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A mythic canon of education: Response to political and spiritual alienation

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A MYTHIC CANON OF EDUCATION: RESPONSE TO POLITICAL AND SPIRITUAL ALIENATION

by

Roma Bowen Joyce

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
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Approved by

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APPROVAL PAGE

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Personal and societal alienation in the 20th century means that we as social beings, conditioned now by the values of utilitarianism rather than those of the spirit, experience profound anxiety and insecurity about our lives. Lacking general individual access, as potential social critics, to the expressive media, we experience life not as pleasure but increasingly as the frustration of a steady process of dehumanization. It is the purpose of the present research to assess the problem of alienation with respect to its significance for education and to investigate the possible wider vision that one style of educational reconceptualization might suggest.

The method integrates the perspectives of three studies: religion, myth, and education theory. Drawing on the work of Jung, Neumann, Eliade, Campbell, Brueggemann, and others, the discussion is qualitative and hermeneutic, rather than quantitative or statistical, to the extent that it rests on a series of theoretical constructs and then attempts, not a conflation, but an assimilation of those generalizations out of related but unconnected disciplines into the new language of a proposed alternative view of the meaning and purpose of education in and for our culture.

This dialectic leads to the conclusion that mythic discourse, because of its unique capacity to establish

connections across broad contextual gulfs, can ultimately reconcile, within a pedagogy that embraces language and vision, the characteristic alienation, fragmentation, and oppression of our lives--these will of course not simply go away, nor can we will them to do so--with the latent universal power of the race to exist both creatively and holistically. The perspective that myth suggests for the education dialogue lies in the basic bond between the spiritual and the political/moral universes. It is a viewpoint that lets us hold a conversation about education which is itself deeply concerned with the politics of spirituality and which can draw meaningful inferences regarding the uses of myth for the living.

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Nanny Foster of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Edith Bolick of Catawba College graciously offered their friendship and collegiality. They, through their personal and professional lives, have many times unknowingly taught me special lessons in good teaching, proper friendship, and practical living. I am most thankful for both of them.

And I am most grateful to that special group of friends who went through this phase of our education with me. To Mary Ann Gray, Aostre Johnson, Janet Fortune, Jane Hinson, Angela Rhone, Ita Kilbride, Drenda Lailard, Becky Blomgren, and Kay Conrad I am always indebted for the sharing of their lives as female educators who are constantly seeking better ways to incorporate energy and thoughtfulness into their professional as well as into their personal lives. Their friendships and special insights have helped keep me going through the many changes in my own life as I worked on this degree. To all of them I wish the very best always.

To my parents Howard and Hazel Bowen and to my brother Gary I am most appreciative for continued support even though their lives were wrought with other crucial family responsibilities.

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I dedicate this dissertation to my 8-year-old daughter Jordan, who, though quite happy that the project is finished, recognized its importance for me early on. It is my hope that her life can be mythic in quality.

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A superstructure of theory is always transitory, being constantly superseded by fresh theories which make nearer and nearer approaches to the truth without ever reaching it. On the shore of the great ocean of reality men are perpetually building theoretical castles of sand, which are perpetually being washed away by the rising tide of knowledge. I cannot expect my own speculations to be more lasting than those of my predecessors. The most that a speculative thinker can hope for is to be remembered for a time as one of the long line of runners, growing dimmer and dimmer as they recede in the distance, who have striven to hand on the torch of knowledge with its little circle of light glimmering in the illimitable darkness of the unknown. (From Creation and Evolution in Primitive Cosmogonies, p. viii, by J. G. Frazer, 1935.)

CHAPTER I

THE CRISIS IN EDUCATION: CRITIQUE AND RESPONSE

The problem of alienation, especially as it plays itself out in our personal and social lives, has been widely discussed by 20th century cultural critics. Critics from varying perspectives and academic disciplines have written profusely about alienation throughout the last 25 years. In 1964 Jacques Ellul, a French sociologist, wrote in The Technological Society about the advent of technology as an alienating phenomenon. In the book Ellul discussed how our human activities were going through the process, first of being technicized, next of being rendered efficient, finally of suffering diminution. He described our society as one in which the overriding value of usefulness, rather than goodness, caused persons to experience powerlessness and thus to feel anxious and insecure about their lives. Living in a society whose ordinary citizens have little in the way of individual access to the expressive media for the purposes of social criticism, persons experience a life that is not characterized by happiness but rather by progressive dehumanization. Ellul writes:

> [Humankind] is also completely despoiled of everything that traditionally constituted his essence. Man becomes a pure appearance, a kaleidoscope of external shapes, an abstraction in a milieu that is frighteningly concrete--an abstraction armed with all the sovereign signs of Jupiter the Thunderer. (p. 432)

To this frightening description of humankind R. D. Laing (1967), a British psychiatrist, added, in The Politics of Experience, that with respect to social normalcy,

> No one can begin to think, feel or act now except from the starting point of his or her own alienation . . . which goes to the roots. The realization of this is the essential springboard for any serious reflection on any aspect of present interhuman life. (p. 12)

Laing goes on to postulate that society "highly values its normal man" (p. 28) whose condition is described thus: "The condition of alienation, of being asleep, of being unconscious, of being out of one's mind, is the condition of the normal man" (p. 28).

Theologians comment on alienation, too. Harvey Cox (1969), author of the earlier The Secular City, wrote in The Feast of Fools that "mankind has paid a frightful price for the present opulence of Western industrial society" (p. 7). Cox discusses the ramifications of acquisitiveness thus:

> Part of the price [for this opulence] is exacted daily from the poor nations of the world whose fields and forests garnish our tables while we push their people further into poverty. Part is paid by the plundered poor who dwell within the gates of the rich nations without sharing in the plenty. But part of the price has been paid by affluent Western man himself. . . . While gaining the whole world he has been losing his own soul. He has purchased prosperity at the cost of a staggering impoverishment of the vital elements of his life [emphasis added]. These elements are festivity--the capacity for genuine revelry and joyous celebration, and fantasy--the faculty for envisioning radically alternative life situations. (p. 7)

So while the psychiatrist wrote about the alienated mind, the theologian wrote about the alienated soul.

Sociologist Philip Slater wrote the national bestseller The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point in 1970; he revised it in 1976 in order to speak "less about what happens to people than about what people do--to themselves, to each other" (p. xiv). Among the many topics Slater discusses is the idea of getting involved in solving the social problems which confront us. Slater contends that we are so removed from the problems themselves and from the type of thinking that envisions connections that

> We are, as a people, perturbed by our inability to anticipate the consequences of our acts, but we still wait optimistically for some magic telegram, informing us that the tangled skein of misery and self-deception into which we have woven ourselves has vanished in the night. (p. 19)

Slater goes on to say that "when social problems persist (as they always do), those who call attention to their continued presence are accused of 'going too far' and 'causing the pendulum to swing the other way'" (p. 20). Thus social pressure perpetuates social problems.

Historian Theodore Roszak, who wrote The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition in 1968, and later published Where the Wasteland Ends: Politics and Transcendence in Postindustrial Society in 1972, calls for a reliance on that visionary experience which can prevent the diminution of our

very existence in the realms of human creativity and community. Roszak (1968) believes that it is through a focus on the question of how to live rather than through a question of what we shall know that we can prevent our annihilation. Elsewhere Roszak (1972) sees the ecological problems we face as the "outward mirror of our inner condition" and proposes that

> We can now recognize that the fate of the soul is the fate of the social order: that if the spirit within us withers, so too will all the world we build about us. (p. xvii)

In Wasteland Roszak (1972) sees hope in "religious renewal" and those who speak for it.

Another critic who has written about the individual alienated by culture is Christopher Lasch, author of The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations and the subsequent The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times. Lasch (1979) wrote about the narcissistic society as one "that gives increasing prominence and encouragement to narcissistic traits" and as one in which the "narcissist has no interest in the future because, in part, he has so little interest in the past" (p. 23). Lasch describes the culture of such a society as one in which the past is trivialized while it is made marketable; one in which the devaluation of the past reflects "not only the poverty of the prevailing ideologies, which have lost their grip on reality and abandoned the attempt to master it,

but the poverty of the narcissist's inner life" (p. 23). In addition to being alienated from the past, from our inner lives, we are alienated from our own experience, and, according to Lasch, we expect "experts to define our needs for us and then [we] wonder why those needs never seem to be satisfied" (p. 25). Perhaps the most telling characteristic of our society appears in the context of our "denial of the past, superficially progressive and optimistic, [which] proves on closer analysis to embody the despair of a society that cannot face the future" (p. 26).

In the later work Lasch (1984) carries this argument even further by describing everyday life as "an exercise in survival" (p. 15). People, according to Lasch,

> Take one day at a time . . . [and] seldom look back, lest they succumb to a debilitating "nostalgia"; and if they look ahead, it is to see how they can insure themselves against the disasters almost everybody now expects. (p. 15)

In a discussion of selfhood, Lasch proposes that selfhood becomes

> A kind of luxury, out of place in an age of impending austerity. Selfhood implies a personal history, friends, family, a sense of place. Under siege, the self contracts to a defensive core, armed against adversity. Emotional equilibrium demands a minimal self, not the imperial self of yesteryear. (p. 15)

Lasch sees the fragmentation in the social order as so great that the hope that political action could

> gradually humanize industrial society has given way to a determination to survive the general wreckage or, more modestly, to hold one's own life together in the face of mounting pressures. (p. 16)

Lasch further argues that "the danger of personal disintegration encourages a sense of selfhood neither 'imperial' nor 'narcissistic' but simply beleaguered" (p. 16). Eloquently, Lasch declares:

> The achievement of selfhood, which our culture makes so difficult, might be defined as the acknowledgment of our separation from the original source of life, combined with a continuing struggle to recapture a sense of primal union by means of activity that gives us a provisional understanding and mastery of the world without denying our limitations and dependency. Selfhood is the painful awareness of the tension between our unlimited aspirations and our limited understanding, between our original intimations of immortality and our fallen state, between oneness and separation. A new culture--a postindustrial culture, if you like--has to be based on a recognition of these contradictions in human experience, not on a technology that tries to restore the illusion of self-sufficiency or, on the other hand, on a radical denial of selfhood that tries to restore the illusion of absolute unity with nature. (p. 20)

Jonathan Schell (1982) in The Fate of the Earth agrees with Lasch that by alienating ourselves from our past we are foregoing our chances for a future. Writing with nuclear extinction in mind, Schell thinks we will determine to live our lives rather than destroy them only if we begin to realize our connections with the generations that have come before us and to the generations that will follow.

Critics of the sixties and seventies later found their expectations of the end of the century to be so different from the realities they encountered that they wrote books about their new observations and humankind's response to them. Harvey Cox (1984), for example, found the postmodern

society to be at such variance from what anyone had expected that he wrote Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Post-modern Theology in order to examine the religion of the new order and describe what he found to be the promising rise of theologically viable groups equipped with the ability to work for survival and community in the new era. The resources for a postmodern theology will, according to Cox,

> come from those sectors of the modern social edifice that for various reasons--usually to do with class or color or gender--have been consigned to its lower stories and excluded from the chance to help formulate its religious vision. They will come from those parts of the world geopoliticians classify as the "periphery," regions also largely left out of participation in the centers of modern theological discourse which are located in the Western political and cultural milieu. (p. 21)

Cox, then, relies on those who have been oppressed under our previous social structures for guidance in the next age.

Issues of gender and alienation also have been explored in depth in the literature of the last 25 years. One book instrumental in describing the reasons for--and characteristics of--this kind of alienation and fragmentation was In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development by Carol Gilligan of Harvard. Gilligan (1982) exposed the fact that almost all developmental research at many institutions of higher education had been based exclusively on male samples but that the conclusions from these studies had been published as generic ones. Because of such research biases, Gilligan says that women have been developmentally

misunderstood and as a result also have felt alienated from their own experiences. In her own resulting research, Gilligan concludes that women become, not morally deficient--as was once believed--in comparison to men, but morally different. In a culture pervaded with maleness, Gilligan concludes:

> As we have listened for centuries to the voices of men and the theories of development that their experience informs, so we have come more recently to notice not only the silence of women but the difficulty in hearing what they say when they speak. Yet in the different voice of women lies the truth of an ethic of care, the tie between relationship and responsibility. . . . By positing instead two different modes, we arrive at a more complex rendition of human experience which sees the truth of separation and attachment in the lives of women and men and recognizes how these truths are carried by different modes of language and thought. (pp. 173-174)

Gilligan espouses the notion that the "dialogue between fairness and care not only provides a better understanding of relations between the sexes but also gives rise to a more comprehensive portrayal of adult work and family relationships" (p. 174).

The above discussions of alienation are only a few of those of significance that have appeared in the past 25 years. These writers point out that we are concerned about wholeness and about living fully human lives as persons existing in a world which is a mirror of our own malaise. In effect we are faced with alienation on all levels of our existence--from the Creator, from the natural creation, from humankind,

and from our own inner lives. Superadded to this sense of alienation is the feeling of powerlessness to do anything about the existing human condition.

Any phenomenon capable of producing so powerful an effect on the culture at large alike affects education. And it is the responsibility of the educator to be aware of not only the phenomenon but its effects on the whole institution of education. As James B. Macdonald wrote (1975):

> It is clear to me now that when we speak of education we speak in the context of a microscopic paradigm of a macroscopic human condition, a paradigm that holds all of the complexities in microcosm of the larger condition. (p. 4)

Recognizing that education is principally characterized by the culture at large, educational theorists have responded to the phenomenon of alienation as it has played itself out in various facets of educational thought. Responding to the phenomenon of alienation and fragmentation as it appears in curriculum are the critical theorists who, according to Henry Giroux (1981) in "Toward a New Sociology of Curriculum," are united by a single theme--opposition to the "technocratic rationality that guides traditional curriculum theory and design" (p. 99). The responses of these theorists are varied and arise from training in a variety of disciplines.

Mainly out of the social and political perspectives of Henry Giroux and Paulo Freire, the topic of alienation as oppression has moved into educational discourse. According

to Giroux (1981), traditional curriculum--or, as he terms it, the technocratic model of curriculum--has been "criticized both for its stated claims to the truth and the assumptions implicit in the kinds of questions it ignores" (p. 100). Among Giroux's criticisms of the traditional curriculum are that it "ignores its ethical function . . . [and] is also stripped of its political function" (p. 101); that it appears to place high priority on control, where the "subjective dimension of knowing is lost . . . [and] the purpose of knowledge becomes one of accumulation and categorization" (p. 101); that it espouses objectivity and valuelessness; and that it represents a "firm commitment to a view of rationality that is ahistorical" (p. 102). To fight the kind of alienation and powerlessness the traditional curriculum breeds, Giroux proposes that a new curriculum theory needs to be formed built on those questions which accept that "power, knowledge, ideology and schooling are linked in ever-changing patterns of complexity" (p. 104).

In another work, Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition, Giroux (1983) discusses ways in which this "radical pedagogy" might become less alienating--and more empowering--by enlisting the responses of "working-class people, minorities of color, and women" (p. 238) and encouraging them to become actively involved in the shaping of school policies and experiences. Once these

groups become involved, according to Giroux, they can "become the subject[s] of such policy making . . . rather than . . . the object[s]" (p. 238).

In a more recent turn in his scholarship, Giroux (1987) broached the subject of language and empowerment. In Literacy, Voice, and the Pedagogy of Political Empowerment, Giroux (1987), calling on the scholarship of Antonio Gramsci, proposes that literacy may "have less to do with the task of teaching people how to read and write than with producing and legitimating oppressive and exploitative social relations" (p. 1). Here literacy is presented as a "double-edged sword"--"wielded for the purpose of self and social empowerment or for the perpetuation of relations of repression and domination" (p. 1). Critical literacy then has to be fought for as an "ideological construct and as a social movement" (p. 1). Giroux writes that literacy has

> to be viewed as a social construction that is always implicated in organizing one's view of history, the present and the future; furthermore, the notion of literacy need[s] to be grounded in an ethical and political project that dignif[ies] and extend[s] the possibilities for human life and freedom. In other words, literacy as a radical construct ha[s] to be rooted in a spirit of critique and project of possibility that enable[s] people to participate in the understanding and transformation of their society. (p. 2)

Giroux has approached political and social alienation in the educational setting and called for a critical assessment of what we do in schools as well as of the language that dominates us. He also proposes that we find ways of

empowering those who, in both the social structure and the school structure, have no power.

A contributor to Giroux's argument is Paulo Freire (1970), who in Pedagogy of the Oppressed proposed a means of empowering the illiterate and impoverished people of Third World countries through interpersonal dialogical encounters in which the focus of the discussion was on description of the world followed by receipt of the proper tools for perceiving personal and social position and dealing critically with it. Drawing on the thoughts of Martin Buber, Freire (1970) describes the dialogical theory of action, in which "Subjects meet in cooperation in order to transform the world" (p. 167). There is no domination; "Instead, there are Subjects who meet to name the world in order to transform it" (p. 167).

Calling on language and community as political tools, Freire (1970) conceptualizes a world where social change is brought about through the eventual cooperation of the original oppressors with the subjects. Such an educational theory is an assault on alienation at the political and personal levels.

Maxine Greene (1978), in Landscapes of Learning, writes from the perspective of the existentialist concerned with aesthetics and society. She calls our attention to the role of education in a world whose people "once had faith in

social activism and commitment [but] have withdrawn from the social arena into their own problematic privacy" (p. 1). Greene treats alienation as the opposite of "emancipation and 'wide-awakeness'" (p. 2) and calls on the humanities, especially the study of literature, for the skills needed to bring about personal transcendence of the present social situation and of the resultant passivity. Greene feels that a study of literature can help people understand their own "landscapes"--"their lived lives" as persons in a particular historical and social situation (p. 2).

Greene (1978) writes about education as discovering connections and as learning in community. Learning, she says,

> is, in one dimension, a conscious search for some kind of coherence, some kind of sense. Learning also is a process of effecting new connections in experience, of thematizing, problematizing, and imposing diverse patterns on the inchoateness of things. (p. 3)

Asserting that "we all learn to become human . . . <u>within a community of some kind</u> [emphasis added]" (p. 3), Greene proposes that the activities

> that compose learning not only engage us in our own quests for answers and for meanings; they also serve to initiate us into the . . . human community, in its largest and richest sense. (p. 3)

She warns that "teachers who are alienated, passive, and unquestioning cannot make such initiations possible for those around" them and that "teachers who take the social real-it[ies] surrounding them for granted and simply accede to them" (p. 3) cannot coax students into "wide-awakeness."

Greene maintains that the experience with literature is an accessible opportunity for teachers wishing to promote dialogue about our own histories and lost spontaneity. It is through a study of literature that Greene sees the possibility for empowering the alienated. On the uses of literature she writes:

> One of the strengths of imaginative literature is that it can enable women [and men] to assume new standpoints on what they take for granted, to animate certain constructs with their indignation, so that they can see them as sources of the injustice that plagues them, see them, not as givens, but as constituted by human beings and changeable by human beings. The imaginative leap can lead to the leap that is praxis, the effort to remake and transcend. (p. 223)

Greene thinks there is hope for a world changed by education--one that grounds persons in their own histories and focuses on energetically lived lives (those characterized by "wide-awakeness"); one where people can act on possibilities for emancipation.

