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Vytautas Kavolis
Dickinson College

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MODELS OF REBELLION: AN ESSAY IN CIVILIZATION ANALYSIS

Vytautas Kavolis

I

I need to begin by defining several key terms. By a symbolic design I refer to an arrangement of meanings, perceptions, and emotional nuances objectified in a cultural document, such as a myth, a work of art, or a philosophical system. By the symbolic designs of a civilization I refer to those arrangements of meanings, perceptions, and emotional nuances which can be regarded as statements about the long-enduring “inner qualities” of a civilization—the latter being defined as the largest distinguishable system of sociocultural organization of human behavior at each level of societal evolution.

What has been conceived of as civilizational analysis centers on the comparative study of the symbolic designs characteristic of and enduring for a considerable historical period in particular civilizations. Civilization analysis differs from intellectual or art history in that the former is concerned with symbolic configurations only to the extent that they express, and give rise to, the distinctiveness of particular civilizations—sociocultural uniqueness on the largest empirically demonstrable scale. Civilization analysis may be conducted either in the “humanistic” or in the “sociological” manner. When conducted sociologically, it must meet the further requirement that possible linkages between symbolic designs and modes of social organization be investigated. The sociological version of civilization analysis also implies that the specific distinctiveness of each civilization at a point in time is seen as the result of a particular conjunction (or disjunction) of
basic sociocultural mechanisms, each of which with an empirically demonstrable degree of "general validity"—that is, operating to a highly similar effect wherever it occurs in its pure, or "ideal-typical," form.

In my view, it is at least as advantageous, in the comparative study of the symbolic designs of civilizations, to begin with the significant detail as to attempt to comprehend the total structure within which this detail is located. As one proceeds in analyzing the "significant detail," one's analytical framework necessarily expands into the aspects of the "total structure" relevant to it. But focusing on the significant details permits us to be more sensitive to changes over time in the symbolic designs and the underlying structures of consciousness and modes of sensibility—a topic which civilizations, in contrast to the intellectual historians, have tended rather to neglect (unless their own background has been in Geistesgeschichte).\(^a\)

In this essay, the "significant detail" will be a thematic component dealt with in a mythological system or its equivalents and embodied in an anthropomorphic or animate figure. Anthropomorphic constructs embodying a thematic component frequently (especially in the Near East and in Greece) provide the bonus of a sociopsychological theory suggesting how the behavior expressive of the thematic component is perceived to have been motivated and how this kind of motivation is thought to have developed in the life history of an anthropomorphic figure. The sociopsychological theory may unfold through the history of the various interpretations of the myth, all of which need to be taken into account in an effort to reconstitute it.

Ideally, an anthropomorphic mythological construct provides: (1) a universal "model of consciousness" for comprehending a particular type of human behavior, (2) a psychological theory revealing how, and of what materials, a particular civilization constructs psychological theories, and (3) a suggestion of the sociological
setting within which either (a) the particular type of behavior tends to arise or (b) the particular psychological theory is generated.

II

These general considerations may be fleshed out a bit by comparing the myths of Prometheus and of Satan, both of which treat the general theme of rebellion by an individual against the supreme authority in the established order and against the rules by which this order operates.\textsuperscript{44, 47, 24, 33} But Prometheus rebels, in stealing fire against the prohibition of Zeus, motivated by sympathy for the sufferings of those unlike himself—people deprived of fire, and he gives them practical assistance without imposing on them either his own values or his leadership. He permits them to incorporate his technical gifts into the structure of their own life, as they themselves see fit.

Surely what might be called the "humane attachment-practical assistance mechanism" is a universal possibility, experienced and observed by people in all civilizations. But what is remarkable is that the Greeks—or some significant Greeks—have associated the humane attachment-practical assistance mechanism with what they themselves thought of as the crime of rebellion against established authority or, more precisely, against a concrete inequity in the normative order sanctioned by it. Rebellion is therefore a "noble crime"; and in the life history of the rebel (or in the historical development of his image) the substantive personal virtue of the individual overcomes the formal criminality of his act.

This is one model for conceptualizing the behavior of the rebel. The other is the Satanic model. As described in Medieval Christian writings, Satan rebels out of resentment. The causes of his resentment are variously interpreted by the theologians: he is the first of the
angels who thinks he has been replaced in God’s affection by a “younger sibling”—man or Christ; he objects to having been created by someone else and wants to be the sole maker of his own identity. But he rebels not out of sympathy for others, but from resentment of what he perceives as loss or lack of recognition of his own excellence—“pride, born of envy” and “a sense of his own greatness.”

