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### Divinity in Life and Works

**Essay 1. Prompt 1)** Written word becomes divine in nature as it becomes written. Once written it has the possibility to survive past its speaker or author's lifespan, achieving some sort of immortality for both the idea and the writer, this immortality through written word is as close as we as mortal humans can become close to divinity. But still there is a problem with this, if the text must be explained by the author it is left with the question, who will explain when there is no one left with the context to explain it?

Ultimately despite it's quality it is divine as this work and other religious works like the Bible and the Torah survive through being a book, as admitted by the Torah selections, "The black and white fire of Torah became garbed in ink and parchment, and God's wisdom, which is the essence of Torah, was embedded in its words and letters" (Torah Selections 8). Evidence of this is the Greeks, many books were lost to fires, wars, and natural disasters, but those that survived are the only resources available that give us a peak into ancient civilization from our modern viewpoint. We may have artifacts, statues, and buildings, but the surviving text reveal concepts of art, livelihoods, and history not evident or recorded into buildings or other physical structures.

Peter Cole says it best in his "Poetry of Kabbalah", "This is, in other words, a poetry written for men who would become like angels . . . . It is *not* a poetry of "personal voice" or "a meter-making argument" with a "self." Rather, it is a verse rooted in the magical power of letters

and words—their shapes, sounds, and the cadences they create in combination.” (Cole 10). Cole states that the preservation of a work through written text and its survival give it divination in Kabbalistic poetry through its existence and intention as it is versed in the “magical powers” of a language. Meanwhile the Torah selections provide another view of how literature of the Old Testament is given divinity as Rabbi Chanina saw that, “Flames can burn parchment and ink, but the letters of the Torah are eternal, for the physical scroll is their abode, not their essence” (Torah Selections 8).

Rabbi Chanina pushes the idea that it is not the preservation that makes a work divine as it is transferred from thought or speech to a medium with a better longevity such as written words. Instead Rabbi Chanina expresses the divinity of text comes from the idea and concept that the physical work provides that may be internalized by a reader and that spiritual form is the point the words become divine as physical manifestations of the concept cannot *eventually* be relied upon as they can perish, but as long as someone has the general idea or “essence” both the written word and teaching of the word of God can be restored as long as someone remembers as they can reproduce what is lost.

**Essay 2. Prompt 2)** We see that Arjuna receives life-lessons from Krishna that apply themselves towards having fulfillment in life rather than the Western proto-capitalistic tradition of needing to be strong, physically, and that success comes from hard work or achievements hard-won over striving for peace and overcoming internal conflicts than purely external ones which might remedy internal conflicts. The *Bhagavad Gita*, unlike the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, places Krishna in a war between two sides that will actively affect the lives of both Arjuna and his subjects, meaning that he is placed in a far more precarious position in his status than Gilgamesh ever was. The lecture notes of *The Bhagavad Gita* that involve Gilgamesh state this perfectly as

a key difference between the two as they represent their mythological traditions, “[The Gods] help in spurring Gilgamesh on to becoming his better self, rather than deposing him entirely. This is a kind of absolutism, which can be traced through a wide variety of Western myths” (Lecture Notes: Bhagavad Gita 3).

Overall Arjuna faces a more complex and turbulent narrative that will affect him negatively in great ways if he doesn't act accordingly to the hazardous events around him. Whereas Gilgamesh is never threatened in his ruling even with the emergence of Enkidu as his match, as he is granted this irrefutable status through his birth right as king of Uruk. His status that is absolute allows him to act as he wants without much reason to change, especially, when he is blessed with a third of his genealogy being of Godly origin that grants him the strength and ability to overcome many obstacles that would threaten him and even ones that threaten Arjuna in *The Bhagavad Gita*. This leaves Gilgamesh to fear his mortality by his two-thirds human genealogy and his rule or achievements as king. Both fears and wants being proto-capitalistic in nature. But Arjuna faces a far more upsetting and tougher internal conflict with his connection with both warring sides involving family and his want to overcome the fear or subvert it entirely. You can see Arjuna's struggle in the beginning of *The Bhagavad Gita*, "I foresee no good resulting / from slaughtering my kin in war! / I have no wish for victory, / nor for kingship and its pleasures! / O Krishna, what good is kingship? / What good even life and pleasure?" (lines 31-32. Chapter 1).

Arjuna has a key difference compared to Gilgamesh as he has a drive to either participate in the war to support his side or standby in fear of hurting mentors and family fighting on the other side. But Krishna remedies Arjuna's fears as he explains to Arjuna the qualities of "gunas" or "Vedas" and the need to balance goodness, activity, and inertia. The distinguishing feature of

this, compared to *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, is that Arjuna is taught by Krishna that life and death are cycles, both circular and natural. That Arjuna must act within his nature which is to fight for his side and appease his fear of hurting those he cares for as a fulfilling their cycle of life and death. Gilgamesh meanwhile begrudgingly accepts the same lessons, but still tried his best to subvert this cycle of nature through selfish means as an act upon his fear of the finality of death.