Other educational theorists respond in like ways to the radiant personal and cultural problems connected with alienation as it plays itself out in education. William Pinar, from the psychoanalytic perspective, for example, suggests the use of currere as a means of getting at the inner experience of the public (see 1975a, p. 399; 1976, pp. vii-viii) and called for a method at once regressive, progressive, analytic, synthetic, and that "places this integrated understanding of individual experience into the larger

political and cultural web, explaining the dialectical relation between the two" (1975b, p. 424).

Similarly, Madeleine Grumet (1981), in "Autobiography and Reconceptualization," writes about the use of autobiography as a method of curriculum research--one that concretely details an individual's experience with the curriculum in an effort to transform that experience into a useful background for more recent choices about the uses of power (p. 141). Grumet sees this research method as a means of living curriculum:

> Curriculum is the child of culture, and their relation is as complex and reciprocal as are any that bond the generations. Curriculum transmits culture, as it is formed by it. Curriculum modifies culture, even as it transmits it. Similarly, as with culture, we live curriculum before we describe it. (p. 140)

But it is in the describing that we live it again, more aware now of the constructs of our choices. Grumet further points out that the autobiographical method provides information even in the choosing of recalled events because "the possibility that schools may become places where students understand their own powers is never realized through rhetoric but through the choices and actions that fill the minutes we spend together" (p. 143).

While these and other similar educational theorists provide valuable criticisms of the state of education and insights into the problems of personal and cultural alienation, I find them lacking in their failure to recognize the

profundity of the cultural, personal, and educational problems. Appropriate responses to our current cultural and educational crises call for far-reaching and informed visions regarding resolutions. It is true that what we do in education must be reconceptualized; it is also true that this reconceptualization requires a much wider vision than any of the above educational theorists proposes.

It is my contention that we are choosing whether or not to live as people on a planet for which we are responsible, but for which we are refusing to take responsibility. Never before in our history have we been capable of annihilation of the entire earth and never before have we faced such forces of alienation as those created by our technological society. Alienation of this sort requires a new vision of life, and of the ways of communicating with everyone about the living of that life.

Two educational theorists--Dwayne Huebner and David Purpel--get at these issues on a much broader scale than that discussed above and set the stage for the kind of educational discourse proposed in this paper. What has been offered above is a colloquy of powerful arguments for fighting alienation and empowering persons both personally and politically. What is missing is a foundation for discourse which can bring these arguments to a common ground encompassing the various concerns expressed. We are dealing with

political problems; we are dealing with existential problems for living; we are dealing with psychoanalytical problems. But we are also dealing with a crisis much larger than any one of these arguments, and the vision of a means of communicating about these problems must be much greater still.

Dwayne Huebner (1984) in "The Search for Religious Metaphors in the Language of Education" expresses concern for more "adequate and powerful ways to describe education . . . critically and creatively" (p. 112). Huebner cites Whitehead's statement that the "essence of education is that it be religious" and that education must be characterized by duty and reverence. By "duty" Huebner feels that Whitehead means a "response to, indeed a response-ability for, the earth . . . and those of us . . . who people it" (p. 114). By "reverence" Huebner believes Whitehead is referring to the "perception that the present holds within itself . . . eternity" (p. 114). So for education to be both reverent and dutiful, it must lay claim to the power to instruct us in going beyond ourselves to care for the world and the "others" with whom we come in contact. Huebner writes about the results of an education which takes place in community this way:

> If we recognize that education is a response to the otherness of the world, that the stranger of the world will not destroy us if we meet him or her in the reconciling communities of care and love, and if we see in the structure of knowledge the manifestation of otherness and love; then perhaps we can be more certain that

> Caesar will get only his share. These difficult tasks are easier if they occur among people who participate in communities of faith, no matter what their specific tradition. (p. 123)

Huebner, then, imbues the profundity of the purposes of education with the characteristics of reverence (for the past, present, and future of our existence) and responsibility for the created order of the world, including the natural environment and other persons.

David Purpel also writes about moral and religious frameworks for education, and in addition proposes a role for the educator as a creator and critic of visions about ways to deal with the present cultural and educational crises. In his forthcoming book, The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education: A Curriculum for Social Justice and Compassion (1988), he asserts that "education is at root a moral endeavor"; that is, it is an endeavor which "focuses on principles, rules, and ideas that are related to human relationships . . . with each other and with the world" (p. 104). Responding to alienation as it is revealed in "contradictions and confusions over our basic values marked by self-deception and self-destructiveness," Purpel argues that

> the cultural and educational crises are rooted in . . . moral ambiguities and confusions, and . . . that these moral difficulties emerge from our inability to deal with the even broader and deeper religious or metaphysical bases of moral, political, and social policies. (p. 108)

Purpel believes that our crises are a result of

> our failure to develop an over-arching mythos of meaning, purpose, and ultimacy that can guide us in the creation of a vision of the good, true, and beautiful life and in the work that this vision creates for us. (p. 108)

So for the educator Purpel prescribes the role of participant in

> the process of creating that vision as part of our responsibility--a responsibility which coincides with our vital need for such a vision to provide directions for our professional activities.
>
> As educators, our responsibilities, however, are not simply to promulgate visions but to inquire into them--not just to study them but to be critical and discerning of them--to be contributor, critic, and celebrator. (p. 108)

Purpel further believes that we have the ability to create not just individual visions but a consensus about a model of "ultimate meaning--some way of conceptualizing a response" to questions of origin, identity, and purpose (p. 110). As a part of this envisioning of crises and solutions, Purpel says that we should both call upon existing myths which

> help us connect our lives in the everyday world to a cosmology . . . and recognize the strength and persistence of this ancient, continuous and on-going impulse to create meaning systems that give order and direction to our lives. (p. 111)

It is in the continuum of the discourse on religion, reverence, and duty offered by Huebner and Purpel that this paper is written.

What is offered in this paper is in a sense a religious discussion to the extent that it both recognizes the existence of a power larger than ourselves and recognizes our

connection to this power as an inward and outward expression of identity. In this paper, however, this particular phenomenon is only part of a discourse on the implications of myth for education. I believe that mythic discourse has the ability to connect the past and the present, the personal and the social, the religious and the political in an attempt to draw all these dialectics together. And yet I believe that a discourse on myth has the ability to offer another dimension--both in language and in vision--concerned with a pedagogy that resists alienation, fragmentation, and oppression and, at the same time, empowers people in the depths of their beings for more creative and holistic lives. Myth offers a perspective for educational discourse: one that reveals the interconnectedness of the spiritual and political/moral dimensions of existence and enables us to engage in a dialogue on education that is itself about the politics of spirituality and the implications of this mythic phenomenon for living.

CHAPTER II

EDUCATION DISCOURSE, MYTH AND ULTIMATE CONCERN

The Problem of Language and Alienation

In Habits of the Heart, Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985) write about conversations with many Americans concerning their struggles to develop a sense of individuality and at the same time maintain a commitment to the larger society. The authors find that Americans are deeply concerned about families, communities, the right way to live, what to teach children, public and private responsibility. It is quite significant, though, that while most of the persons interviewed spoke openly about individual goals and desires, they preferred to keep their concern about morality and community "relegated to the realm of private anxiety, as if it would be awkward or embarrassing to make it public" (p. vii).

Inasmuch as schools mirror the larger society, they also reflect this anxiety about discussions with respect to living moral and communal lives. It has become increasingly uncomfortable in the public schools--as in society in general--to air one's innermost thoughts and concerns, especially when these expressions run counter to what the larger society dictates as important, significant, and proper for

public discourse. In addition, there is a great deal of self-consciousness in a culture which puts emphasis on image. The worst result, however, is that the anxiety over discussions on important issues has contributed to a lack of language--and, consequently, a lack of desire to create language--for discussions about the aspects of life which concern us at the deepest levels. Language is the key to communication and without proper words and concepts to express our deepest thoughts and ideas, our discourse is deprived of entire areas of concern. The danger is, of course, that our lives are in danger of becoming shaped and controlled only by those concepts and ideas about which we can communicate. If we lack language about those concepts and concerns most significant to us, then our lives become shaped and controlled by ideas, concepts, and concerns of lesser importance.

One of the purposes of this paper is to suggest a language which can move educational discourse beyond the private realm to the public while, at the same time, maintaining the gravity of our private discourse. I believe that it is possible to find a lexicon which can maintain the significance of the issues and simultaneously provide language for public debate. Because the subject at hand is of ultimate importance to our survival as persons, as a society and as a world, the language must be one which can indicate the weight

and the far-reaching significance of the subject. It must be a language of depth, which can work as metaphor--which can call up our deepest knowledge about what it means to be fully human, which can act to preserve a world on the verge of extinction by our own hands. It must be a language that can call up what is most sacred, for preservation of life and of the earth is surely a sacred subject.

Mythic Language and Ultimate Concern

I find the language of myth to be profound and reverent and, at the same time, powerful enough to provide a proper framework for sacred discourse. Myth provides a language which can, on many levels, serve as metaphor to call up those concerns which are sacred. The study of myth is the study of the meaning of life--of how one should live in the world: as a functioning individual who must be psychologically whole, as a social being who must make a contribution to community and to the larger society, as a person in awe of the divine, as a person responsible for the natural world in which we all must live. I believe that at the deepest level we as human beings know, both collectively and individually, that to live productive lives we must live in positive connection with all facets of the creation. I also believe that at the deepest level we know that we do not and indeed cannot function alone, making our way in the

world, independent of these essential relationships. What the discourse of myth provides, then, is conversation about ultimate concern--about what it is that gives us these basic connections to life at its most sacred roots and what all of this means for the way we live our lives.

I have borrowed the term ultimate concern from Paul Tillich (1952, 1957), characterized as the most influential theologian of this century. Tillich spent his life fighting, through his theological writings, authoritarian systems that he saw as stultifying the life of the individual. Tillich begins his theological system with the human predicament or "situation" and talks about the ground of being as the object of ultimate concern. Tillich propounds a theological system and a view of the world in which the individual in community is forced to think about what it means to be free in a social context, to express ideas, to disagree with the government, and to act on the question of ultimate concern, which Tillich sees as having true authority over one's life. In one autobiographical essay, Tillich (1961) in writing about his preaching says that the contact with the audience "gives me a pervasive sense of joy, the joy of a creative communion, of giving and taking, even if the audience is not vocal" (p. 15).

Attuned to discourse with others, Tillich found the source of this "creative communion" in his concept of

ultimate concern. Like myth, Tillich's theology provides a context--a language--for talking about matters of ultimate concern. It should be noted, however, that the language of Tillich's theology does not hold the potentiality of richness as does the language of myth. This seems to be primarily because theological language tends to be conceptual while mythic language leans toward the metaphorical.

In Dynamics of Faith, Tillich (1957) speaks about ultimate concern with respect to love, faith, community, action, ritual and symbol, and about the "Ground of all Being"--the ultimate and unconditional--that precedes our minds and all created things. Tillich begins his writings with the assertion that faith and, indirectly, religion are of ultimate concern. Religion and faith and ultimate concern, then, represent a movement toward the ultimate (or unconditional), which is similar to our usual concept of God but which cannot be defined as such because of the limiting nature of defining God. Tillich believes that God cannot be defined because a definition would limit God's existence as the "ground," the thing behind all things. Tillich, then, prefers to use "ground of being" or "Being-Itself" so that persons reading his theology will not equate his concept of the ultimate, which is beyond our comprehension, with the more limiting concept of God.

A major component of our predicament as modern men, according to Tillich, is estrangement from this ground or

foundation of our being. Since Tillich believes that "one is ultimately concerned only about something to which one essentially belongs and from which one is essentially separated" (p. 112), he believes that we experience anxiety because we, as finite creatures, are separated from the infinite. Tillich proposes a way to combat this anxiety and separation. He describes love, "the drive toward the reunion of the separated" (p. 112), as having the role of overcoming separation and anxiety and of bringing us into communion with the ultimate or ground of our being. Further, Tillich believes that ultimate concern "presupposes the reunion of the separated" (p. 112) and consequently that the "reunion [emphasis added] with that to which one belongs and from which one is estranged" (p. 112) is both "the concern of faith and the desire of love" (p. 112). In this context Tillich sees love as an element of faith since "faith is understood as ultimate concern" (p. 115).

Having this reuniting or connective quality, love operates in Tillich's theology on another level. Since the object of one's faith or ultimate concern is the Ultimate or ground of being, and since faith claims love as its manifestation, love determines how one acts on one's faith. According to Tillich, love is the "mediating link between faith and works" (p. 115). He writes:

> Faith implies love, love lives in works: in this sense faith is actual in works. Where there is ultimate concern there is the passionate desire to actualize the content of one's concern. "Concern" in its very definition includes the desire for action. (pp. 115-116)

The action one takes in behalf of this faith and love is action within community. Since faith to Tillich is a matter of community, "the state of ultimate concern is actual only within a community of action" (p. 117). To Tillich a community of action is also a community of faith, and the life of faith is life in a community of faith, "not only in its communal activities and institutions but also in the inner life of its members" (p. 118). For Tillich there is no community without faith.

Tillich writes that the faith of community is renewed through its mythic and cultic symbols and that myth,

> if interpreted as the symbolic expression of ultimate concern, is the fundamental creation of every religious community. . . . Without the community in which they [cult and myth] are used, faith would disappear and man's ultimate concern would go into hiding. (p. 121)

Not only is it important that a community have its mythic symbols, it must understand the symbolic character of its symbols or the nature of the community will be destroyed. Myth, then, is the language of ultimate concern but is valid only when it contains the richness of the ultimate concern itself, that is, when it can be interpreted and not taken literally.

Tillich's concept of ultimate concern provides the initial insight for the mythic framework proposed in this study. Both Tillich's theology and myth focus on the importance of connections to the creative power of the universe, Being-Itself. Both stress the necessity of such connections with the "ground" or "foundation" of one's being as determinant of one's actions within community. And, indeed, both Tillich's theology and the mythic framework developed here hold that these connections are sacred by nature. Tillich also stresses the essential nature of mythic and symbolic language for the definition and preservation of community. That essentiality is a major assertion of this paper.

Myth as Metaphor

While Tillich's concept of ultimate concern hints at the nature of the mythic framework presented here, it does lack the richness the language of myth can provide. In Metaphorical Theology, Sallie McFague (1982) provides, in her discussion of metaphor, model, and concept, a framework to aid in moving from Tillich's theology to further discussion of the framework of mythic language. Quoting John Middleton Murry--"Metaphor is as ultimate as speech itself, and speech as ultimate as thought" (p. 32)--McFague determines metaphor to be the primary source of our language and knowledge because it calls forth truth and still retains the tension, the "it is and it is not" (p. 13), that metaphors in their indirection

create. McFague finds this "silent but present negative" (p. 13), this tension, to be a healthy aspect of metaphor to the degree that it points up constantly the fact that our language and our thought processes are comparative. To attempt to reify language, then, is to attempt to reify thought and thus to bring stagnation to the natural processes of thinking and creating our world.

Basically, metaphor uses a better-known or more familiar object or idea to point out a quality in common with the lesser-known object or idea. So the familiar is used to talk about the less-familiar or unknown. McFague (1982) defines metaphor as a comparison by which one sees one thing as another, "pretending 'this' is 'that' because we do not know how to think about 'this,' so we use 'that' as a way of saying something about it" (p. 15). Language and thought are metaphorical in nature. We think metaphorically; therefore, we speak metaphorically. We communicate with one another using the same forms with which we think. Murry was right when he said, "Metaphor appears as the instinctive and necessary act of the mind exploring reality and ordering experience" (see McFague, 1982, p. 32). Ordinary language, then, is the way we think and ordinary language is the language of thinking by "indirection," by metaphor (p. 16).

Also important to human thought is the fact that metaphor contains judgments about which "this" is compared to

which "that" and, as this paper will attempt to demonstrate, these judgments can be significant to the extent of narrowing the way people think while at the same time altering the social and cultural climate. There are, then, good metaphors and poor metaphors. McFague discusses good metaphors thus:

> Good metaphors shock, they bring unlikes together, they upset conventions, they involve tension, and they are implicitly revolutionary. . . . Metaphorical thinking [is] . . . prophetic . . . [and] projects, tentatively, a possible transformed order and unity yet to be realized. (p. 17)

Though metaphorical language is, in its best forms, rich language--true to the variety of ways our mind can think in comparison and by indirection--it demands interpretation. It begs us to ask, "What does this mean?" So we have a need to move beyond metaphors to conceptual language, which insists on similarities rather than on dissimilarities as metaphors do.

McFague calls this move from the metaphorical to the conceptual a move from primary to secondary language and finds the <u>model</u> to be instrumental in this process. A model is a "mixed type" (p. 23) in that it borrows from both the metaphor and the concept. As a "dominant metaphor, a metaphor with staying power" (p. 23), a model becomes a major way of structuring and ordering experience while retaining some of the tension of the "is and is not" (p. 23). While models give us a way of thinking about the unknown through the known, they also provide us with a more organic,

consistent, and comprehensive way of thinking than does the metaphor (p. 23). Thus models, according to McFague, "give us something to think about when we do not know what to think, a way of talking when we do not know how to talk" (p. 23). McFague cautions that models can become dangerous if they become literal, that is, if they begin to "exclude other ways of thinking and talking" and become "identified as the one and only way of understanding a subject" (p. 24). In essence, models "object to competition in ways that metaphors do not" (p. 24), and while they are necessary, they must be used with discrimination.

McFague proposes that thinking does not stop, however, with metaphors and models; she asks for "conceptual interpretation and criticism" (p. 25). The critique of metaphors and models, then, is the task of conceptual thought (p. 27). Conceptual thought attempts to generalize or find similarities among various models and to give rise to systematic thought, on which we rely in ordering models into concepts.

Any system of thinking, then, must rely on <u>metaphor</u> for richness, <u>model</u> for discrimination of dominant ideas, and <u>concept</u> for critique. When Tillich's theology is viewed from this perspective, it becomes apparent that it is conceptual in nature. Though it is insightful, it has lost the "and is not," the richness, that metaphorical language insists on. Tillich's purpose is to reinterpret, to critique

the dominant Christian symbols and metaphors of his time. And, although he has systematically reinterpreted many of them, his writing remains primarily within the realm of concept. Therefore, while Tillich's discussion of ultimate concern is most useful for this study by getting at the idea that we are connected to and a part of a larger scheme of things from which we get our meaning for life, it does not offer the richness necessary to a language for communicating our depth of concern about the meaning and preservation of our existence--a conversation we have relegated largely to the private realm of our being. A new language, of necessity, must be metaphorically rich, providing many possibilities for what <u>is</u> as well as what <u>is not</u>.

The framework for mythic language presented here is one based on language that can communicate ultimate concern. The language of this framework must have the ability to reveal and to communicate in two directions. While it must be able to get at the ground or essence of existence, the sacred connections to be examined more fully later, it must also have the capacity to carry this character and significance of the revelation about the nature of our sacred connections to other persons. It must be a language that can aid in calling into consciousness what the nature of ultimate concern is, and, at the same time, it must be a language people feel comfortable using--i.e., it must be perceived to

be ordinary and available to all people and yet have the ability to make extraordinary comparisons, ones which surprise us into new meaning and insights.