And, while he employs wealth and power as a means for attaining control over those he seeks to corrupt, he is wholly unconcerned with meeting the practical (food, warmth or health) needs of anyone.

Indeed, both as the servant of God, in the story of Job, and as the evil one, Satan appears to find the peaceful enjoyment of material comfort intolerable. The simple felicities of ordinary life offend against Satan’s single-minded pursuit of absolute “virtue” or, in his transformed state, “anti-virtue.” The final goal of the resentful idealist is to create a total alternative to the divine order, an “adversary culture” and, within it, to assume God’s place. But the results of his activities are wholly destructive. While Prometheus, a materialist-rationalist “partial rebel” who sought only to provide a useful service, winds up evoking a new conception of justice which even Zeus, in the lost parts of the Aeschylean trilogy, apparently comes to accept—Satan proves unable to create any value and can only mock the old by inverting them. The would be total innovator is enchained to the inverse of all of the old.

Satanic behavior can be conceptualized psychologically as governed by the resentment-destruction mechanism. Surely this mechanism, too, is a universal possibility, experienced and observed by people in all civilizations. But note that in the Judeo-Christian, and particularly the medieval Christian, tradition it is the resentment-destruction mechanism that is firmly attached to the theme of rebellion against the legitimately established power holders and the normative order rep-
resented by them. Within this tradition, there is no nobility in the crime of rebellion against the existing normative order. Rebellion is in itself evil even when its occurrence is “objectively necessary” for the completion of the larger design of God and contributes to the comprehension, by men, of this design. What is “spontaneous” in Satan is evil even though this spontaneity has been “provided for” and kept “under control” by the irreplaceable occupant of the commanding heights of “power” and “goodness.”

The connection between rebellion and the resentment-destruction mechanism is much more central to the Christian tradition than the linkage between rebellion and the sympathy-assistance mechanism in the Greek civilization. Prometheus was far less important in Greek mythology than Satan in the medieval Christian. But, centrality aside, the linkage of the cultural theme of rebellion with the psychological mechanism of humane attachment resulting in practical assistance to others is, among the historic civilizations, a distinctively Greek theme. The older Plato would not have appreciated it, but in no other pre-modern civilization has this particular linkage of themes been given a mythological elaboration anywhere approaching that given to it by Hesiod and Aeschylus. And we are concerned not only with what is central to a civilization, but also with what is unique in it.

We have, so far, two interpretative models of rebellion, both potentially applicable to the behavior of actual rebels in any civilization. The first model suggests that rebellion, motivated by humane sympathy for the sufferings of others and expressed through particular acts of practical assistance, results in an enduringly valuable change in the structure of the moral universe. The other model contends that rebellion motivated by personal resentment, and expressed in global attempts to create an alternative style of life and impose it on others, is destructive in its consequences. We also have
the historical fact that one of these potentially universal theories of rebellion has been created by important representatives of the Greek civilization, and the other has possessed immense influence in the medieval Christian civilization (and in some of its secular derivatives). Is the selection of the theoretical model by which to interpret rebellion a consequence of the different behavior of key rebels in the two civilizations, or is it an expression of differences in the cognitive structure of the two civilizations at the time when these models acquired their hold over the imagination?

Before addressing myself to this question, however, I wish to compare the psychogenetic theories contained, or implied, in the Promethean and the Satanic legends to account for the origins of the rebel. What is most distinctive of Satan at his earliest appearance in the Old Testament is that he is a function of God specializing in ferreting out potential transgressors and bringing them to God’s attention to be punished. He is, on the one hand, an absolute servant, created by his master, who has no existence of his own, no civil rights, and no social ties except the bond of obedience against which he eventually rebels; and, on the other hand, he is the enforcer of morality, the chairman of the Heavenly Un-Godly Activities Committee. When the absolute servant rebels, he can only imagine himself replacing the despot at the peak of the power structure, without disturbing the structure itself; and he will be more merciless than his former master. He who begins as the enforcer of morality, ends as the great corrupter.