**Essay 3. Prompt 6)** There are multiple creation stories of women in Greek mythology, I will be analyzing the more infamous ones, Pandora and Athena. Where Pandora's mythical story "Pandora's Box" is a tragedy, Athena's mythical story is more welcomed and unexpected compared to Pandora. Pandora was created as the most beautiful women by the gods as a punishment to mankind's defiance to the Gods for seeking out a better way of life not approved by the Gods. She was showered with gifts and of those gifts two would lead to dire consequences, her gifted curiosity and a box with explicit orders never to open. These two "gifts" lead to the tragedy that is Pandora's story that lead to her opening the box and unleashing hateful emotions upon the world. Though it is not all bad as then hope comes out of the box at the very end as the one force that may help to overcome the many harmful ones that now exist.

This is an infamous story of woman creation as her feminine beauty was the cause of mankind's suffering as they received the forces of poverty, war, starvation, and violence against man as a result of the byproducts that came from her feminine beauty and even a misogynistic implication of women as foolhardy compared to man with her husband Epimetheus showing great sense in not expressing or entertaining curiosity of the box and was the one to close the box. Then there is Athena's mythical story of creation from the head of Zeus. Through her unique birth solely from Zeus she owes her existence to a man and as the text describes her domain as being "the embodiment of wisdom, reason, purity" (Hamilton 25) is Zeus' and

therefore man's domain by extension. That her fabled great wisdom, reason and position as God is a result of man is unmistakable as "She was the daughter of Zeus alone. No mother bore her" (Hamilton 24). From these two mythological stories of women is that the fall of man is usually the cause of a woman as seen with Pandora and then the greatness of a woman is by extension of a man's efforts or resources as represented by Athena's creation story.

**Essay 4. Prompt 8)** The importance of psychoanalysis for Campbell in the modern age and the unconscious role of the contemporary hero's journey is important as a source of growth that may not be present or fully realized in surrounding sources in a developing person.

Campbell summarizes this point early on with relation to modern works, "Modern literature is devoted, in great measure, to a courageous, open-eyed observation of the sickeningly broken figurations that abound before us, around us, and within" (Campbell 20). Developing children look to adults for a role or personality to emulate within themselves as a method to grow-up or explore what it means to mature.

But there are times when even the adults aren't suitable as sources to pull from for a child or aren't at an acceptable caliber to find maturity in. When physical sources aren't suitable or are of no use at a child's certain state then they may find their unconscious journey within a dream as support by Freud as they find "symbols" in their dream states that represent what is missing or desired, "This symbolism is not peculiar to dreams, but is characteristic of unconscious ideation, in particular among the people . . . myths . . . to a more complete extent than in dreams" (Campbell 13). In a more modern age, children are reliant on their authority figures as models to emulate as coming of age stories are less in demand as we lose practices like story-telling that were more prominent in earlier ages than modern times as priorities change and demands like jobs take over time used to parent children in traditional manners.

With our modern or secular culture, we lose the little variations of stories or messages as people come to accept a more common telling over another based on popularity. This popularity causes less popular renditions to be lost as they aren't retold or rerecorded as they fade from knowledge. The uniqueness of storytelling is lost as they are read from paper than read from memory that causes these different variations or endings to fill in the lost gaps in memory that leads to exciting or needed fulfillments within growing individuals.

**Essay 5. Prompt 5)** Classical Greek mythology has maintained a consistent focus on patricide and with a lesser degree of matricide as it evokes the origin story of the primary Greek gods, such as Zeus, Hades, Poseidon, Demeter, Hera, etc. Zeus' mother was their savior, where their father was their destroyer. This is the origin story that the Greeks evoke through sons and daughters going on to kill their parents and it is specifically the father to call back to Zeus' slaying of his father Cronus. We see reference to the western or Christian call back to the origin story of the garden of Eden with the involvement of apples, the treachery of snakes, and some fall or realization on humanity as they come to understand their newfound critical thinking and shame.

There is some explanation as to why Greeks called upon the killing of parents by their children as the basis for the origin of their primary Gods that can be found in Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, "his consciousness came to be amplified and made capable of enduring the full possession of the mother-destroyer, his inevitable bride. With that he knows that he and the father are one: he is in the father's place" (Campbell 101). Through our own marriages we take on the role as fathers and mothers, psycho analysts have theorized that we psychologically replace our parents by choosing spouses similar to our own parents as we mentally note them as successful reproducers or mates that is then fulfilled unconsciously by our

attractions to women or men with the same elements.

Themes that have come from narratives of patricide and matricide is the inherent need to outperform our parents that might be an insight into Greeks seeing each generation as an improvement of the last and not merely an equal replacement of another generation. Embracing an evolutionary element of genetic improvement, prosperity, and violence of survival as it emerges into a civil society as it did in a more savage society.

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