Defining Myth: A Historical Perspective

Myth as approached in this study is not a reference to matters of a fictitious nature or to matters which are untrue. This use of the word myth, to denote something of a false nature, seems first to have appeared in our language during the 19th century, when scholars, very much under the influence of the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment, wrote about myth with respect to origins. For the 19th century scholar, myth referred to ancient stories of primitive peoples, stories that explained the origins of the universe, their culture, and their gods, rites, and customs. Because primitive peoples held these explanatory stories to be literal representations of their origins and made them the basis upon which they organized their lives, 19th century scholars focused on myth as primitive man's functional equivalent of science (Dundes, 1984, p. 30). While primitive peoples saw their myths as sacred in nature, scholars of the 19th century saw them as pre-scientific, peculiar to an early period or stage in human evolution (Dundes, 1984, p. 41). Nineteenth century scholars, then, were very much a product of the prevailing influence of the science of their time.

According to Baumer (1978), in the 17th century science became the directive force of Western civilization, displacing theology and antique letters. Science challenged the focus on the world of the spirit, replacing it with a focus on the material world. Baumer writes further about the 17th century influence of science:

> It [science] drove Christianity out of the physical universe into the region of history and private morals [emphasis added]; to an ever growing number of people in the two succeeding centuries [the eighteenth and nineteenth] it made religion seem outmoded even there. . . . It changed profoundly man's attitude toward custom and tradition, enabling him to declare his independence of the past, to look down condescendingly upon the "ancients" [emphasis added], and to envisage a rosy future. (p. 249)

In addition, Baumer asserts that with the shift of emphasis from spirit and religion to the material world and science, improvement and change in oneself and one's world came no longer from within, i.e., from spirit, but rather from without, i.e., from science. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) contributed to the swing from stress on the spiritual to an emphasis on the material and scientific by asserting that knowledge is both cumulative and tentative (Baumer, 1978, p. 253).

Such ideas as these, once they became pervasive in the culture, would have to have a part in destroying the view of myth as a legitimate, though religious, explanation of origins and of the basis for ritual and the living of one's life in an ordered and connected, i.e., sacred and spiritual fashion. Knowledge revealed in myth to primitive peoples was final,

not tentative or cumulative. Melioration came from adherence to myths as revelations of the spiritual aspects of life. Myths determined the nature of one's goings and comings in the world as well as the nature of conservation and preservation in relation to one's spiritual and political constitution.

Science was responsible for making Christianity a subject of history and private morality rather than a phenomenon of the physical universe. Science was also responsible for removing myth from the context of natural phenomena and establishing it as a feature of ancient history, outdated morality, and pre-scientific speculation. Agreeing with this influence upon 19th century scholars of myth is Jan de Vries (1984) who, in writing about the influence of Max Muller, an influential 19th century scholar of myth, says:

> [His] theory demonstrates once more the gap that lay between nineteenth-century man and the sundry faiths he knew existed. To the extent that modern man's soul detached itself from Christianity, to the extent that Christianity was allowed to deteriorate into a mere moral lore as the core was taken out of its dogma and the sense for its mystery got lost, to that extent also man's understanding of other religions disappeared. It seemed to him that these religions were so naive that they could not have any connection with deep human experience. Max Muller's theory makes abundantly clear that he never fathomed belief. He was a man of his time. (pp. 39-40)

De Vries' primary point is that to reach any understanding of myth that is at once accurate and useful, we must seek an accurate observation of primitive religious life to go along with other methods of examining myth.

One of the most remarkable and costly effects of the Scientific Age, however, was severing the ties between the present and the past, enabling us to declare our independence from the past (Baumer, 1978, p. 249), resulting in the neglect of our roots in and connections to matters of a sacred and spiritual nature. Equally costly was the capacity that the Scientific Revolution bestowed on us to "look down condescendingly [emphasis added] upon the 'ancients'" (Baumer, 1978, p. 249), those representatives of a rich primitive heritage, because they were of a pre-scientific age. It is my own contention that while this severance represents a change in our view of the spiritual and the sacred foundations of our lives and of myth as an embodiment of those foundations, it also represents a dangerous phenomenon to the degree that it sets us up to become culturally and personally fragmented and alienated from the very nature of our being, i.e., from the matters of ultimate concern.

Within the romantic movement of the 19th century there was some evidence that myth would begin to be taken more seriously again. As a reaction against the scientific interpretation of nature prominent during the Enlightenment, writers of the 19th century--primarily the poets and dramatists--began to write about nature in imaginative and emotional terms. At the same time myth began to be characterized as imaginative. Though this emphasis on the imaginative did

not restore the mythic connection to sacred and spiritual origins, it did carry with it a hint that myth was, according to Rogerson (1984), an "expression of the deepest creative potentialities of man" (p. 65). Eventually, Romantic writers and myth theorists began to see myth as an expression of profound truths about human existence and a revelation of intuitions of truth that would not and could not be consciously available to more sophisticated people. Rogerson sees this as a movement away from the view of myth as inadequate science and toward a view of myth as symbolic interpretation--this, then, would constitute the underlying perspective on myth in the work of Jung (see Rogerson, 1984, pp. 65-66).

With the advent, in the 20th century, of the scholarship of Jung and those influenced by him, myth once more began to be taken seriously as an acknowledgment of truth about our spiritual and political lives. Empirical research and attempts at demythologization actually have helped the status of myth in the 20th century. Honko (1984), a Finnish folklorist, outlines three primary forms of demythologization: (1) terminological, in which the actual word myth is avoided but the story istelf is retained and referred to as "holy story"; (2) total and compensatory, in which the mythical tradition is totally rejected because the stories are seen as unnecessary for the civilized mind and replaced with science; (3) partial and interpretative, in which while there is no rational basis for their literal acceptance, myths have

nevertheless a symbolic value to the extent that what lies behind them is important (pp. 42-43). From demythologization, then, we acquire the ideas that myth contains an element of the holy or sacred, i.e., that it describes what is sound and whole; that myth, if it is to be a viable study for the 20th century mind, must acknowledge the development of civilization and the advances of science; and that there is an extremely important symbolic element in myth, one rich in meaning.

Acknowledging the prominence of myth research, Honko (1984) outlines 12 different ways that 20th century scholars have approached the subject: (1) as a source of cognitive categories; (2) as a form of symbolic expression; (3) as a projection of the subconscious; (4) as an integrating factor in man's adaptation to life (as world view); (5) as a charter of behavior; (6) as a legitimation of social institutions; (7) as a market of social relevance; (8) as a mirror of culture, social structure, etc.; (9) as a result of historical situation; (10) as religious communication; (11) as religious genre; and (12) as a medium for structure (pp. 47-48).

By classifying these approaches more broadly into four subgroups--historical, psychological, sociological, and structural--we can see how they overlap with elements of the mythic framework used in this paper. Myth is story, metaphorical story, that works in two directions--both behind and in

front of the narrative--to produce meaning. As metaphorical language it gets at the sacred and spiritual connections with the Ultimate while at the same time prompting exegesis and hermeneutic interpretation of our present political and cultural situation.

The positive qualities of myth are needed in the 20th century, which has been called the Age of Anxiety. We are reaping both the benefits and the horrors brought about by the Technological Revolution. For the first time in history we have the ability to make our lives easier with technological advances like the computer and to destroy ourselves and the earth with nuclear power (and the power to choose between the two alternatives). Commenting on our technologized world, Jacques Ellul (1964) warned in The Technological Society of the loss of the quality of being human resulting from "technique." He wrote:

> Indeed, the human race is beginning confusedly to understand at last that it is living in a new and unfamiliar universe. The new order was meant to be a buffer between man and nature. Unfortunately, it has evolved autonomously in such a way that man has lost all contact with his natural framework. (p. 428)

Not only is humankind in this situation, Ellul declares, but the escape prerequisite to the re-establishment of roots appears nearly impossible:

> Enclosed within his artificial creation, man finds that there is "no exit"; that he cannot pierce the shell of technology to find again the ancient milieu to which he was adapted for hundreds of thousands of years. . . . Who is too blind to see that a profound

> mutation is being advocated here? A new dismembering and a complete reconstitution of the human being so that he can at least become the objective (and also the total object) of techniques. (pp. 428, 431)

Ellul's pronouncement articulates well the profound angst of modern humans cut off from the roots which for centuries defined the quality of being human.

The quickened pace of our lives, the imminence of possible disaster, and a continued separation from our sacred and spiritual roots that is characterized by angst and anomie, disparity and despair, impotence and defeat, continually point up the need to communicate about the present-day situation and the need for a language which is accessible and rich for approaching these life-living matters. For a language and therefore a metaphor to be empowering it must be grounded in knowledge that can speak to the problems of the age, the "situation" of our lives. In a time such as ours, when so many aspects of our lives are calling for grounding and direction, it is untimely and indeed superfluous to communicate, to do scholarship, to teach, to develop curricula about subjects and language of little or no relevance to the preservation and conservation of our world. Crucially serious times require crucially serious means of discovering and communicating knowledge that must of necessity be grounded in Ultimate concern and carry imperatives about how to preserve our lives, how to conceptualize meaning, and how to conserve our sacred roots, our spiritual foundation.

To contribute to the situational problem of our age--which education must address if we are to survive--then, myth as metaphor must be able to perform two functions: it must show us the "ground of being" and provide direction and focus for our actions. Essentially, it must be spiritual and political, showing us the sacred nature of living. In order to understand more appropriately how the myth theorists discussed below contribute to the mythic framework presented herein, it is apropos to discuss further the nature of the contextual use of the concepts spiritual and political.

Mythic Framework as Spiritual and Political

By spiritual I am referring to our roots and connections to the essential aspects of living and being human, i.e., our union with the Ultimate, with the inner self, with other persons, with the larger society, and with the natural world. The claim is made here that our lives are not whole in fundamental ways if we do not recognize each of these associations as essential to our understanding of being human. These relationships are spiritual, then, in that they cannot be ignored or severed without dire consequences--death of the person and/or the world. Spiritual connections, then, constitute the "breath" of life in that they represent the cohesiveness and foundation of the essence of life itself. Taken together, these essential relationships constitute what is here referred to as one's spirituality.

While the spiritual aspect of myth works behind myth, emphasizing that the essential wholeness of being human is rooted in spirituality, the political aspect of myth works in front of myth and represents the way we live among people as participants in community and as citizens of the world. The political aspect of life is a demonstration of wisdom as to the most moral way to live one's life among others in community and in recognition of one's spirituality. The word political here denotes a participation in citizenship and community much broader and more comprehensive than that afforded by governmental politics alone. It is, rather, a reference to the totality of the way people choose to live their lives with and among other people and with themselves, a reference to the way we make significant decisions about living as citizens of the world, and a reference to the quality of life that ensues from such decisions.

The framework for the political aspect of living is spiritual. In other words, the ethical and moral aspects of life, the way one chooses right or wrong conduct and establishes one's character, are determined by one's understanding of and participation in spiritual wholeness. Discourse about politics in this paper, then, refers to ethical and moral action. The political realm of life is synonymous with the ethical and moral realm. Acknowledging that ethical, moral, and political decisions are based on significant beliefs about

the world and one's place in it, those decisions are examined here with reference to their spiritual foundations. In essence, people choose to act in certain ways and to live their lives according to certain codes.

The task of education, then, becomes twofold: to examine the spiritual connections, their holistic and individual nature, and to examine the nature of the deliberately lived political life that grows out of such an understanding. At its best political action becomes a moral duty of a preserving and conserving sort. At its worst it becomes action that ignores spiritual roots and is therefore amoral or action which deliberately defies spiritual roots and is therefore immoral. When one considers the alternative to living in recognition of these spiritual roots--death of the person and/or of the world--, political action becomes a profoundly sacred duty and education becomes an entity of the most valuable and necessary kind.

A word about the meaning of conservative and preservative in connection with political duty is in order. Political action as it is spoken of here is preservative in that it seeks to keep the holistic spiritual connections--to the Ultimate, to one's self, to the larger society, to the natural world--intact as viable forces in decision-making. Actions which defy or ignore or sever these connections would be avoided. Political action as it is spoken of here is also

conservative to the extent that it recognizes the importance and immediacy of making decisions based on spiritual understanding. It thus limits itself in quality and in kind to those actions that keep our spirituality from being damaged, lost, or wasted. In a sense, this is an attempt to preserve a tradition, but the tradition being preserved is one far removed from the present culture, which since the Enlightenment seems to have done little to examine what was positive about the spiritual and political nature of life previous to it. It is possible, then, and quite probable that political actions that focus truly on spiritual preservation will be described as liberal in the present culturally conservative climate--and if not, definitely as radical to the degree that those actions will be vastly different in most cases from the norm established by the present culture. For example, projects presently spoken of as monetarily progressive and successful would be examined not with respect to the financial success paradigm but rather with respect to whether those projects would enhance the quality of life on the earth in a life-giving sort of way. Would such-and-such a project contribute to the conservation of the natural resources or destroy them? Would it promote good will among people or would it seek to destroy peace and community? Would the project remind us of our relationship to the Ultimate or promote further the idea of a rootless self-enhancement?

Would it tend to promote individual self-understanding or destroy self-worth?

In the next chapter we will examine the writings of several 20th century myth scholars who provide further insight into myth as spiritual and political/moral and into myth as an educationally viable source of knowledge about our lives. The writings of Jung, Neumann, Campbell, and Eliade are important ones for us as persons seeking to combat alienation and envision more holistic ways to live our lives.

CHAPTER III

CONTEMPORARY MYTHIC PERSPECTIVES AND EDUCATION

Introduction

Of the 20th century scholars of myth, three have been of primary influence in the development of the dual nature of myth discussed here. Erich Neumann, Mircea Eliade, and Joseph Campbell focus their research on what various bodies of myth reveal about our foundations and origins as humans. In reference to the framework described above, these writers attend primarily to the features of the myth metaphor that work behind the myth, or to the realm described as the spiritual nature of myth. Each writer has, however, given specific reference to what I have described as the political realm of myth, or those features that work in front of the myth and are composed of those of our actions which are in turn based on the ways we choose to live our lives--essentially our morality nature, broadly speaking. Each writer expresses a concern that because we in the 20th century have not occupied ourselves with the messages of myth as story--and more broadly as metaphor--we are suffering grave personal and cultural consequences. Each writer feels also that we can and should listen to the spiritual insights and messages of myth in order to improve our political/communal lives.

For Neumann, Eliade, and Campbell, then, myth has profound spiritual as well as political implications at a time in history when, in the main, we conceive of ourselves as severed from our spiritual roots.

The Influence of Carl Jung

To discuss myth seriously without some understanding of the scholarship of Carl Gustav Jung is impossible. Primarily because he saw the unconscious as a more holistic and positive force in personality development than did Sigmund Freud, Jung broke with Freud, a proponent of depth psychology, to become the founder of analytical psychology. Delving more deeply than Freud did into the foundation of myth and symbol for the collective unconscious, Jung put forth the view that the various elements of the personality longed for integration. Jung taught that this wholeness was achieved through a process called individuation.

Jung's work focuses on the concept of the archetype, which has become so significant in the study of myth that it figures into almost all modern scholarship on the subject. According to Jung (see 1958a, pp. 113-131; 1971, pp. 23-46), certain archetypes, or repeated themes, symbols, and images, originate in the collective unconscious and have implications for each of the three levels of the psyche. In essence, Jung distinguishes between the conscious and unconscious and writes that the unconscious is both personal and collective.

Jungian psychology, then, involves a study of the conscious, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious, where archetypes originate.

Jung designates the "I" or the "ego" as the mediator between the inner and outer world and thus of the perceivable world or the conscious. The unconscious, then, is composed of material and perceptions which the ego does not readily comprehend. The personal unconscious is the storehouse of lost memories and concepts or ideas: those the conscious is not yet ready to deal with, either because of the pain that might be associated with their revelation, or because they are not sufficiently developed to have a significant effect on the ego. While the personal unconscious is individually unique, Jung warns that we should be careful not to place undue emphasis on it and chooses instead to make the collective unconscious the pivotal reference in his personality theory.

The collective unconscious, according to Jung, is the storehouse for archetypes and as such is the most powerful influence on personality. The archetypes--basic mythic images and symbols of accumulated experiences from all previous generations of humankind--comprise such representations as hero, earth mother, death, birth and rebirth, unity, child, ultimate or god, and demon. These images, Jung asserts, have a profound influence on the development of personality

and even more complexly play a still more profound role in our collective development as humans.

Because he is interested in self-actualization or individuation, Jung identifies the self, a system composed of all aspects of the unconscious, as a catalyst for the unification of all aspects of the personality. The self, then, works for harmony by seeking to integrate the various levels of the personality. Jung (1958b) writes:

> I have . . . suggested calling the total personality which, though present, cannot be fully known, the self. The ego is, by definition, subordinate to the self and is related to it like a part to the whole. . . . And just as circumstances or outside events happen to us and limit our freedom, so the self acts upon the ego like an objective occurrence which free will can do very little to alter. It is, indeed, well known that the ego not only can do nothing against the self, but is sometimes actually assimilated by unconscious components of the personality that are in the process of development and is greatly altered by them. (p. 4)

Thus, despite the emphasis given the unconscious, particularly the collective unconscious, Jung's primary thrust is on the integration of the total human psyche, the conscious and the unconscious (de Laszlo, 1958, p. xx)--an integration which happens mainly through the medium of the self.

Jungian psychology sets the stage for myth to act as a significant entity in the development of every personality and thus of humankind as a whole. Through his writings on the collective unconscious, Jung establishes that certain archetypes, mythic in nature, appear in the unconscious of all persons, giving a universal quality to personality

development. Thus, by inference, Jung establishes myth/archetype as the single most influential factor in the development of the entire human race.

Referring to archetype--i.e., to myth--as an "as-if" (Jung, 1958a, p. 118), thus claiming the metaphoric quality of the myth archetype, Jung declares that there are severe consequences resulting from attempts to cut ourselves off from archetypal foundations. He writes:

> In reality we can never legitimately cut loose from our archetypal foundations unless we are prepared to pay the price of neurosis, any more than we can rid ourselves of our body and its organs without committing suicide. (p. 120)

Jung expresses concern that if we do not "connect the life of the past that still exists in us with the life of the present, which threatens to slip away from it" (p. 120), we will suffer "a kind of rootless consciousness . . . no longer orientated to the past, a consciousness which succumbs helplessly to all manner of suggestions and is, in fact, susceptible to psychic epidemics" (p. 120). Writing in 1928, Jung in "The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man" expressed this concern about modern men and women:

> Today, ten years after the war, we observe once more the same optimism, the same organizations, the same political aspirations, the same phrases and catchwords at work. How can we but fear that they will inevitably lead to further catastrophes? Agreements to outlaw war leave us skeptical, even while we wish them every possible success. At bottom, behind every palliative measure there is a gnawing doubt. I believe I am not exaggerating when I say that modern man has

> suffered an almost fatal shock, psychologically speaking, and as a result has fallen into profound uncertainty [emphasis added]. (Jung, 1971b, p. 460)

The survival of humankind as a collectivity of positively integrated and functioning beings depends, according to Jung, then, on asserted efforts of the personality to become whole, to work towards individuation--to integrate the conscious and unconscious into a properly functioning psyche. And the key to this positive and proper holistic development of the individual and, therefore, of the human race is the collective unconscious, the myth/archetype level of our psyche, which provides the foundation for our development and keeps us rooted in our humanity.