Prometheus, on the other hand, is an independent from the very beginning of his conscious existence. He has his own independent position, not delegated to him by a higher authority; he has his own relatives, wife, and children; and, above all, he has his own knowledge—the ability to predict the future—which is in fact superior to the knowledge possessed by the ruler of the gods. It would have been inconceivable for Satan
to have known more than God does. That is, the Satanic rebel acts out of ignorance, on the basis of an inferior, self-deceptive theory. Or so the Judeo-Christian tradition, in which, at the peak of the hierarchies of knowledge and power, knowledge tends to be identified with power, interprets the intellectual condition of the rebel. In Greece, it was possible for highest power to be perceived as deficient in knowledge (as well as in virtue).

Prometheus, then, begins as the equivalent of a knowledgeable, high-status adolescent used to making his own decisions. The first significant decision he makes is in fact one to support Zeus in his battle against the Titans, who are members of Prometheus’ own family. This decision—in some ways the equivalent of Crane Brinton’s “desertion of the intellectuals” in the revolutionary process—proves to be a mistake, since Zeus, in power, becomes a ruthless tyrant. Rebellion, for Prometheus—if not necessarily in conscious intention, then in its objective effects—functions as an expiation for the unintended wrongs he had earlier helped to create by having aligned himself with an emergent tyranny. While the expiation motive is not specifically mentioned in the Greek texts, the logic of Promethean behavior permits this interpretation, as Satanic behavior does not. Satan could feel no guilt for what he had done in serving his master (in bringing down, for example, the undeserved misfortunes of Job), since, having been created entirely as a tool of that master, he did not develop the habit of considering himself responsible for his own actions. It is he who perceives himself as the blameless agent of a greater power—or as the necessary evil—rather than he who has reason to know he has been a fool in his own judgments, who develops into the resentful destroyer.

One further element in the background of Prometheus is his part as a trickster who delights in substituting bones and fat for meat in a sacrifice to Zeus, thus deceiving the supreme authority without any mo-
tive apparent in this action other than the pure fun of it.\textsuperscript{23} Satan, on the other hand, does not appear capable of pure fun, unrelated to the single-mindedness of his service to God (in his earlier career) or to that of his rebellion against God (in his later identity). Thus the final psychogenetic summary of the evolution of Satanic and Prometheus types of rebellion: \textit{abstract justice, combined with resentment, corrupts the absolute servant; playful trickery, to which sympathetic kindness is added, permits a moral evolution in an independent mind.}

We now have not only two models of rebellious behavior, but also two psychological theories of how these respective types of behavior have come about. And the civilization-comparative question may be repeated on another level: Why did the Greek and the Judeo-Christian civilizations develop different \textit{"psychological" theories of the origin of rebellion against authority?}

Two possible approaches to this question may be suggested. The first focuses on differences in the \textit{depth structure of moral thinking} of the two civilizations. The dominant Judeo-Christian tendency, shaped or reinforced by Iranian influences, and surviving in a variety of secular ideologies of Western-European derivation, has been to adopt a \textit{"mobilizing,"} or \textit{"reifying,"} attitude toward moral issues. The goal implicit in this attitude is to enhance the \textit{"good"} and to exorcise the \textit{"evil"} in history and personality by rigidly separating them, as objects of total worship and absolute condemnation, in the mythological constructs used to comprehend historical experiences and subjective states of the personality. This attitude has also been strong in the North African and Near Eastern Islamic traditions, and has recently revived there.

The Greeks, in contrast, have sometimes been able to adopt a \textit{"developmental,"} or \textit{"dialectical,"} attitude toward moral issues, with the implicit goal of integrat-
ing a recognized "evil" (e.g., the crime of rebellion) with the presumed "good" (e.g., the authority of the legal order) in such a way that the "evil" is gradually transformed into the "good," or functions as an indispensable challenge to it, while the "good" must be exposed to a searching criticism of its claims, in the absence of which it stands in danger of revealing itself as (or degenerating into) another form of "evil." This attitude is evident not only in the Promethean myth, and in the conception of Zeus, in whom, as Paul Ricoeur puts it, "the problematics of the ‘wicked god,’ the undivided unity of the divine and the satanic reaches its highest pitch," but also in the treatment of Dionysus, in whom Christ-like and Satan-like elements are intertwined. A similar attitude has been evolved by Freud, and it is not accidental that he gave such central importance, in his theory, to a Greek myth (though in his therapeutic practice he was more inclined to accept the role of the Hebraic God). A somewhat comparable mode of integrating the "evil" into the "good" has been evolved in Hasidism (e.g., "Use evil to do good").

Within the relatively enduring Indian and Chinese structures of moral thinking, the primary categories to which substance is attributed are not "good" and "evil," and the relationships between the fundamental opposites take the form neither of "battle" nor of "dialectical transformation." In Hinduism, dualistic categories both stand in a relationship of mutual recognition of each other (being in the world and world renunciation) and (as in the purity-pollution distinction) are used to separate hierarchically arranged entities representing phases of an interminably cyclical process. While the categories themselves constitute a permanent structure, the particular contents of Indian categories are comparatively fluid: the ascetic becomes an erotic profligate and bounces back again; an individual moves from being in the world to world renuncia-
tion; what is "polluting" overflows and infects the "pure" (but never the opposite, thus suggesting the strength of "pollution" and the weakness of "purity," in some contrast to the powerful Chinese belief that good examples normally attract others to emulate them).

In Confucian China, polarities equal in value but unequal in power (as in the Yin-Yang paradigm) cooperate, in a rigorously defined but contextually variable manner, to sustain and develop a harmonious cosmic hierarchy.3.15 There is less fluidity of the contents of the categories and more of a "practical" cooperation between the opposites than in the Indian structure of moral thinking.

In the medieval and early modern European tradition, polar opposites either battle energetically until the final solution, the outcome of which is predetermined (the God-Satan model), or are mutually interdependent in a static hierarchical relationship, which it is impermissible to challenge (as in the notion of the "marriage" of the soul with the body, in which the "masculine" soul is entitled to the obedience of the "feminine" body).38 The result of the concurrent presence of both of these models in the Western tradition is a constant tension between "hierarchy" and "dualism": hierarchies are always potentially threatened by a dualistic militance subversive of them, as they are not in either India or China.

In contrast to all of these conceptions of the proper relationship between polar opposites, Greek dramatists have conceived of a dialectic in which the opposites evolve, changing their own character and the structure of their setting, in the course of a battle in which the cards are not stacked in advance in favor of one participant, as they are in the God-Satan paradigm. While the image of Prometheus has appealed at various times and in various ways to European traditions of experience,6 the Promethean dialectic has re-emerged most
prominently in the Romantic imagination.\textsuperscript{1} But the Romantics had a tendency to collapse Satan and Prometheus into one (or rather to impart the psychological qualities of the former to the imagery of the latter).\textsuperscript{13, 178} Marx resonated to this ambience; Stalin remained a medieval Christian dominant with a factory for the transformation of humanity in his hands.

The second approach to explaining the differences between the Greek and the Judeo-Christian models of rebellious behavior, and between their theories of the origin of such behavior, can be made on the social-structural level. The construction of Satan has started within the general ambience of a militaristic, Persian "oriental despotism," where the obligation of everyone, including the highest officials, has been to serve the ruler in the manner of disciplined soldiers, and in which, since the judgment of the supreme power holder could not legitimately be questioned, failure to submit to him had to appear as the upheaval of primeval chaos against the righteousness of civilization. The Persian type of oriental despotism may be contrasted to the bureaucratic empire of historic China, where officials, insofar as they were "true gentlemen" (\textit{chün-tzu}), adhered to generalized moral standards of their estate, by which they could define their own dignity and even judge their supreme authority, the emperor—thus retaining a certain margin of dignified moral independence relative to him.\textsuperscript{h}

In the Chinese framework, in which supreme worldly power could legitimately be perceived as deficient in knowledge and in virtue, rebellion could not automatically be judged as arising outside of the normative order and as constituting a threat not only to the current political manifestation of that order, but to the principle of order itself. Rebellion could therefore not easily be interpreted within an imagery of the Satanic type. The most popular image of the rebel in traditional Chinese fiction is that of a trickster-monkey who, after having
fought successfully against all sorts of heavenly powers and secular sages, ends up as the defender of a Buddhist pilgrim. Rebelliousness, in this case, appears not as a serious human, angelic or titanic quality, but as a playful expression of primordial nature, capable, in the very course of its rebellion, of rising to the level of moral responsibility. There is a bit of Prometheus in the monkey, but nothing whatsoever of Satan. Actual rebellions tended in China to be rationalized by the theorists as expressions of the loss of "the mandate of heaven" and legitimized by the rebels themselves, until the nineteenth century, in the imagery of the nature mysticism of popular Taoism and the reassertion of traditional peasant values.