Erich Neumann: Ethics, Community, Images, Education

> The rediscovery of the human and cultural strata from which these symbols [archetypes] derive is in the original sense of the word "bildend"--"informing." Consciousness thus acquires images (Bilder) and education (Bildung), widens its horizon, and charges itself with contents which constellate a new psychic potential. As the . . . collective human aspect is rediscovered and begins to come alive, new insights, new possibilities of life, add themselves to the narrowly personalistic and rigid personality of the sick-souled modern man. (Neumann, 1954, p. xxiii)

Erich Neumann, a physician and student of C. G. Jung, furthered Jung's implications for the role of myth in analytical psychology by promoting the thesis that the individual consciousness passes through the same mythical, archetypal stages of development as does the history of human consciousness as a whole. Basing his research on the archetypal stages

found in universal mythical stories surrounding the Uroboros, the World Parents and the Hero, Neumann acknowledged and expanded Jung's ideas presented in Psychology and the Unconscious and Psychology of the Child Archetype, both of which expounded on the archetypes or primordial images of the collective unconscious. Neumann (1954), supporting Jung's theory, called these archetypes "pictorial forms of the instincts," because "the unconscious reveals itself to the conscious mind in images which, as in dreams and fantasies, initiate the process of conscious reaction and assimilation" (p. xv).

Neumann's most important work, The Origins and History of Consciousness, published in German in 1949 and in English in 1954, examined in depth the repeated themes and symbols of mythological archetypes and showed their relationship to psychology and to culture. Neumann (1954) states his purpose for the work thus:

> It is the task of this book to show that a series of archetypes is a main constituent of mythology, that they stand in an organic relation to one another, and that the stadial [stage of development] succession determines the growth of consciousness. In the course of this ontogenetic development, the individual ego consciousness has to pass through the same archetypal stages which determined the evolution of consciousness in the life of humanity. . . . As organs of the psyche's structure the archetypes articulate with one another autonomously, like the physical organs, and determine the maturation of the personality in a manner analogous to the biological hormone-components of the physical constitution. (p. xvi)

Obviously adopting an evolutionary (stadial) view of the development of personal and historical consciousness, Neumann shows through his research that myth is the hinge upon which a holistic and healthy development depends.

It is important to note that Neumann is not concerned with the psychology of healthy individuals only, but that he is equally involved in the ramifications of collective psychology and how it figures in the lives of people at this particular time in history. Crediting the mythological archetypes with both describing and prescribing the course of human history, Neumann wrote:

> The relation between the transpersonal and the personal--which plays a decisive role in every human life--is prefigured in human history. . . . Analytical psychology considers the structure of the psyche to be determined by a priori transpersonal dominants--archetypes--which, being essential components and organs of the psyche from the beginning, mold the course of human history. (p. xxi)

The key to healthy development--both personal and collective--according to Neumann, depends on our rootedness and our understanding of the archetypes of the collective unconscious as they are revealed in myth.

While Neumann as an analytical psychologist is dedicated to the study of the healthy psyche, his primary thrust is a social and political one. Neumann (1954) relates his basic mythological research to what he calls the "narrowly personalistic and rigid personality of the sick-souled modern man" (p. xxiii). Neumann believes that the tendency of

modern humankind to reduce all "transpersonal contents to perosnalistic terms is the most extreme form of secondary personalization" (p. 387). When secondary personalization, the assigning to the personal matter belonging to the transpersonal, becomes a generalized phenomenon, the responding culture forms a crisis. When transpersonal forces are devalued, Neumann warns, there results "a dangerous overvaluation of the ego" (p. 388) and a devaluation of "the unconscious forces of which he [Western man] is afraid" (p. 388). Both by overvaluing the ego and by devaluing the "unconscious forces," Western humankind is ignoring the importance of myth in both the personal and transpersonal--and consequently in the culture--areas of life. Neumann, then, believes that the present cultural crisis is a direct consequence of our insistence on severing the unconscious or mythic archetypal level of the personality from the other levels. Proper development can occur only when there is proper fluidity between the conscious and the unconscious within the terms of this relationship set by the collective unconscious. With the present cultural phenomenon in mind, Neumann has described the status of our language and also proposed a "new ethic," based on a positive integration of the unconscious, to replace the old one, which he describes as dangerous.

One area in which Neumann locates the phenomenal display of the crisis of our present civilization is in our language.

Neumann shows how ignoring the importance of the collective unconscious or mythic component of the psyche has led to language that both denigrates the transpersonal and inflates the importance of ego consciousness because of its disengagement from the mythic archetypal level of the psyche. Neumann (1954) describes, for example, our frequent use of "apotropaic defense-magic" in our language in an attempt to explain away and "exorcise anything dangerous with a glib 'nothing but' or 'it's not half as bad as you think'" (p. 388). In this same vein Neumann describes our personalization of the Godhead into the "All-loving and Merciful Father" and the "Eiapopeia of children" while ignoring the "primordial divinity of the Creator and the fierce, infinitely strange, ancestral totem-animal that dwells in the human soul" (p. 388). According to Neumann, this personalization of God also ignores the fact that the Ultimate cannot be known in any absolutely true and final concrete sense.

This manner of describing God, Neumann says, is a rationalization in which the "archetype is elaborated into a concept" (p. 389) disengaged from the collective unconscious. Neumann writes (1954): "The line runs, as we saw, from the archetype as an effective transpersonal figure to the idea, and then to the 'concept' which one 'forms'" (p. 389). With regard to the concept of God, Neumann asserts that our perception of God is now derived "wholly from the sphere of

consciousness" (p. 389). Neumann asserts, however, that such perceptions occur when the ego is "deluded enough to pretend" that it is not responsible to the unconscious for its meaning. Sadly Neumann writes: "There is no longer anything transpersonal, but only personal; there are no more archetypes, but only concepts; no more symbols, only signs" (p. 389).

Here Neumann's concern is close to that of McFague (1982), who in writing about metaphor, model, and concept pointed out the cultural and social fallacies that arise when metaphors, described as close in character to the mythic archetype of the unconscious, become models and are conceptualized into "the only" way of viewing the Kingdom of God. McFague says that to change a "root-metaphor of a paradigm is a basic change, . . . a new religion" (pp. 145-146). Like Neumann, McFague emphasizes that we exist only in relationship and consequently "must use the relationships nearest and dearest to us as metaphors of that which finally cannot be named" (p. 194). Such a use of metaphors, she asserts, prohibits us from "absolutizing any models of God" (p. 194) and leaves open new possibilities for describing the relationship. Both McFague and Neumann recognize the prohibitive quality of language in describing God, especially when the language becomes exclusive, cut off from its roots, nonmetaphorical and nonsymbolic, ignoring the richness of the fact that there is more to the meaning of the Ultimate than can be said--ever.

Neumann does not just leave us with a description of a civilization in crisis. Instead, he draws inferences and suggests solutions for ethics and for living in community. Neumann writes that repression of the collective unconscious, the mythic archetypal level, is a corruption of the compensatory relationship between the conscious and unconscious. He (1954) illuminates the cultural implications of this view this way:

> This splitting off of the unconscious leads on the one hand to an ego life emptied of meaning, and on the other hand to an activation of the deeper-lying layers which, now grown destructive, devastate the autocratic world of the ego with transpersonal invasions, collective epidemics, and mass psychoses [emphasis added]. . . . Even when it is not so acute as to bring on a psychic sickness, the loss of instinct and the overaccentuation of the ego have consequences which, multiplied a millionfold, constellate the crisis of civilization [emphasis added]. (p. 389)

According to Neumann, then, just an overarching, unbalanced emphasis on one level of psychic development, without a focus on the collective unconscious as the basis for development, can lead to an unbalanced cultural phenomenon.

In Depth Psychology and the New Ethic, published in German in 1949 and in English in 1969, Neumann (1969) describes an "old ethic" and offers a solution for our cultural problems through his description of the "new ethic," which he says presupposes the "old ethic" (p. 15). To Neumann the "new ethic" is

> A development and differentiation within the old ethic, confined at present to those uncommon individuals who, driven by unavoidable conflicts of duty, endeavour to bring the conscious and the unconscious into responsible relationship. (p. 15)

Basically, Neumann describes the present world crisis in terms of a collective inability to deal with evil. He (1969) wrote:

> No appeal to old values and ideals can shield us from the recognition that we live in a world in which evil in man is emerging from the depths on a gigantic scale and confronting us all, without exception, with the question: "How are we to deal with this evil?" . . . The phenomenon which brands our epoch is a collective outbreak of the evil in man, on a scale never before manifested in world history. (pp. 25-26)

Primarily Judeo-Christian in origin, the old ethic, according to Neumann, carries with it "an assertion of the absolute character of certain values which are represented by . . . moral 'oughts'" (p. 33). Neumann describes the old ethic as taking certain positive, dominant symbols like the saint or wise man and perceiving these values or symbols as "codifiable and transmittable values which govern human conduct in a 'universal' manner" (p. 33).

With the above assertion Neumann moved to what he believes to be the heart of the problem with the old ethic: the denial of the negative. He (1969) wrote:

> It is always held that the ideal of perfection can and ought to be realised by the elimination of those qualities which are incompatible with this perfection. The "denial of the negative," its forcible and systematic exclusion, is a basic feature of this ethic. . . . (pp. 33-34)

Neumann asserts that the "denial of the negative" has taken hold through two methods--suppression and repression. Suppression is the "deliberate elimination by ego-consciousness of all those characteristics and tendencies in the personality which are out of harmony with the ethical value" (p. 34), while repression causes the

> excluded contents and components of the personality which run counter to the dominant ethical value [to] lose their connection with the conscious system and become unconscious or forgotten--that is to say, the ego is entirely unaware of their existence. (p. 35)

While suppression and repression are distinguished by a line which is indeed finely drawn, a further distinction can be made: "Repressed contents, unlike those suppressed, are withdrawn from the control of consciousness and function independently of it" (p. 35). The conscious mind, then, is aware of suppressed factors while it is unaware of repressed phenomena.

The consequences of both suppression and repression, however, are devastating to the human mind and to the culture. Neumann (1969)) describes it thus:

> This split between the world of ethical values in the conscious mind and a value-negating, anti-ethical world in the unconscious which has to be suppressed or repressed generates guilt feelings in the human psyche and accumulations of blocked energies in the unconscious. Naturally, these are now hostile to the conscious attitude, and when they finally burst their dams they are capable of transforming the course of human history into an unprecedented orgy of destruction [emphasis added].
>
> The old ethic must be held responsible not only for the denial of the shadow side but also for the

> creation of the resultant split, the healing of which is now of crucial importance for the future of humanity. (p. 58)

Neumann plaes some emphasis on this split resulting from the old ethic and asserts that "the further progress of mankind will . . . depend . . . on whether it proves possible to prevent the occurrence of this splitting process in the collective psyche" (p. 58).

Referring to the healing which becomes necessary to prevent the destruction of humankind, Neumann characteristically describes the need to reestablish the relationship between the unconscious and the conscious, the collective and the individual. He writes that while the

> ultimate aspiration of the old ethic was partition, differentiation and dichotomy, as formulated in the mythological projection of the Last Judgement under the image of the separation of the sheep from the goats, the good from the evil, the ideal of the new ethic . . . is the <u>combination of the opposites in a unitary structure</u> [emphasis added]. . . . The aim of the new ethic is the achievement of wholeness, of the totality of the personality. (pp. 101-102)

It is important under the new ethic for persons to be psychologically <u>autonomous</u> rather than <u>good</u>. This shift in emphasis from goodness to autonomy is a significant one to the extent that it signals a change in focus from "outside" values to "inside" conversation with one's own psyche. This wholeness that one must achieve in order to establish "the basis for creative processes which give birth to new values" (p. 103) is acquired through centroversion--Neumann's

description of the "glue" that seeks to build integration in the personality by bringing and holding together both good and evil.

Neumann relates the necessity in the new ethic of "doing evil" to the classic development of the archetypal hero, who must commit certain crimes--such as murder of the primal parents--in order to liberate the ego and grow to maturity. Not committing such a crime symbolically leads to the "retarded development" of the individual who chooses to continue to be a "good child" at the expense of the sacrifice of maturity and independence in later life (pp. 104-105). Maturity and independence, then, are bought at the expense of good behavior.

At the same time the individual must assimilate "evil" for proper development, s/he must also experience dangers unprotected by the "bulwark of any kind of convention" (p. 106) as provided for within the old ethic. In other words, Neumann writes,

> It is no longer possible for the individual to retain his balance simply by clinging to the traditional law; the result of this may be disturbances and distortions in development which ancient man--and in fact any mythological view of the world which knows the transpersonal powers as gods--would have interpreted as "Aphrodite's revenge." (p. 106)

Calling for a shift away from looking to the outside culture for behavioral codes to looking into one's own psyche for guidance for each and every moral issue, Neumann

recognizes the uncertainty involved with such a radical change from the norm of the old ethic. He (1969) writes:

> To surrender the moral certainty about good and evil provided by the old ethic, stamped as it was with the approval of the collective, and to accept the ambiguity of the inner experience is always a difficult undertaking for the individual, since in every case it involves a venture into the unknown, with all the danger which the acceptance of evil brings with it for every responsible ego. (p. 108)

Though Neumann acknowledges that one person may consider certain factors and situations evil while another may not (p. 107), he is more concerned that "the share of evil 'allotted' to an individual by his constitution or personal fate . . . be worked through and deliberately endured by him" (p. 110). Further, Neumann clarifies the nature of good and evil by stating that the "acknowledgement of one's own evil is 'good'" but to try to "transcend the limits of the good which is actually available and possible--is 'evil'" (p. 114). One must, according to Neumann, by accepting evil, "accept the world and himself" as well as the "dangerous double nature which belongs to them both" (p. 117). In the final analysis, Neumann declares the following formulation of values of good and evil for the new ethic:

> Whatever leads to wholeness is "good"; whatever leads to splitting is "evil." Integration is good, disintegration is evil. Life, constructive tendencies and integration are on the side of good; death, splitting and disintegration are on the side of evil. . . . Our estimate of ethical values is no longer concerned with contents, qualities or actions considered as "entities"; it is related functionally to the whole. Whatever helps that wholeness which is centered on the

> self towards integration is "good," irrespective of the nature of this helping factor. And, vice versa, whatever leads to disintegration is "evil"--even if it is "good will," "collectively sanctioned values" or anything else "intrinsically good." (p. 127)

Thus, the new ethic is individualistic in its task but also and equally collective in that by bringing on the stability of the individual psychic structure, it contributes to the whole, the collective. As Neumann wrote:

> It is becoming clear that, although different archetypal constellations may be dominant or recessive among different nations and races at different times, the human species is nevertheless one and indivisible in the basic structure of its mind. . . . (p. 135)

That is to say the human species is one in its archetypal collective unconscious.

Because the new ethic assumes communication and cohesion between the conscious and unconscious and between the individual and the collective, it is interesting to note Neumann's handling of collective guilt. The old ethic provided for scapegoats, for the individual elimination of evil by projection onto weaker persons; the new ethic provides for the sharing of collective guilt where "the individual assumes personal responsibility for part of the burden of the collective, and he decontaminates this evil by integrating it into his own inner process of transformation" (p. 130). Most starkly, however, Neumann talks about collective social guilt resulting from the Nazi rule by declaring that "the murdered are also guilty--not only the murderer" (p. 26). He continues:

> Those who saw and failed to act, those who looked away because they did not want to see, those who did not see although they could have seen, and those, too, whose eyes were unable to see--each and every one of these is actually in alliance with evil. We are all guilty--all peoples, all religions, all nations, all classes. Humanity itself is guilty [emphasis added]. (p. 26)

This collective guilt, characteristic of the new ethic, can work to aid individuals in finding "an inner liberation of the collective, which in part at least is redeemed from this evil" (p. 130). Neumann's psychic wholeness, then, leads to both personal and collective acceptance and integration of guilt and this acceptance and incorporation pay off, in turn, in psychic wholeness and health both individually and collectively.

This cohesive good-evil view also attempts to correct the aforementioned skewed view of the Godhead, for now the Godhead can be accepted as the creator who "made light and darkness, good and evil" and humans can perceive themselves as paradoxical totalities in "which the opposites are linked together as they are in the Godhead" (Neumann, 1969, p. 147). And, according to Neumann, only when "the creative interrelationship of light and shadow is accepted and lived as the foundation of this world--is life in this world truly possible for men" (p. 147). At this point only, Neumann writes, will "the unity of creation and of human existence escape destruction by that disastrous rift which threatens the future of the human race" [emphasis added] (p. 147). It is

here and only here that Neumann sees any hope for the survival of the race. By liberating the Godhead from the good-only conception, he has again made available the view of the Godhead as greater than we can comprehend. The Godhead can now be approached, not in concretized conceptual form, but rather in symbolic and metaphorical language--language that calls forth far greater images and analogies, symbols more in keeping with the more comprehensive view of Godhead called for within the new ethic.

In a paper on educational discourse, one cannot neglect to note that Neumann (1954) recognized the significnce of two factors for consciousness--images or bilder and education or bildung (see epigraph above) (p. xxiii). Referring to the German derivatives, he shows that he knew that to change the consciousness of humankind meant focusing on and bringing forth the images of the unconscious. Both the images (bilder) and education (bildung) are informing (bildend). Essentially education, derived in English from the Latin root educare, means "to lead or draw out." Used in the context of Neumann's scholarship, it means to lead or draw out those images or archetypes which can properly inform our consciousness so that we no longer exist as "sick-souled" persons. Drawing out the archetypes and images is a tremendous burden for education but at the same time a proper one in light of our present cultural situation. The question remains, then, How

can persons primarily concerned with education inform or draw out these images or archetypes for the conscious mind?

Mircea Eliade: Sacred History, Initiation, Education, Literature

> Myths lead us into a world that cannot be described but only "narrated," for it consists in the history of acts freely undertaken, of unforeseeable decisions, of fabulous transformations, and the like. (Eliade, 1958, p. xv)

> It is not surprising that critics are increasingly attracted by the religious implications, and especially by the initiatory symbolism, of modern literary works. Literature plays an important part in contemporary civilization. . . . Hence it is only natural that modern man should seek to satisfy his suppressed . . . needs by reading certain books that . . . contain mythological figures camouflaged as contemporary characters and offer initiatory scenarios in the guise of everyday happenings. (Eliade, 1958, pp. 134-135)

Mircea Eliade, long-time professor of the history of religions at the University of Chicago, has written widely about mythic patterns, especially as they reveal themselves in the rituals of primitive peoples. Primarily focusing on myth-ritual and the Jungian archetypes, Eliade, through his research, found myth to be a revelation of sacred time and space and saw in the sacred history of myths a critical outline for the conduct of everyday life. For Eliade (1984) myth revealed "truth par excellence" (p. 138). Taking into account "the mythology in its totality" and the "scale of values which such mythology implicitly or explicitly proclaims" (p. 140), Eliade saw myth as having the paradigmatic function of justifying "the existence of the world, of man

and of society" (p. 141). He (1959) wrote: "Hence the supreme function of the myth is to 'fix' the paradigmatic models of all rites and all significant human activities--eating, sexuality, work, education, and so on" (p. 95). Myth seen as sacred history, then, is paradigmatic in that it "relates how things came to be . . . [and] lays the foundations for all human behavior and all social and cultural institutions" (pp. x-xi).

Eliade found too that myth manifests itself differently in traditional societies than in modern societies. Of traditional people Eliade (1958) found that they perceived themselves to be "created and civilized by Supernatural Beings" and consequently believed that the sum of their behavior and activities belonged to sacred history and that this history had to be "carefully preserved and transmitted intact to succeeding generations" (p. xi). Basically, primitive peoples gained their identity from the belief that "at the dawn of Time, certain things happened to . . . [them], the things narrated by the myths" (1958, p. xi). So traditional peoples saw themselves as the "end product of a mythical history, that is, of a series of events that took place in illo tempore, at the beginning of Time" (1958, p. xi). To the traditional people, then, everything significant, creative and powerful that has ever happened took place "in the beginning, in the Time of the myths" (1958, p. xi). Outwardly and inwardly,

traditional peoples lived their lives closely associated with myth and relied on myth to tell them what it meant to be human both individually and communally.

Eliade (1958) wrote about modern peoples very differently. By his account, modern people consider themselves historical beings "contituted by the whole history of humanity" (p. xi) and, further, consider the "history that precedes [them to be] a purely human work" (p. xi). What is more, according to Eliade, they feel that they have the "power to continue [history] and perfect it indefinitely" (p. xi). Eliade recognized that modern humankind's absorption with history is itself connected with the view that humans can manipulate and create it. Eliade (1960) wrote, "As it has often been said, the anxiety [emphasis added] of modern man is obscurely linked to the awareness of his historicity, and this, in its turn, discloses the anxiety of confronting Death and Non-being" (p. 235). For modern peoples influenced by the Enlightenment, then, there is no deliberate outward or inward acknowledgment of myth as a viable entity in the living of everyday life. Eliade points to this shift from an emphasis on religion and spirituality to an emphasis on the individual as the controlling force and prime mover in both the broad sweep of history and the ordinary living that makes up its daily accounts. He asserts, however, that though there is no outward involvement with myth

apparent in the lives of modern peoples, a Jungian-type involvement with myth does appear to the extent that modern humankind has a deep and problematic curiosity regarding history, time, death and nonbeing, a social feature that does not appear in the lives of traditional peoples.

Further pointing up the differences between traditional and modern peoples on the subject of myth is the place of initiation in the societies of both. Initiation ceremonies were extremely important in ancient societies, serving as they did as the education young people received in what it meant to be mature males and females in a given community. According to Eliade (1958), the male generally passed through a ceremony or series of ceremonies involving a symbolic death and resurrection--death to the life of youth and resurrection/re-creation into maturity as a grown male, now a member of the society. Initiation ceremonies taught the males everything they needed to know about functioning as mature persons and at the same time connected this knowledge to the beginning of time, to the sacred beginnings. For females, the education passed on through initiation ceremonies centered on the sacred mysteries of being female and as such of being primarily in charge of creation and birth and fertility. To both males and females was presented the notion of creation and/or procreation, the significance of which had been revealed in the beginning, during sacred time. So the living

of mature lives had a sacred base: the spiritual aspect of myth was revealed and the political aspect of myth was mandated in these ceremonies.

For modern peoples there are no more sacred initiation ceremonies on the order of those of primitive peoples. There are remnants, like New Year's Eve celebrations and graduation ceremonies and the dedications of newborn children, left among our societies. Still there are no ceremonies to teach us what it means to be an adult male or female in the modern world. There are no sacred ceremonies which teach us about our spirituality; there are no prescriptions for political behavior based on the sacred understanding of life. Eliade is right in his assessment of our anxiety--it is the result of not knowing what we are or what we can become or even where we are from.

For us there is no education about sacred matters and education does not serve in an initiatory capacity of the sort described above. We live in anomie, separated from our sacred roots and connections and groping for meaning in life and death. Judged against the standards and dimensions of the ancient conception we also are not mature, since for them maturity included a sense of the sacred. We suffer anxiety because we are not educated about our sacred roots, about our spirituality. We avoid maturity because it has nothing to offer in a world that promotes youth and avoids

the old. Maturity gives us no prescriptions for conduct; no promise of procreation or life. It represents, instead, a nearness of death in its most unmeaning form--nothingness. Maturity reminds us that age means death and death means nonbeing.

The question that surfaces in reading Eliade is this: Where can we find the true, sacred, and applicable mythic foundation so that we can begin addressing the value of the question of meaning and maturity for our own modern lives? With respect to Eliade's research, this also seems to be the question for education. Eliade writes that modern humankind can find myth in narrative and in literary works (1958, p. xv, and pp. 134-135). It is here that "modern man . . . [can] satisfy his suppressed . . . needs" and find "mythological figures camouflaged as contemporary characters and offer initiatory scenarios in the guise of everyday happenings" (1958, pp. 134-135). Northrop Frye and others have carried out this interest in literature through their Jungian critical interpretations. (See Anatomy of Criticism, 1957; "New Directions from Old," 1959; and "Archetypes of Literature," 1975.)

For the purposes of this study, then, Eliade serves to point out the differences between traditional and modern societies with regard to their views of the importance of myth for their individual and communal lives. He is able to

demonstrate that modern humankind is separated from myth but still shows a connection to it in the longing to understand history, the involvement in making it, and the anxiety about temporality. Also, Eliade points out that modern literature shows us the unconscious side of ourselves and reveals myth to us. Consequently the study of literature for modern humankind is terribly important.

Joseph Campbell: Hero as Spiritual Healer

> The modern hero-deed [emphasis added] must be that of questing to bring to light again the lost Atlantis of the co-ordinated soul. Obviously, this work cannot be wrought by turning back, or away, from what has been accomplished by the modern revolution; for the problem is nothing if not that of rendering the modern spiritually significant [emphasis added]--or rather . . . nothing if not that of making it possible for men and women to come to full human maturity through the conditions of contemporary life. (1968, p. 388)

> The old teachers knew what they were saying. Once we have learned to read again their symbolic language, it requires no more than the talent of an anthologist to let their teaching be heard. (1968, p. vii)

For many years a member of the literature faculty of Sarah Lawrence College, Joseph Campbell has long been one of the more prolific and popular writers and lecturers on myth in contemporary society. Among the many works to his credit are The Hero with a Thousand Faces (1949), which presents an outline of the composite hero, and the four-volume work The Masks of God (1959-68) which contains volumes on primitive, oriental, occidental, and creative mythology. Campbell's concern is with the condition of modern societies

and the involvement of modern peoples in myth, which he sees as containing essential instruction for productive living. His own study of mythology led him to write about the monomyth (a term borrowed from James Joyce's Finnegans Wake) of the hero, for him a type of model savior of the modern world.

In an interview just before his death (in November of 1987), Campbell outlined his basic views regarding myth and gave a definition of mythology as a collection of metaphors or "an organization of symbolic images and narratives metaphorical of the possibility of human experience and fulfillment in a given culture at a given time" (Abrams, 1987, p. B8). Campbell warns, however, that mythic symbols should never be taken as absolute truth, for "when you're dealing with these symbolic forms . . . the ultimate reference is beyond all categories of human thought" (p. B8). Campbell goes on to talk about the content of mythology thus:

> The themes that myths have to deal with don't change, and those themes are human life--the transformation of childhood into adulthood, the psychology of dependency transformed into one of self-responsible judgment and action. And then the whole business of passing away instead of lasting forever.
>
> These are the things the myth has to deal with, but it has to deal with them now in terms of a contemporary, scientifically interpreted universe and a society that is in flux instead of one that is static. (Abrams, 1987, p. B8)

One of Campbell's central critical insights is this: while there is no competition between mythic and scientific knowing in post-Enlightenment thought, to suppress mythic knowing is

tragic and eventuates in psychosis and the advent of unhealthy societies (see 1972, pp. 1-18). This position brings him into line with those theologians who espouse the view that there is no conflict between science and religion.

In the essay "Schizophrenia--the Inward Journey," from Myths to Live By (1972), Campbell outlines his concern for raising children in the contemporary world. He feels that parents have to face the problem of certainty with regard to whether the "signals which they are imprinting on their young are such as will attune them to, and not alienate them from, the world in which they are going to have to live" (p. 220). Campbell feels that young people should be able to align themselves "constructively with . . . [the culture's] progressive, decent, life-fostering, and fructifying elements" (p. 220). He (1972) writes:

> And so we have this critical problem, as I say, this critical problem as human beings, of seeing to it that the mythology . . . that we are communicating to our young will deliver directive messages qualified to relate them richly and vitally to the environment that is to be theirs for life, and not to some period of man already past, some piously desiderated future, or--what is worst of all--some querulous, freakish sect or momentary fad. And I call this problem critical because, when it is badly resolved, the result for the miseducated individual is what is known, in mythological terms, as a Waste Land situation. (pp. 220-221)

Campbell's concern for the proper education of youth is profound to precisely the degree that he sees what miseducation has done to the adults in our world.

In The Hero with a Thousand Faces (1968) Campbell describes a kind of immaturity existing in our society that proceeds from the refusal to acknowledge myth as a spiritual aid in our individual and social development. He explains that "we [as adults] remain fixated to the unexorcised images of our infancy, and hence disinclined to the necessary passages of our adulthood" (p. 11). Campbell (1968) becomes impassioned in his description of the American aversion to aging:

> There is even a pathos of inverted emphasis: the goal is not to grow old, but to remain young; not to mature away from Mother, but to cleave to her. And so, while husbands are worshiping at their boyhood shrines, being the lawyers, merchants, or masterminds their parents wanted them to be, their wives, even after fourteen years of marriage and two fine children produced and raised, are still on the search for love--which can come to them only from the centaurs, . . . and other concupiscent incubi of the rout of Pan, either as in the second of the above-recited dreams, or as in our popular, vanilla-frosted temples of the venereal goddess, under the make-up of the latest heroes of the screen. (pp. 11-12)

Without a proper integration of myth into the modern lives of humankind, then, Campbell sees the possibility of individuals and societies that are schizophrenic and immature--of a world where people are "cut-off," where the "individual is thrown back on himself" (1972, p. 221).

There is hope in this situation if we look at the hero, the subject of Campbell's "monomyth" or primary myth of significance for our development into mature persons participating fully and positively in the world. In The Hero with a

Thousand Faces, Campbell examines the mythologies of many societies in an effort to develop a composite view of the hero and his journey through life. Campbell writes that the usual path of the "mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation--initiation--return: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth" (1968, p. 30). Campbell's entire composite of the hero is cited below for later reference:

> The mythological hero, setting forth from his commonday hut or castle is lured, carried away, or else voluntarily proceeds, to the threshold of adventure. There he encounters a shadow presence that guards the passage. The hero may defeat or conciliate this power and go alive into the kingdom of the dark (brother-battle, dragon-battle; offering, charm), or be slain by the opponent and descend in death (dismemberment, crucifixion). Beyond the threshold, then, the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten him (tests), some of which give magical aid (helpers). When he arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward. The triumph may be represented as the hero's sexual union with the goddess-mother of the world (sacred marriage), his recognition by the father-creator (father atonement), his own divinization (apotheosis), or again--if the powers have remained unfriendly to him--his theft of the boon he came to gain (bride-theft, fire-theft); intrinsically it is an expansion of consciousness and therewith of being (illumination, transfiguration, freedom). The final work is that of the return. If the powers have blessed the hero, he now sets forth under their protection (emissary); if not, he flees and is pursued (transformation flight, obstacle flight). At the return threshold the transcendental powers must remain behind; the hero re-emerges from the kingdom of dread (return, resurrection). The boon that he brings restores the world (elixir) [all above emphasis added]. (1968, pp. 245-246)

In addition to the summary above, Campbell provides a diagrammatic summary which appears here as an appendix.

The primary importance of the hero for this study lies in Campbell's observation that the "hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (p. 30). This boon is in the form of spiritual understanding of the world and what it means to be human living in the world. Thus the hero becomes a role model, a character to be emulated in the quest for maturity.

It is worth noting that the hero does not achieve stature without making a necessary transit through a series of great ordeals; this suffering follows the break with the "home" he has always known. These ordeals--which model the initiation ceremonies of primitive societies--signal the fact that the hero, spiritually transmogrified, is now a new being ready to live with the wisdom he has gained through survival of the ordeals necessary for adulthood.

The hero, then, is a spiritual model as well as a political model in that he has lived and continues to live the life of one who knows firsthand the significance of his connections to the ultimate, to the created world, to his fellow humankind and to himself, and who acts accordingly.

One point Campbell does not make but which can be made from a reading of his discourse on the hero is that maturity comes with discomfort and at great price. Very much to the

contrary, we in the Western world--and particularly in the United States--expect great rewards and respect, and recognition and status, to come easily, without trial or hardship and without sacrifice. Campbell's composite hero points out that great reward comes only through great sacrifice and trial. Certainly the example of the hero would not be a popular one in the modern world.

About the present-day hero Campbell (1968) writes:

> The modern hero, the modern individual who dares to heed the call and seek the mansion of that presence with whom it is our whole destiny to be atoned, cannot, indeed must not, wait for his community to cast off its slough of pride, fear, rationalized avarice, and sanctified misunderstanding. . . . It is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse [emphasis added]. And so every one of us shares the supreme ordeal--carries the cross of the redeemer--not in the bright moments of his tribe's great victories, but in the silences of his personal despair. (p. 391)

And Campbell thinks there is hope that we will, eventually, choose to find heroes who are spiritually and politically exemplary of holistic living. He (1972) writes, "Whenever men have looked for something solid on which to found their lives, they have chosen, not the facts in which the world abounds, but the myths of an immemorial imagination" (p. 20).

Implications

Neumann, Eliade, and Campbell have all acknowledged the significance of contemporary personal and social crises--the results of our disengagement from the spiritual aspect of

our lives--that have far-reaching consequences, both personal and social, for the ways we conduct our political affairs. Neumann has called on us to look for those images in the collective unconscious that can educate us about what it means to be centroverted (psychically mature) individuals operating in society under the rules of the "new ethic"--that is, integrating both the good and the necessary bad into our lives so that, in becoming mature both individually and socially, we can prevent the sort of perverse social disasters that have arisen in the past from the repression and suppression of archetypal images.

Eliade recognizes that we lack the significant initiation ceremonies and events that define individual and social adult roles for us and educate us about what those roles entail. He observes, too, that while many claim to live lives primarily profane in nature, remnants of our sacred lives still emerge to remind us that we really are sacred by nature. Eliade believes that these sacred symbols and events--which remain in our lives and, at times, appear unexpectedly--come from the collective unconscious to remind us of our sacred nature. To deny this is to admit to our alienation from the sacred.

Campbell, too, is conscious of the lack of the spiritual in our lives, but also of the great need for a particular kind of spirituality--one that will emerge in the form

of a hero who can "save us" and make our lives significant again by teaching us the nature of the spiritual and giving it direct meaning for our lives. Campbell sees the hero as the composite need of all humankind for a spiritual leader to provide a kind of spiritual glue for our lives through deeds of a heroic nature. Campbell's hero, Eliade's traditional ceremonies, and Neumann's idea of centroversion all teach the concept of maturity from the perspective of connection to the spiritual and sacred aspects of our lives. Only within that framework can we participate in the political action of positive community effectively as preservers and conservers of the positive connections we have to the ultimate, to ourselves, to others and to the natural world.

Each writer sees that a solution to this culturally and personally defined alienation can come only through a necessary reconnection to the mythic aspect of our nature, that is, to our spiritual roots. For cultures, societies, and communities to become positive places for people to live, those people must rediscover for themselves their personal spiritual foundations--their connections to the ultimate, the community, the inner self, and nature.

The primary implications for education, then, come from the idea that we are alienated from our spiritual nature as persons and as a society, but also that this alienation must be alleviated if we are to <u>survive</u> as individuals and

as a society. So the task of education is to teach us how to survive holistically in connection with our spiritual roots--that is, in positive relationship with the ultimate, with our inner lives, with the community and the natural world--and as persons who act politically and morally to preserve these spiritual roots for the continuation of our race and world.

Each of the above theorists has indicated means by which education could serve as a force for reestablishing the connections necessary to preserving our foundation as holistic persons in a healthy society--with positive political missions for the preservation and conservation of our society and culture. Neumann, concerned with the "narrowly personalistic and rigid personality of the sick-souled modern man" (1954, p. xxiii), calls for a rediscovery of the "strata" from which the mythic archetypes of our existence emerge. To begin with, to become conscious of those images necessary to alleviate our "soul-sickness," we must first make contact with these images through education. An education that would bring forward these archetypes or images is, according to Neumann, alive with "new psychic potential" for a new life, one without the cultural atrocities committed in the past. While Neumann would most likely promote dream study and depth counseling as a primary means of discovering these mythic images that he finds to be so important for our education

as well as our growth as persons, Eliade hints at a more accessible text for education in general. Eliade feels that the mythic images available in narrative, in the stories of "acts freely undertaken, of unforeseeable decisions, of fabulous transformations, and the like" (p. xv) are instrumental in helping modern man attune himself to his mythic heritage. He asserts, too, that literature plays an important "part in contemporary civilization" and that it is here that modern man can go to "satisfy his suppressed . . . needs" (1958, pp. 134-135). Thus Eliade promotes story and literature as matrices for the mythic archetypes and images of the spiritual aspects of our lives.

Campbell, a professor of literature, has carried this definition of the role of literature the farthest by pointing out the particular image he feels can amost readily educate us about the spiritual. The hero, whom he finds to be both spiritual and political hero, perfectly combines spiritual connection with proper preserving and conserving political action. The essential mythic images, then, if we are to listen to these three theorists, can be found by seeking those mythic archetypes of images in literature and story that focus on the life of a hero who combines effectively spiritual and political life. The discovery of these images Neumann calls education.

If we accept the premise that these archetypes of the collective unconscious are so important for education, then

this question remains: How are we to approach these images in educational discourse? How can we get at these images so that we can talk about their importance?

In the next chapter we will examine the possibility of developing a pedagogy of myth through the example of an analysis of a powerful narrative.

CHAPTER IV

ESTABLISHING CANON: MYTHIC FRAMEWORK AND EXEGESIS

Both the spiritual and the political features of myth presented herein are essential to the alleviation of alienation experienced by contemporary people. This study indicates that personal and social alienation can be combatted through a reconnection to mythic images and symbols buried in our collective unconscious. To live a life of meaning, then, in which the valuable lessons of myth carry over into our social lives, we must be able to call up and rely on images, and thus language, which perpetuate discourse about these aspects of our lives, which are no less important for remaining obscured much of the time. In other words, we must have means of expression regarding the most important concerns we have, regarding those concerns of ultimate importance. Without a mechanism for such expression, our most crucial concerns about issues of ultimate importance will continue to be suppressed in our conversations, in our most personal actions, and in our social decisions.

Education must teach that living meaningfully involves operating in the spiritual and political realms at the same time. It is not possible to live a meaningful life by operating in the spiritual realm only, cut off from the world

of politics and morality, any more than it is possible to participate meaningfully in political and moral life while cut off from spiritual existence. Further, to attempt to lead a life cut off from either realm is both spiritually devastating and politically and morally dangerous.

In an age when we experience fragmentation and alienation both personally and socially, especially at a time when we so desperately seek wholeness for our lives, it is imperative that we as educators find ways not only of using the mythic dimension as a critique of our present situation in education but of reforming what it is we do and talk about in our attempts at educating whole persons for living in a healthy society.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine further the nature, scope, and focus of the mythic framework here described with the goal of characterizing an educational canon that will serve to diminish alienation and promote holistic living and community. Myth operates at the juncture where we become grounded in the essential nature of our spiritual and political/moral connections. Persons who "buy into" this framework, to use Ricoeur's (1978) terminology (p. 240), essentially repent in the sense of choosing to change their lives, to operate on different ground. New life focuses on the living out of the interconnectedness of the spiritual and political dimensions, and on the

participation in the process of continuing to discover the richness of meaning of the mythic framework for our personal and social living. The problem for education, then, is two-fold: the canon must be, first, located, and then "called out" for characterization.

If we call on the suggestions of Neumann, Eliade, and Campbell in Chapter III, it seems reasonable to rely upon their indications that for modern persons myth is available in narrative, that is, in story of significant meaning. For this reason, this chapter examines a story from the mythic perspective for its political and spiritual implications in an attempt to discover elements of myth within it and to characterize further the canon for educational discourse revealed in myth. It is my contention that there is an existing and accessible canon for myth; there are, as well, existing methods for discovering mythic elements in literature.

Myth as Significant Narrative

While Eliade (1958, 1960) and Campbell (1968, 1972) primarily examine the narratives and stories of traditional and ancient peoples, both men express the belief that mythic elements can be found in modern writings, too. It is my present contention that mythic elements like those described in Chapter III, which identify a preoccupation with the spiritual and political features of life, can be found in both

ancient and modern narrative. These narratives can be about gods and goddesses or about the ins and outs, the everyday trials, of living with one's self and with others. These narratives can have a religious bent to them, can have religious symbolism in them, but can also be about events and happenings considered nonreligious or profane in nature. Eliade's concept of the sacred and the profane proposes a perspective here which suggests that, though the stories may appear to be profane in nature, they are also equally sacred since the profane is nothing more than a response to the sacred, which exists a priori.

The stories that could be chosen for studies from the perspective of mythic framework are mainly those stories that present situations calling for action and those that present and examine narrative about ways of living in the world. The stories are those which "grab" us for reasons not always readily apparent. Usually, therefore, the story "calls" us to read it again and again, with further meaning revealed each time. Often such a story will not "let us go." Its psychic hold is such that it pushes itself into our consciousness at strange times--in the supermarket, when we are reading other stories, in dreams, at the dinner table. In essence the stories, though they may seem ordinary, are ones which when examined can call forth extraordinary insight about the meaning of everyday living.

In this discussion myth has been identified as metaphor in the sense that it has been characterized as having the ability to call forth meaning about what is and also what is not, and to create a tension with its images (McFague, 1982). Here myth is described as operating in much the same way that Ricoeur (1978) describes the workings of parables:

> Parables are radically profane stories. There are no gods, no demons, no angels, no miracles, no time before time, as in the creation stories, not even founding events as in the Exodus account. Nothing like that, but precisely people like us. . . in a word, ordinary people doing ordinary things: selling and buying, letting down a net into the sea, and so on. (p. 239)

Ricoeur goes on to say that the focus of the parable is on that plot which contains a paradox: while the stories appear to be "narratives of normalcy," they are, on the other hand, descriptions of the extraordinary--the Kingdom of God (pp. 239-240). According to Ricoeur--and this is the way McFague describes the prophets, too--parables ask us to think metaphorically rather than conceptually. Ricoeur (1978) describes it this way:

> The Gospel says nothing about the Kingdom of Heaven, except that it is like. . . . It does not say what it is, but what it looks like. This is hard to hear. Because all our scientific training tends to use images only as provisory devices and to replace images by concepts. We are invited here to proceed the other way. And to think according to a mode of thought which is not metaphorical for the sake of rhetoric, but for the sake of what it has to say. . . . No translation in abstract language is offered, only the violence of a language which, from the beginning to the end, thinks through the Metaphor and never beyond. The power of this language is that it abides to the end within the tension created by the images. (p. 242)

Stories chosen for the mythic heuristic process, then, should be those which in their normalcy can act as metaphor for what is apparent, what is hidden as well as what could be missing.

Ricoeur (1978) and McFague (1982) make another point, which serves as a cautionary note: no metaphor is in itself a complete description of the phenomenon being examined. Therefore, while a particular parable might give insight about the Kingdom of Heaven, no parable has the capability of giving the complete insight. And while a powerful metaphor like God the father might call up significant insight about the Kingdom of God, it becomes suppressive in itself when it is the only metaphor used to describe the kingdom. Likewise, one story cannot have the power to describe adequately the mythic framework presented here; but significant stories can provide depth of insight in a metaphorical context.

One last, but important, tenet might be noted briefly in this description of myth as significant narrative. If we are to accept Joseph Campbell's (1968) assertion, the story must present at least one significant character who can serve as the hero called into action and placed in the position of having value-ridden choices to make.

Myth will be sought, then, in stories of significance to the extent that they: continually "call" for our attention to their various facets; may or may not deal overtly with the sacred; can work metaphorically, using ordinary

events and persons to call forth extraordinary comparisons; and present a protagonist who can be considered the hero.

I have chosen to offer an exegesis of the ancient story of Ruth in this chapter as an example of the heuristic process and therefore of the way we might get at the spiritual and political mythic images in narrative. I chose the story of Ruth precisely because for years this story has "haunted" me in the ways suggested above. I could as easily have chosen Flannery O'Connor's "The Displaced Person" or Katherine Anne Porter's "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" for this study since both of these stories also examine events in the everyday lives of people attempting to live with others. Both stories call up images of spiritual connections and resulting political and moral responses. And also these stories are accessible. The story of Ruth, however, provides a further richness for this discussion in that Ruth possesses heroic and mythic qualities of a greater degree than the protagonists of the other two stories.

The story of Ruth of the Hebrew scriptures is a story of female friendship and one little discussed in commentaries on Hebrew scriptures in general, and in writings about women of the Hebrew scriptures in particular, because Ruth is not felt to be characteristic of the other women presented in the scriptures. (See Nunnally-Cox, 1981; Swidler, 1979; Trible, 1978).

The Heuristic Process and Exegetic Method: Mythic Textual Criticism

Since we are dealing with narrative in this study, literary, or in this case specifically textual, criticism seems to be one of the best methods of examining the story chosen. Textual criticism is primarily a hermeneutic method that seeks to get at the meaning of a piece of literature. With literary criticism there is generally a particular perspective from which the critic works and which determines how the critic "goes at" the text. Consequently, the meaning of the text is colored and shaped by the method and perspective of the critic. Nevertheless, there is a resulting interpretation that lends itself to discourse about the text and the worth of the text for our lives. Biblical textual exegesis is a critical analysis of a word, passage, or entire text with reference to the biblical source itself as well as to the means of "leading out" or "guiding out" of the source's meaning. Exegetic work also implies a particular perspective from which the critic works and which determines the kinds of examinations the exegete performs on the text. Biblical exegetes use a literary text, primarily, but also, generally, a great deal of historical data to discuss the meaning behind a text--the meaning determined, in the main, by the historical period from which the text arose.

It is very difficult to determine the exact period in which the story of Ruth arose because it seems to be an

ancient folktale later transposed to the period when it was written. This phenomenon adds a historical, social, and canonical puzzle to the mysteries of the text itself. What possessed the fathers of the biblical canon to include such a book in the Hebrew scriptures? Certainly it sheds little light on itself as a text of the times--that is, it does not tell us in specific detail about the period or how the people lived or what their peculiar problems were: rather it is a text whose production of universal meaning via mythic insights may be a function of its specifically political content--was it a propaganda story about non-Hebrew people and the covenant? Was it a legitimization of David as a proper leader--a non-Hebrew leader of distinction? Little is known about its inclusion in the biblical canon. For this heuristic study, however, these issues are not of primary concern. What does matter is that the exegesis of Ruth be performed from an appropriate perspective of the critic in an attempt to find meaning characteristic of the mythic educational canon.

Terry Eagleton (1983) and Janet Gunn (1984) have described a text as utilitarian: in other words, the critic is free to do what he or she wants in order to discover meaning. Gunn (1984), in describing Flannery O'Connor's concept of displacement, said: "I have every intention . . . of being a crass utilitarian . . . since I will be making use

of it [O'Connor's art] to look at the world" (p. 2). Terry Eagleton (1983) espouses a similar view when he writes:

> Discourses . . . of all kinds, from film and television to fiction and the languages of natural science, produce effects, shape forms of consciousness and unconsciousness, which are closely related to the maintenance or transformation of our existing systems of power. They are thus closely related to what it means to be a person. Indeed "ideology" can be taken to indicate no more than this connection--the link or nexus between discourses and power. Once we have seen this, then the questions of theory and method may be allowed to appear in a new light. It is not a matter of starting from certain theoretical or methodological problems: it is a matter of starting from what we want to do, and then seeing which methods and theories will best help us to achieve these ends [emphasis added]. Deciding on your strategy will not predetermine which methods and objects of study are most valuable. As far as the object of study goes, what you decide to examine depends very much on the practical situation. (pp. 210-211)

Thus a justification for methodological focus and textual choice is provided.

The exegesis of Ruth here is in a sense a feminist literary criticism since I am looking primarily at the women in the story and at what their lives are like in a patriarchal society. The feminist perspective for literary criticism is useful here, too, to the extent that the primary and significant persons of the story are females trying to make their way in the world without male counterparts. Such criticism serves also to point up the concept of metaphor discussed by McFague (1982), in which the text presents what is and what is not. In feminist literary criticism it is important to describe both what is and what is not there.

Eagleton (1983), however, is quick to point out that all criticism, regardless of its name, is in reality political criticism to just the degree that it gets at how people live their lives, and how well they live their lives, and where they face suppression, and where they have power.

So even though the focus of Ruth's story is on women, it is also political. But primarily because I see the spiritual as the foundation for the political, this examination is of the spiritual foundations of the story itself. The exegesis of Ruth is a hermeneutic study of two women who live in the world and whose actions arise from a foundation of spirituality. And while I agree with Eagleton that all criticism is political, I also find that all criticism is equally spiritual. So this exegesis will provide a description of the spiritual condition of the characters and situations involved.

As a hermeneutic study of myth as spiritual and political--as existent in the lives of three women who must figure out a way to continue to remain alive and, if possible, to live abundantly in a society where they are of little importance--this study examines the spiritual connections of the women involved--to the society, to themselves, to community, to the natural world, to the ultimate--and the political and moral actions to which their spirituality gives rise. The critical focus, then, is on the politics <u>of spirituality</u>.

The perspective is that of a woman looking at the story of women.

Ruth is mainly a hero--not a heroine, because this latter term seems to imply the dainty, prescribed, and circumscribed role of a woman of little actual weight who must live by the rules of others. This one is a woman of great strength and courage and not one to be considered the counterpart of the male hero, with whom the female heroine is usually in love. Ruth is to be taken seriously by herself, without a male counterpart. Therefore, she will be referred to as the hero, not the heroine.

The Story of Ruth

Ruth, a biblical canonized book of only five chapters, is a biographical account of three women who find themselves widowed in Moab. Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, with her husband and two sons had previously left Judea to escape famine. After living in Moab for some time, and after having acquired wives for her two sons from the native people, Naomi, along with her two daughters-in-law, finds herself widowed. Wishing both younger women well, Naomi begs them to return to their families, where they can be cared for, and marry again, for Naomi has no means of caring for them or providing new husbands according to the laws of the land. Knowing nothing else to do, she plans to travel back to Bethlehem, her home city, alone. Dutiful and loving, Orpah, respecting her

elder, follows her mother-in-law's advice and returns to her family. Ruth, however, refuses to obey, chooses a more radical and, as it turns out, higher calling, and against Naomi's wishes follows her to Judea. After arriving in Bethlehem, Ruth works to provide for the two women by gleaning as a poor person in the fields behind the workers of Boaz, one of Naomi's relations. Eventually, Ruth convinces Boaz to accept his familial responsibility by marrying her. Following her suggestion, Boaz makes the necessary legal arrangements, marries Ruth, and fathers a son by her, providing an offspring for Naomi, the childless widow. A genealogy added later relates that Ruth is the great-grandmother of King David.

A Situation Calling for Action

All three women must make decisions about their future lives. Indeed, the patriarchal laws of the land dictate that there is no life for any adult woman without the proper affiliation with a man as husband or son. Each woman makes a different kind of decision. Naomi and Orpah decide to return to their homes--to familiarity and to people they know--while Ruth decides to journey to a foreign land with Naomi, a woman who can promise her no future.

Of the three women, Naomi, the mother-in-law, has suffered the greatest loss: not only has she no husband, she has lost her sons as well. There is no one to care for her

under the levirate laws. Levirate law provided for the care of women who lost their husbands and had no sons: the dead husband's brother was to marry his widowed sister-in-law (Deuteronomy 5:5-10). Naomi is devoid of community except for the foreign daughters-in-law for whom she has great affection but whom she rejects as being unable to provide the kind of support she apparently needs. She knows that she cannot choose to remain in Moab as a widow in a cultural situation which offers her no relief. Though she seems to be depressed and a little disoriented--not surprisingly, considering the losses she has sustained and which affect her in every aspect of her life--she must decide what to do to take care of herself. Her singleminded obsession with returning to her homeland is not only a reasonable response to her situation but perhaps the only viable choice she has to consider. At least in Bethlehem she can be among people with whom she is familiar, if she cannot be among family.

Jean Baker Miller (1986), in Toward a New Psychology of Women, shows how loss of relationship can bring on depression and loss of self. Miller writes that female development proceeds on a basis different from male development in that women place more emphasis on relationships than men do, organizing their lives around them. She explains:

> One central feature is that women stay with, build on, and develop in a context of connections with others. Indeed, women's sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then to maintain

> affiliations and relationships. Eventually, for many women the threat of disruption of connections is perceived not as just a loss of relationship but as something closer to a total loss of self [emphasis added]. (p. 83)

Miller goes on to talk about depression in this context:

> Such psychic structuring can lay the groundwork for many problems. Depression, for example, which is related to one's sense of the loss of connection with another(s) [sic], is much more common in women. (p. 83)

Miller's stance is supported by Maggie Scarf (1980) in Unfinished Business: Pressure Points in the Lives of Woman, and by Carol Gilligan (1982) in In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Scarf (1980) writes that a woman's "inherently interpersonal, interdependent, affiliative nature . . . her orientation toward other people" is her major underlying vulnerability causing depression (p. 599). Gilligan (1982) adds that the "mourning that accompanies all life transitions can give way to the melancholia of self-deprecation and despair" (p. 171).

While Naomi's decision to return to her homeland is a reasonable one under the circumstances, her actions suggest that she lacks vision to the degree that she has chosen, in the past, to make her significant connections according to the culturally accepted norm, that is, exclusively to the relational males in her life. To lose these persons, then, is to experience loss of self. Instead of taking comfort in the relationships of very willing daughters-in-law,

she, in her self-pity, chooses instead to send them away. While it is fitting enough for their own futures that she should send them away, it is sad that Naomi has not seen these women as having sufficient value for her life to offer her support in a time of bereavement. She has not allowed them to achieve enough significance in her life to provide the kind of "interpersonal, interdependent, affiliative" relationships that could have offered support at such a time of need, in even this cultural situation. Possibly she could have benefited from the recognition of other kinds of significant relationships--from female friendships, perhaps--and prevented, even at the time of such great loss, the further loss of self.

At the time of her departure from Moab Naomi, in depression and self-pity, describes her situation thus: "Have I yet sons in my womb . . .? I am too old to have a husband. . . . It is exceedingly bitter to me . . . that the hand of the Lord has gone forth against me" (Ruth 1:11, 12, 13). It is important to note that Naomi apparently refuses to speak on the journey to Bethlehem--"She said no more" (Ruth 1:18)--and that, totally absorbed in her own grief, she fails to see that Ruth also has suffered losses. Naomi has grown no less bitter and no less depressed by the time of her arrival in Bethlehem. To the townspeople she says,

> "Do not call me Naomi [Pleasant, Sweet], call me Mara [Bitter], for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the Lord has afflicted me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?" (Ruth 1:20-21; Harmon, 1953, p. 838)

So on a rather lengthy journey Naomi has found no resources, either within herself or without, to aid in alleviating her grief, her sense of loss, or her depression. Because of her acceptance of prevailing cultural norms regarding relationships, she has absolutely no vision with respect to the possibility of other options for significant relationships in her life. She cannot even affirm Ruth, whose allegiance is unquestionable. Her only choice is depression--which could last until the solution she understands can be arrived at. In essence, Naomi is spiritually devastated--having suffered a loss of connections to persons she loved. She is therefore suffering from a spiritual fragmentation which leaves her unable to perform any political function except to return to her homeland.

Leaving Naomi on her arrival in Bethlehem, we turn to Orpah, the daughter-in-law who obeyed her mother-in-law and went home. Orpah is the woman in the story who was conventionally good. She not only did the sensible thing for her life by returning home, where there was the possibility of her finding a new husband and having children, she also showed proper respect by obeying the older woman. Indeed Naomi feels no remorse or disappointment that Orpah chooses

to return home and actually holds this daugher-in-law's decision up to Ruth as the example of what Ruth should do: "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law" (Ruth 1:15). Ironically it is Orpah that we hear no more about.

The Interpreter's Bible (Harmon, 1953) offers insight about the origin of Orpah's name. The popular etymology of the name, according to this reference, is "stiff-necked" because she turned her back to Naomi and went home. Though Harmon, the writer of the commentary, finds this popular meaning to be "farfetched," he does offer a second root, one which provides an appropriate comparison to her character. This second root means "cloud," which by itself means little until we read that a derivation of Ruth's name could have meant "water abundantly" (pp. 834-835). The contrast between cloud and rainfall sheds light on the characters of the two women as having promise for providing sustenance for growth, but remaining ungiving, as with Orpah, while actually providing the substance for fertility and growth with real rain, as with Ruth.

There can be little doubt that Orpah serves as a foil for Ruth and although the name etymologies highlight this contrast, I feel that there is an even more significant difference between the two women, one apparent in the ways they envision goodness as it relates to actions. There is a

broad conceptual difference between "being good" and "doing good." The ancient Hebrew teaching was to "do good," not to "be good." Perhaps even so long ago as the time of this book the tension between the two concepts existed; certainly this is the dilemma facing Orpah and Ruth. And the dilemma pits culture against inner experience--centers around politics and morality alienated from our spiritual foundation, or politics and morality grounded in a deep sense of spirituality and connections to the significant aspects of our lives. Today when we ask children to "be good" little girls and boys, we are in reality asking them to obey the established rules of the social order. When we ask a child to "do good," we are asking him or her to evaluate possible choices and to act out of an understanding of the issues based on a deep sense of our spirituality. Generally when we speak of goodness to children we are not asking them to make their own measured choices and neither is Naomi in her request that the women return to their own families. Naomi is asking for obedience.

The Hebrew understanding of "goodness" involves making decisions based on one's relationship to God. To "do good" means to act in accordance with the understanding of the goodness of God as it relates to his creation in all of its wholeness. To act otherwise implies fragmentation and alienation from the creation--from oneself, others, the

natural world. Some give this alienation as a definition for sin. The story of Cain and Abel is an example of a story that points out the alienation which results from choosing to do evil. In the scene after Cain has murdered Abel God reminds Cain that anger can be conquered:

> "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well [emphasis added], sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it." (Gen. 4:6)

It does not just happen that a person "does good." A thoughtful choice is involved. As we see in this Genesis story, to make decisions on any foundation other than the spiritual is to break the God-humankind relationship set out in the creation.

The concept of "goodness" becomes even more muddled when we confuse goodness with unquestioned obedience of other persons. The story of Ruth seems to demonstrate that on occasion the highest good can be disobedience. Certainly Ruth disobeyed and as a result became a significant woman in Hebrew history, while Orpah obeyed and became an unknown. The significant factor in these decisions is neither disobedience nor obedience in and of itself, however, but spirituality and the way the two women understood their duty in relation to their connections to themselves, to others, to the society, and to the Ultimate. Orpah obeys in following the rules of the culture (outside herself), while Ruth

disobeys in following the rules of spirituality, of love for the Ultimate and caring for one's neighbor (within herself). I might add that Ruth's decision is illustrative of Neumann's (1969) observation regarding the "new ethic" and the incorporation of good as well as evil into one's life in an effort to bring wholeness to a fragmented world. Under this ethical rubric the culturally popular and expected decision is not always the most spiritually thoughtful one to choose. After all, what would we have thought of Ruth had she obeyed Naomi and sent an elderly woman off on her own, consumed with grief over her losses? Certainly her decision would not have defined good of the most spiritual kind.

In the context of myth as spiritual and political, Orpah appears to be alienated from her spiritual connections and thus from her moral and political decisions. She appears not to acknowledge any foundation for making decisions except obedience to others. Because of this her actions are fairly thoughtless. In Jungian terms, Orpah relies upon the ego--an outward consciousness--in making her decisions: thus she does not rely upon the self, the force which seeks to integrate the conscious with the unconscious, and the spiritual with the political, in the process of making decisions. Orpah's decision to follow Naomi's wishes and return to her mother is therefore indicative of spiritual, political,

and moral fragmentation. Orpah is unthoughtful insofar as she has not considered holistically the ramifications of her decision.

Orpah's purpose in the story seems to be mainly to show the significant contrast between her character and that of Ruth. Ruth's decision to follow Naomi is an unusual one in its apparent selflessness. On the surface Ruth has nothing to gain. Actually, there is compelling logic to support the contention that Ruth has the healthiest concept of self presented in the story. She has a deep sense of compassion based on her relationship to the Ultimate, to others in community, to self and to the natural world. Her orientation to life is spiritual; she does not neglect the moral and political duty that goes with it.

Matthew Fox (1979), in A Spirituality Named Compassion, writes about compassion as a holistic concept, one which promotes the survival of the world and recognizes the interdependence of all living things as part of the created God-world. In Chapter I, Fox (1979) attempts to define compassion:

> Compassion is not pity but celebration; compassion is not sentiment but is making justice and doing works of mercy; compassion is not private, ego-centric or narcissistic but public; compassion is not mere human personalism but is cosmic in its scope and divine in its energies; compassion is not about ascetic detachments or abstract contemplation but is passionate and caring; compassion is not anti-intellectual but seeks to know and to understand the inter-connections of all things; compassion is not religion but a way of life,

> i.e., a spirituality; compassion is not a moral commandment but a flow and overflow of the fullest human and divine energies; compassion is not altruism, but self-love and other-love at one. (pp. 32-33)

Certainly Ruth's actions can be understood in this context; she seems to know from her depths that "compassion is the fullest experience of the spiritual life" (Fox, 1979, p. 33). And in Ruth's famous declaration of allegiances we can see the spiritual source and political results of her compassion:

> "Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if even death parts me from you." (Ruth 1:16-18)

Indeed Ruth knows that she has no choice but to follow her own spirituality as it plays itself out in compassion for Naomi and for the world at large. But Ruth's compassion is not for Naomi alone; it is for herself also. She knows that her own self-love, again based on spirituality, will not allow her to make another decision. In fact, if she does not show her compassion for Naomi, she can have no life of her own worthy of respect. In consequence, she is compelled to bid Naomi to cease asking her to do what she cannot do. To make a choice other than the one to follow Naomi would be to violate her conception of the universe, the created world, as a hallowed and spiritual space. She demonstrates fully Fox's (1979) claim:

> To be compassionate is to incorporate one's own fullest energies with cosmic ones into the twin tasks of 1) relieving the pain of fellow creatures by way of justice-making, and 2) celebrating the existence, time and space that all creatures share as a gift from the only One who is the universe's Maker; it is the action we take because of that kinship. No wonder Meister Eckhart . . . could declare as he did: "You may call God love; you may call God goodness; but the best name for God is Compassion." (p. 34))

Ruth's compassion goes beyond goodness and lays claim to all that is holy--to the spirituality of justice and preservation of the created world.

Ruth's choice of compassion is played out partially in female friendship. Janice G. Raymond (1986), in A Passion for Friends: Toward a Philosophy of Female Affection, writes about the need for a theory and practice of female friendship. Raymond proposes that "women who do not love their Selves cannot love others like their Selves" (p. 4). Ruth is in a sense the "rare woman" that Raymond describes in her book:

> A tribute to the original woman--the woman who searches for and claims her relational origins with her vital Self and with other vital women. . . . She is not "the other" of de Beauvoir's Second Sex who is man-made. . . . And she does not deny her friendship . . . for other women. She is her Self. She is an original woman, who belongs to her Self, who is neither copied, reproduced, nor translated from man's image of her. She is, in the now obsolete meaning of the original, a rare [solitary] woman. (p. 5)

Raymond says further that "friendship begins with the affinity a woman has with her vital Self" and asserts that a "woman's Self is her original and most enduring friend"

and that "female friendship begins with the companionship of the Self" (pp. 5-6). The text of the story of Ruth seems to bear witness to the observation that Ruth's friendship with Naomi is rooted in a deep sense of Self--especially as it is defined in this dissertation: as action deeply rooted in spiritual connection. Ruth, then, is not acting out of misplaced sense of duty and loss of self but out of a deeply rooted understanding of her own Self as it is itself spiritual.

A corollary to spirituality, one which plays itself out in compassionate friendship, is thoughtfulness. Like Maxine Greene's definition of "wide-awakeness"--that is a thoughtfulness and full awareness of the world, the choices available and the consequences of those choices--is Raymond's description of thoughtfulness. Concerned with a theory and practice of female friendship, Raymond (1986) writes:

> The kind of theory I have been advocating . . . is a thoughtful theory--one that restores the thoughtfulness to thinking. Or, better still, thinking is the theory; thoughtfulness is the practice. (p. 218)

I believe Ruth has thought the situation out within the context of her spirituality and that she is "wide-awake" about the choices that she has made. Indeed, throughout the story we become aware of her as a character who is "full of thought," "absorbed in thought," "meditative," and "characterized by careful reasoned thinking [emphasis added]" (Raymond, 1986, p. 218). Raymond adds that

> A vision of female friendship restores the thinking to thoughtfulness. At the same time, it restores a thoughtfulness to thinking, that is, a respect and considerateness for another's needs. Only thoughtfulness, in its more expanded meaning, can sustain female friendship and give it daily life. A thinking friendship must become a thoughtful friendship in the full sense of the word thoughtfulness. (pp. 220-221)

Ruth appears to have acted positively and with thoughtfulness within the mythic context of the spiritual and moral/political choices presented here. Her choices are not thoughtless ones; they have been carefully weighed within the context of her life in this social situation to this point.

Of the three women featured in the book of Ruth, Ruth stands out as the one who is spiritually unique. Though she too has suffered the loss of a husband and is facing the loss of her homeland and family, her response is qualitatively different from the responses of the others who are here called into action. As an obedient woman Orpah returns home, respected by Naomi as a good person. Experiencing deep grief, depression, and bitterness, Naomi returns to her homeland in silence. Ruth alone acts responsibly and compassionately and in keeping with her spirituality. For this she gets no immediate reward and indeed seems to expect none. The action itself appears to be the reward.

The Journey: The Trials

Of the three female characters here presented, Ruth reminds us the most of Campbell's (1968) composite hero.

Ruth is the one who is set up as the bearer of spirituality to the world--consequently as the one who can be called hero. She is the catalyst who has been set in motion to mend the broken spirituality of the world of Naomi and the others she meets.

At first glance Ruth's actions seem to have been concocted to employ traditionally female wiles to fulfill the political, social, and emotional needs of Naomi and herself. After all, she deliberately places herself in sight of Boaz, the distant kinsman of Naomi and possible fulfiller of levirate law (since there is no one else directly in line to do so), and as she comes to him on the threshing room floor at night she asks him to marry her.

But a second look reveals something quite different. Ruth seems to have made a conscious and very thoughtful decision to survive as well as she possibly can while caring for Naomi within a social structure from which her own needs are excluded. She appears to be approaching the world with "wide-awakeness" and "thoughtfulness." She knows the social situation and works hard at remaining spiritually rooted; all the while she provides for the survival needs of her chosen "family." After all, she has come this far by seeking to keep justice and mercy and compassion in the world. It would be out of character for her to make other choices at this point, though she is well aware of the nature of those other options for her life.

Ruth has made a conscious decision to act within the social structure rather than outside it. But it would be wrong to conclude that Ruth considers herself to be of it. Her choices for living her life as a part of the existing social structure would include choosing to act in like manner to Naomi or to Orpah and she rejects these choices. Ruth, instead, values her "foreignness" (Gunn, 1984) because its marginality provides her with freer choices. (See also Freire, 1970: Giroux, 1981, 1983, 1987.) Being rooted in Self, she chooses thoughtfully to act for justice in full consideration of the ramifications of doing so in this society. Ruth works on the edge of society, carrying out her plan for wholeness. This method of bringing about change was endorsed in a recent lecture by Rosemary Radford Ruether (1987a), a theologian who advocates the use of existing institutions (like the church) by women who would like to see those institutions respond to the world in more humanizing and community-based ways. In contrast to theologian Mary Daly (1985), who found that she had to separate herself from the church because she could no longer tolerate its patriarchal structure, Ruether (1987a) feels that the views of women cannot be ignored if they stay within patriarchal institutions, working on the "outside edges" and attempting to recenter the institution (here the church) to work in humanizing and healing ways. Ruether feels that if women

truly want the world to be more humane, then they cannot separate themselves from other persons or from the institutions that they find objectionable. Further, she feels that it is by working on the edges that women nudge others into perceiving the need for spiritual healing. Ruth appears to exercise some of the same vision in order to bring compassion and justice to her world and to bring about a consciousness of what the roles of others are to be in this humanizing process.

Essentially Ruth must overcome three major trials in her hero-journey for survival in this patriarchal society: she must find food, she must find a levir (a male protector as son or husband), and she must find a way of creating offspring. As the dominant force attempting to bring the fruition of spirituality to each trial, Ruth--who has no real power within the social structure--still acts responsibly and with knowledge of what her actions may mean. Accepting that Ruth acts with knowledge, we can probably assume that she knows the character of both of Naomi's existing male relatives and that she has chosen to make herself known to Boaz primarily because he is the most likely to respond to her.

Boaz, "a kinsman of her [Naomi's] husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech" (Ruth 2:1), treats the Moabitess Ruth with gentleness and respect and protects her from molestation (Ruth 2:8) while she gleans as the poor

do in the fields, taking what is left behind. It is apparent that he is a man of unusual character and most likely of character that is a match for Ruth's. When Boaz is told by his foreman that Ruth is the Moabite maiden who came with Naomi, Boaz treats her with extreme kindness, seeming to ignore her race and the fact that she is without privilege in his society. He says:

> "Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my maidens. Let your eyes be upon the field which they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to molest you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn" [emphasis added]. (Ruth 2:8-9)

This unusual kindness, suggesting familial relationship ("my daughter"), is, of course, emphasized by Ruth in her conversation. She knows he is the key to her survival: "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner?" [emphasis added] (Ruth 2:10). Boaz's response shows that he, too, is one who knows reputations and reads character, for he adds:

> "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before." (Ruth 2:11)

Boaz's generosity, which apparently comes from a sense of spiritual connection on his own part, is enhanced when he willingly blesses her: "The Lord recompense you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take

refuge!" (Ruth 2:13). Boaz, who appears to have been nurtured by Ruth, then adds to his blessing by providing for her at mealtime and instructing his workers to be generous in leaving sheaves behind for Ruth.

Before the day is over, Ruth has another opportunity to remind Boaz to think about her relation to him and says, "You have spoken kindly to your maidservant, <u>though I am not one of your maidservants</u>" (Ruth 2:13). Ruth continually reminds Boaz of his relationship with her in such a way that he has to consider what that relationship really is. With such action she is taking control of her own life and working <u>within</u> the social structure, but yet <u>on the edge</u> of it, to bring about the viable fulfillment of her needs.

In these passages Ruth not only acquires the necessary food for herself and for Naomi, but she also has thoughtfully set into motion the plan for resolving her next trial--to acquire a levir to care for herself and Naomi. After gleaning in the fields for many days and being allowed to assume a place of privilege, Ruth--with the advice of Naomi, who seems finally to be coming out of her depression--stages a bold adventure: she appraoches Boaz in the night, reminding him that he is the next of kin and as such as a duty to provide for Naomi and for her. Remaining true to his character, Boaz again compliments Ruth by saying: "You have made this last kindness greater than the first, in that you

have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich" (Ruth 3:10). Pointing out her fine reputation, Boaz adds: "All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of worth" (Ruth 3:11) and then he promises to "do the part of the next of kin" (Ruth 3:13). The next morning Boaz goes, as promised, to the gates of the city and challenges the other relation, who we discover is actually closer in kin than Boaz, to buy Naomi's land and marry Ruth (Ruth 4:1-6). When this closest relation refuses the marriage out of fear of impairing his own inheritance, Boaz marries Ruth, at a stroke providing her with the levir she and Naomi so desperately need. Throughout this very risky business of appearing to Boaz at night, Ruth had to depend on the probability that Boaz would continue to be true to his character. And--as we would expect by this time--Boaz remains true to his own conception of the moral ramifications of his spirituality by saying: "Let it not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor" (Ruth 3:14). Thus he protects her reputation, which he has so often referred to in the story. In addition, he again provides food for her to take back to Naomi and thus acknowledges his good intentions. While this discussion focuses on the women in the story, it should be noted that Boaz is a rich character in his own right and deserves, at another time, his own fuller interpretation.

The Return: The Hero Spirit-Deed

One trial remains: to provide an offspring for Naomi. With the marriage of Boaz and Ruth, this provision becomes a possibility. When Boaz makes the legal arrangements at the gates, he, having also come into fuller spirituality through Ruth, announces the status of Ruth:

> "Also Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from the gate of his native place; you are witnesses this day." (Ruth 4:10)

Shortly a son is born, whose arrival assures Naomi that she will not be left without next of kin (Ruth 4:14). The significance of this child is expressed in this way: "He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age" (Ruth 4:15). As a "restorer of life" in this patriarchal society, the child becomes symbolic of wholeness to Naomi, who clings to the patriarchal order of relationships. Indeed we are led to believe that Naomi never quite grasps the true worth of Ruth in her life, for it is the women of the town, not Naomi, who in the end properly describe Ruth: "Your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him" [emphasis added] (Ruth 4:15).

Ruth has acted courageously and even heroically in this story to restore the spiritual foundation to her shattered family. In doing so she restores life to an elderly, grieving woman who sees no future for herself or her family. In

addition she appears to enhance the life of Boaz, a man of the town who is most likely the spiritual counterpart for her. Clearly he is a man of unusual insight, for he treats Ruth--a foreigner--with the utmost gentleness, generosity, and respect, and, in addition, he recognizes the need for--and willingly participates in--the restoration of Naomi's family. Ruth's actions are remarked with amazement by the townspeople, who from the beginning comment on the strength of her unusual friendship for Naomi and recognize the nature of her sacrifices in order to care for this woman. Because the townspeople's descriptions of Ruth appear to be strategically placed throughout the narrative, we cannot help but infer that Ruth has somehow spiritually transformed their lives too. At any rate, though a foreigner, she has attracted their attention to her character. Based on an understanding of her own spirituality, then, Ruth has chosen to act morally to care for those around her, but also, through her life, to call others into acceptance of their own moral and political duty. Highly respected, a woman of worth, Ruth, centered spiritually, has worked on the edge of society to bring about the spiritual and political results which are called for in this extreme situation. Ruth is not marginal to God. Ruth has, in the words of Rosemary Ruether (1987b), "neither worked within the system as it is" nor regarded herself as "disenfranchised." She has been enabled

to work from this healthy perspective to solve this crucial problem precisely because she understands her own spirituality and the political and moral ramifications of that spirituality.

Myth as Metaphor for Ultimate Concern

The story of Ruth, when examined critically to get at its archetypal images, reveals a narrative of mythic proportions. Its focus is on the spiritual and political foundations of the life of a hero who finds that she is compelled to act to restore wholeness to the world. Ruth's story outlines the heroic journey of a woman who has chosen to base her moral and political decisions on an understanding of spiritual connections. And the actions she chooses are highly unusual ones for her time, which is pointed up by the choices of Orpah and Naomi, the other two women of the story. While on the surface Ruth appears to adhere to a typically female malaise centered in selflessness, a closer look at the story reveals a woman who has developed a healthy self-identity out of her spirituality. She is thus not alienated from self but rather psychically integrated in holistic ways. Ruth has not chosen the easiest way to live, as Orpah did; nor has she chosen a destructive and self-pitying way, as Naomi did. Rather she has chosen the most fulfilling and hopeful way that she can envision to bring holistic living and even survival back to her world.

Ruth can be described as a female counterpart to Campbell's (1968) male hero in The Hero with a Thousand Faces. Ruth fits Campbell's hero composite in that she leaves home, encounters ordeals which she eventually conquers, and emerges as the provider of a boon which restores the world.

Her journey is qualitatively different from the journey of the male hero described by Campbell, however. This difference centers primarily in the different perceptions of spirituality held by Ruth and the composite hero. While the male hero learns about and develops his spirituality after leaving home and during the trials of the journey, Ruth leaves home because of her spirituality to develop a keener sense of the moral and political forces in her life. Since her spirituality is characterized by connections of ultimate and inseparable importance, Ruth is compelled to uphold these essential relationships in her decisions about how to live her life. It is interesting to note here that Ruth seems to know that her future is not with her parents; at the time of the journey her maturity has outstripped that stage of development. By contrast, the male hero is generally forced to leave home in search of the spiritual understanding he needs for the journey, which in turn defines his maturity and allows his return as a changed person. Ruth's separation in leaving home is already centered in a connectedness to others, to herself, to the Ultimate and

to the natural world, while the male hero appears to leave home in search of such an understanding.

The purpose for the journeys, then, is also different. Building on this differing sense of spirituality, Ruth journeys for a different reason than the Campbell hero does. Ruth's voyage is based on a spiritual connection that compels her to care for the day-to-day welfare of other people. In the story she must decide how she and Naomi are to survive in a patriarchal society that provides neither food nor shelter for widowed women who cannot meet certain criteria. Her actions are based on a thoughtful consideration of her spirituality and how it can play itself out in a society unwilling to provide for her. The male hero, on the other hand, generally faces ordeals which force him to call upon "strangely intimate forces" (Campbell, 1968, p. 245) to help him in his combative, personal trials of life and death. Though the male hero may have someone to fight alongside him, his primary interest is still <u>self</u>-survival. While Ruth bases her spirituality on sacred connections, the male hero bases his spirituality on primordial events of a cosmic nature, including death, birth, and rebirth cycles patterned after the great gods.

The third aspect of the hero life that differs for Ruth and the composite hero is the return with the boon that restores the world. Ruth's journey obviously cannot be seen

as a return; she has found a new home in Bethlehem. While in most narratives the hero returns as a new and decidedly changed person, having learned from the journey what his adult role is to be, Ruth is as a result of her journey likely only wiser and more skilled than formerly in how to survive politically in an unfriendly world. While the male hero may return with a material boon, frequently one stolen from him and now restored, or even with just the new skill of leadership--itself recognized as a boon, Ruth's boon is one she has herself helped to create in the form of the new child: the restorer of Naomi's family. Though Ruth's reputation is far-reaching, in reality she restores only a small "world"--one family. On the other hand, the male hero restores with his boon a much larger world in the shape of a tribe or nation. It is generally at this point that the political and moral duties of the male hero begin. So while there are similar stages in the stories of Ruth and the Campbell composite hero, their stories are qualitatively different primarily because their understandings of spirituality are at variance.

For Ruth the matters of ultimate concern are her spiritual connections to the natural world (she gleans in the fields, births babies), to herself (she has an understanding of her own spirituality that she adheres to), to others (she feels compelled to follow Naomi to care for the mother-in-law when she has no outside duty to do so), and to the

Ultimate (she declares Naomi's god to be her god and shows a spirituality that recognizes the created order as important). Ruth also faces the extreme concerns which the patriarchal system creates for her--those regarding food and shelter and an offspring for a woman of the patriarchal order who worries about the perpetuation of her family. In essence Ruth has got to worry about her physical survival in a world where, because of her status as a foreigner, she can be molested as she gathers the grains left behind in the fields. But Ruth's primary concern is how to be true to her own spiritual nature while she solves the political problems presented to her. How can she, in an unfair situation, respond morally? Very like the man in Bellah et al. (1985), then, Ruth is deeply concerned about family and those other aspects of life to which she is connected. It seems highly unlikely that she would respond otherwise, if asked--especially considering her actions.

Despite what I might anticipate concerning Ruth's own repsonses to her concerns, other significant matters reveal themselves in the story. When we consider myth as the metaphor which shows both what is and what is not there, the "what is not there" must also be examined. The main feature of Ruth's life that is not there is true political power. Ruth has to work through the male structure to create a situation that will care for her and Naomi. She cannot go to

the gate and work out her own destiny. She cannot buy and sell the land, even though it is owned by a dead father-in-law. She herself must be bargained for. She is not even powerful enough to give herself to whomever she wants in marriage or to choose to live on her own or to live with another compatible family. So what is not there is the political and social power needed to fully determine her own life. But there is a sense that Ruth is empowered by her spirituality and her intellect, for she works very keenly on the edge of the social structure to determine her own future and to bring others into their own spiritual wholeness as it relates to political and moral action.

One of the attractive mythic qualities of the text of the story of Ruth is that it is rich enough to provide another interpretation of Ruth's role in the story--one of prophet (Brueggemann, 1982) or "foreigner and therefore a translator . . . [of the] political" as it relates to universal wholeness (Gunn, 1984). A fuller discussion of the importance of the prophetic role for education is provided in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE CANON OF MYTH AND EDUCATION

While there are several dimensions to the importance of myth for educational discourse, the concern that seems to contribute most significantly to the stated concerns of this paper is one which focuses on the canon of myth as revealed in the exegesis of the story of Ruth in Chapter IV. As a heuristic, the story of Ruth revealed the workings of myth as spiritual and political integration. For Ruth and those with whom she comes into contact, this mythic framework--especially as a politics of spirituality--played a significant role in decisions about how to live their lives and about how richly rewarding those lives would be.

In The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education, Walter Brueggemann (1982) suggests that there is an important correlation between the educational function of the church and the process of canon construction. And it is my own contention that this correlation has implications for a study like this of myth and education. In stressing the importance of education for the perpetuation of society, Brueggemann writes:

> Every community that wants to last beyond a single generation must concern itself with education. Education has to do with the maintenance of a community through the generations. This maintenance must assure

> enough continuity of vision, value, and perception so that the community sustains its self-identity. At the same time, such maintenance must assure enough freedom and novelty so that the community can survive in and be pertinent to new circumstnces. Thus, education must attend both to processes of continuity and discontinuity in order to avoid fossilizing into irrelevance on the one hand, and relativizing into disappearance on the other hand. (p. 1)

According to Brueggemann, our education must attend to old orders of thinking, as well as to the characteristics of alienation caused by technology, and other alienating phenomena, in order to keep us alive.

Brueggemann (1982) claims that it is necessary for the literary process of canon and the process of socialization to be examined in relation to one another if education is to be viable (p. 120). The hermeneutic process of "engaging the text in subtle ways as the live Word of God . . . can give vitality to the community" and this process can permit the text "to continue to have vitality, authority, and relevance for new generations in new circumstances" (p. 6). Brueggemann's starting point, then, is that "the process of canon is a main clue to education" (pp. 5-6). According to Brueggemann canon is both the written text and any response to that text which comes out of a faith in God. The phenomenon that Brueggemann is referring to, then, is the response to life in this particular community of faith.

The response that Brueggemann writes about is similar to what other writers propose when they mention the necessity

of telling one's story in order to name the world and in order later to have a text to which to respond for the purposes of discovering and critiquing the goodness of our places in the world. One writer who calls for such a telling and retelling is Carol P. Christ (1980) who, in writing for women specifically, says that women need to hear their stories in order to affirm their spiritual and social places in the world and in order to create new visions of a more holistic world (pp. 39, 127). Another writer asserts:

> Consciousness-raising, or "conscientization"--what I have called the entry point of a liberation theological process--happens when collective storytelling, a process of naming with others our shared situation, gets under way. Conscientization involves recognition that what we have experienced, in isolation and silence, as private pain is in fact a public, structural dynamic. My life is now perceived in a new way in light of your stories. Together we slowly re-vision our reality so that what appeared, originally, to be an individual or personalized "problem" or even a human "failing," is exposed as a basic systemic pattern of injustice. The reality of oppression, exploitation, or subjugation becomes clear as we "learn together" to grasp the common meaning of our lives. Until each participant in the process of reflection has been empowered to break silence and name her or his own story, the pedagogy of liberation is violated. (Harrison, 1985, p. 243)

Telling our own stories, then, has strong implications for personal wholeness, social justice, and awareness of the power of community.

Still another writer who has stressed the importance of story for the alleviation of misfortune in the modern context is Elie Wiesel (1966), who writes:

> When the great Rabbi Israel Baal Shem-Tov saw misfortune threatening the Jews it was his custom to go into a certain part of the forest to meditate. There he would light a fire, say a special prayer, and the miracle would be accomplished and the misfortune averted. Later, when his disciple, the celebrated Magid of Mezritch, had occasion, for the same reason, to intercede with heaven, he would go to the same place in the forest and say: "Master of the Universe, listen! I do not know how to light the fire, but I am still able to say the prayer," and again the miracle would be accomplished. Still later, Rabbi Moshe-Leib of Sasov, in order to save his people once more, would go into the forest and say: "I do not know how to light the fire, I do not know the prayer, but I know the place and this must be sufficient." It was sufficient and the miracle was accomplished. Then it fell to Rabbi Israel of Rizhyn to overcome misfortune. Sitting in his armchair, his head in his hands, he spoke to God: "I am unable to light the fire and I do not know the prayer; I cannot even find the place in the forest. All I can do is to tell the story, and this must be sufficient." And it was sufficient.
>
> God made man because he loves stories. (In Keen, 1978, pp. 82-83)

The power of story and myth has not been more pointedly told than here.

Similarly Brueggemann considers the canonical process to be one of confession and theology engaged in only "by those for whom <u>everything is at stake</u>" [emphasis added] and he (1982) writes:

> It follows that the <u>educational process</u>, faithfully carried out, can be performed only by those who submit to the <u>canonical process</u>. Everything is at stake for them in the educational process because that process is intimately linked to the canonical process, where everything is likewise at stake. . . . Canon has to do with life. (p. 7)

For Brueggemann the canonical process is both a reading of a text and the interpretation of that text as it carries

itself out in our expressions and critiques of living. And this life that Brueggemann mentions is described in the terms of the Hebrew understanding of it: "Not only is private experience not adequate for life, it is a deception to speak of private experience; for all human experience is deeply social" (p. 25). It is through turning inward, according to Brueggemann, that Israel finds solidarity and consensus. This inward turning comes of obedience, and memory of oppression and of liberation, but it is through it that the oppressed, for instance the widows and orphans of the society, are cared for (p. 39). And so it is also deeply social.

In his discussion of participation in canonical process Brueggemann comments on the importance of the prophet--her or his actions and her or his voice. Through this discussion of the prophet Brueggemann provides another perspective for further discussion of myth and education. Brueggemann sees the role of the prophet in the canonical process as offering "a radical, disruptive act or statement which supersedes the old order . . . and . . . truth as 'interruption in the continuity of life'" (p. 45). Applied to education, the implication of such a position is that we consider the failure of the old truth and the "surprise and authority of new, disruptive words" (p. 46). The prophet becomes in this process a kind of leader--a person who calls others into

seeing the truth if they have not already seen it for themselves.

One additional characteristic of the prophet is that she or he had spiritual power, the foundation of which was not in the culture but in a relationship with God. Brueggemann proposes that education should nurture people into accepting an alternative imagination, one "which never quite perceives the world the way the dominant reality wants us to see it" (p. 47). In other words, one of the roles of education should be to lead us out of ourselves and into critical examination of the existing world: into imaginations of a culture--in a relationship with God--that is both different and better than expected. The prophet's role fits this leadership role.

The two further requisites of this canon are first that the prophet exist in affinity between the "word of Yahweh and the community of the marginal ones in which the prophet lives and from which he/she speaks" (p. 50) and also that the speech be poetic speech. This gives the prophets the "capacity to draw new pictures, form new metaphors, and run bold risks of rhetoric" (p. 52), all of which can educate Israel's imagination. Setting the poetic speech in contrast to the speech of the "king," Brueggemann (1982) articulates the dangers of losing the prophetic voice this way:

> The educational task of the community is to nurture some to prophetic speech. But for many others, it is to nurture an awareness that we must permit and welcome and evoke that prophetic tongue among us. Otherwise we will be diminished into the prose world of the king and, finally, without hope. Where there is no tongue for new truth, we are consigned to the coldness of the old truth. (p. 54)

A part of education is to nurture people to watch patiently and to examine carefully, to guard against the reification of social truth.

But what does all of this have to do with teaching? Brueggemann makes several claims here. Primarily teaching focuses on the experience of daily life as understood and shaped by the community. It is primarily here that the importance of telling stories figures. Assuming that education takes place in community, Brueggemann asserts that both educational parties are engaged in "thoughtful discernment" and proceed with a playfulness provocative of the notion that knowing is provisional. Brueggemann characterizes provisionality as "a good thing" (pp. 80-81). Brueggemann also writes about the importance of education as language that teaches wisdom (pp. 89, 93).

Certainly Brueggemann's description of the interconnectedness of canon and education is essential to determining the educational role of mythic canon revealed in Ruth. While we have seen that Ruth has heroic qualities spiritually and qualitatively different from the Campbell hero's, and that as a function of her heroic qualities she helped

restore the world, it is probably of even greater significance that she can be seen as a prophet who educates others about their proper ways to respond to living within the community and the world around them. Ruth is dutiful to God and states emphatically that her spiritual connections come from this relationship with the Ultimate. She is quite aware that this relationship calls for treating others responsibly. She is still marginal to the degree that she lives as a foreigner and a poor woman in a marginal community; she is still oppressed. She is the type of person Cox (1984), Giroux (1983), Brueggemann (1982), and Freire (1970) describe as a possible catalyst for social change. As a marginal person, then, or even as a displaced person (Gunn, 1984), Ruth has enough distance from the society that she is not <u>of</u> it, but rather living <u>in</u> it, acting to bring about more humane ways of living.

The prophetic voice of persons of marginality--according to Brueggemann and others (Cox, 1984; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983; Gunn, 1984)--is an educative voice. Education in this context calls people into action on behalf of justice in the world around them. Education, then, calls for a thoughtful and critical consciousness about the world and a duty to action on that consciousness. Since, as Brueggemann points out, this consciousness is one of marginality, it does not represent the mainstream of social thought.

So people must be educated to "hear" differently and to "see" differently than the society and culture at large would teach them to do. A point Brueggemann does not take up but which seems important here is that education usually comes as a result of crises which call for decisions about survival.

The story of Ruth is told in this educative context but it is also told in a close educative context of friendship. And just as any story rich in meaning will supply both what is and what is not there--a metaphorical quality in its mythos--the story of Ruth reveals that just because Ruth befriends Naomi--and in a sense acts as prophet for her--it does not follow that Naomi can "hear" or "see" the importance of Ruth as prophet or as educator. There seems to be an implication here that the prophetic responsibility goes even further than that suggested by Brueggemann: so that while Ruth can call some, like Boaz, into action, she has to accept responsibility for others who cannot respond for themselves. McFague (1982) offers the metaphor of God as friend and Ruth seems here to be playing that role. I suggest that it is through friendship that Brueggemann's widows are cared for: it may be difficult for many who have been schooled in the social ways--without the tools of critique--to see any way of acting politically in their own behalf.

In addition to the importance of the prophet and the prophetic voice for educational canon, there is another

characteristic of canon which correlates with the person and actions of the prophet--that is, that the story and the language of the prophet are poetic. For the educational purposes of determining the canon of myth it is helpful to have both a plot and a dialogue to respond to--as well as the person of the prophet. Words can be as important as actions. Power lies in being able to name one's world (Huebner, 1984) and in being able later to rename it. Naming implies acting on the new perception. So text for educational critique should reveal a person (prophet, hero) who acts on the world in significant ways--not in expected ways--and who names the world in poetic terms: with poetry considered as synonymous with the voice of the new and unexpected. The mythic text, then, is metaphorical and teaches new ways of perceiving: ways which are not the old--and which will not necessarily be the future--ways.

The educational criticism of a text--the scrutiny of a text for spiritual and political qualities of myth--produces eisegesis (meaning) and increases one's spiritual and political sensibility about the lived world. Textual criticism is a prophetic act and one which is more than a revelation of the political, to which in Eagleton's (1983) view it is always and only limited. It is a revelation not only of the political but of the spiritual. Textual criticism can reveal a reverence and connection through its

spirituality, and can reveal a widom (which shares a root with political), in its politics and duty.

A good educational text, like the story of Ruth, will be metaphorical insofar as it will be rich enough to teach what is as well as what is not. And in the context of this paper a rich text for education will be both prophetic and heroic insofar as it will--through the actions and words of the prophet--call people into a new sensibility about their lived lives in the world. Furthermore, this new sensibility includes a new understanding of both the spiritual connections of life and the political duty such spirituality can inspire. Radical texts call for radical interpretations and radical responses. In addition the text will also be poetic in that it will call persons into new ways of looking at the world and into new ways of taking responsibility for it.

There are such scholars as Ruether (1987a), Rich (1986), Daly (1985), and Spretnak (1982), who assert that women are prophetic in that their sensibilities affirm the possibilities of annihilation as well as the possibilities for averting it. Women like Mary Daly (1985), for example, claim that they can no longer live in a patriarchal society and that women's talk must be primarily for the development of women. The recognition that women do operate generally in a realm of connections and that women do tend to seek peace more ardently than do men is by this time well researched

(Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982). This is not to say that the knowledge of connections and of peace is for women only or that women are the only persons to hold insight about this kind of spirituality. It is my contention, however, that masculine and feminine traits are metaphorical and as such can be heuristic in the pursuit of wisdom. Women as both oppressed and marginal are particularly open to the possibilities of living lives prophetically, imaginatively, and holistically.

According to Engelsman (1987), it is through repression that we create a climate which calls for an even more perverse social situation. In the face of their repression the prophetic insights of spirituality and moral action that are so acutely felt by women at this point in history are both situation specific and of more general significance. It is then my hope that women's spirituality and moral action can be prophetic for everyone, not just for the empowerment of women.

It appears then that the role of the teacher can benefit from being seen as a prophetic one, in which the task is to call others into reverence about their connections to the Ultimate and the past and the present and the future, and to call others into the duty of preserving the world in more positive and holistic ways for living out their lives in community. Teachers with the prophetic sensibility must have the ability to live on the edge of the culture so that they

can approach the world with "wide-awakeness" and call, through poetic response to the world, others into action for a more just world.

In essence education must be concerned with the spiritual and the political--political critique without the spiritual is at best limited and at worst sterile. There must be a grounding in reverence and there must be a duty--both of which are mythic in quality. If mythic canon process shapes our education so that our society can continue, it must call us into critical response about our own spirituality and our own political duty as it is perceived in deference to the cultural norm. We must exist on the edge, at a distance from both ourselves and the society so that we can see what our political duty is and so that we can see when we are neglecting the reverence-spiritual aspect of our lives. We as educators also have a duty to call others into this sensibility by teaching in "wide-awakeness" and with energy about the world we live in and its connections to the past and the future. Without such connections to the created natural world, to the society and community, and to ourselves, we are assured of death.

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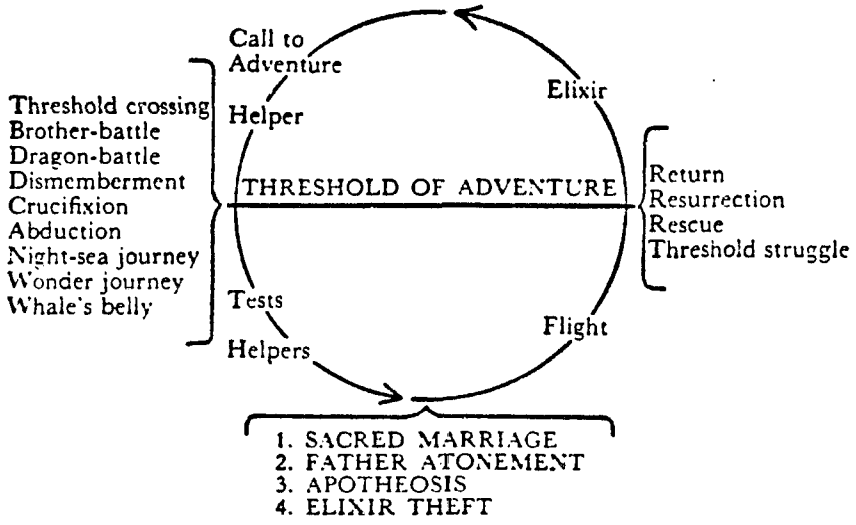
APPENDIX

CAMPBELL'S MODEL OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HERO



Source: Campbell, J. (1968). The Hero with a Thousand Faces (2nd ed.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.