The myth of Prometheus has been put together in a society which cultivated "individualistic heroism" in social action and in fact provided opportunities, for a privileged elite, to seek this goal. When Prometheus first appears, in Hesiod, the breaking down of clan controls was taking place in the absence of both a dominant state organization and a rigorously dualistic intellectual culture. In this setting, a mere semigod senses the "prerogative of the privileged"—the obligation to come to the aid of others in his own way, without waiting for legitimation by any traditional standard or a newly formulated explicit ideology. A society which permits individualistic practical (not merely symbolic) action for at least some of its members is probably necessary for such trust in one's own private moral sensitivities, not sanctioned by any imaginable agency or tradition external to the individual. In a stable peasant society, or within a bureaucracy, such an attitude would not be credible enough to sustain a great myth.

Yet Prometheus is not a feudal lord, or a Hegelian "honest soul," acting with the archaic directness of "honor." He is a "subtle-spirit" (Aeschylus), a user of his mind, who has clearly seen oppression and its limits, and it has become his nature to "think deviously."

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(Hesiod): it is apparently Prometheus who has invented the deceptive sacrifice to the powerful. But to invent it, with full conviction in the propriety of his act, he has not to need it for himself. He is willing to sin, but only for the concrete benefit of others. In the tradition in which he originates, this commitment is associated with supreme intelligence.

Another structural characteristic of the Greek society relevant to the Promethean theme is the presence of a body of intellectuals, principally the dramatic poets, who were deeply concerned with interpreting moral issues, but were not functionaries within, or tightly controlled by, a religious or political organization. In the ancient Near East, where moral poetry was, by and large, in the hands of organized religious bodies, the priesthhoods were organized, like the state, along the lines of a militaristic "oriental despotism." In the Israelite tradition, where they were not—and where the institution of prophecy permitted "rebelliousness" against the established social order in the name of a higher obedience, Satan originally did not have the character of a rebel, let alone a nihilistic rebel.

The sense of the virulence of Satan has been taking shape under the Seleucid conquerors of Palestine, when a strong movement toward Hellenization in the Jewish aristocracy, ambitious to increase the scope of its power, began seriously to threaten the cultural identity of the Jewish community. The vivid experience of this threat to national and religious identity must have lent emotional vitality to the elaboration of the Satanic myth from its already existing elements into a full-fledged dramatic explanation of the meaning of the experience (e.g., in the "temptations" of Christ). Satan emerged as a religious interpretation of the perceived readiness of members of a community, in which high value had been traditionally placed on group solidarity, to abandon the moral ties of mutual obligation in search of the recognition of unique personal excellence. The up-
risings of the period, which reasserted collective identities and the ties of mutual obligation, and the growth of the Satanic mythology are products of the same historical situation. And a similar situation developed in Christian Europe at the peak of the power of the devil and fear of witchcraft toward the end of the Middle Ages.

III

While Prometheus has, since the nineteenth century, been frequently assimilated to Satan, it is Dionysus—an avenger of offenses suffered by himself, and a purely expressive actor totally unconcerned with the practical needs of others—who is morphologically closer to Satan. But Dionysus appears to have been raised by emotionally deprived women in a male-dominated society. In contrast, only the authoritarian Old Testament patriarch and his servants are mentioned in the domestic environment in which Satan spent the early years of his career. The “childhood environment” may help explain why Dionysus, violent as he is, seeks temporary ecstasy rather than permanent power, and being sacrificed or provoking cannibalism in others are equally ecstatic fulfillments for him.  

Dionysus creates resources of intense emotionality where they are, in his absence, lacking. He does not, however, integrate these resources with the rest of human existence. Left in his hands, they therefore become destructive forces. In this respect, he is like Satan: resources that might feed life become agencies of destruction in the hands of both. And it is in this respect that Dionysus is unlike Prometheus, who integrates the resources he has not created—as well as the skills he has—into the life of other people without doing injury to the structure of existence of the recipients of his gifts. Prometheus is a skilled inventor of useful objects and activities. He also has the gift of prophecy—that is, a
valid theory of the future. His ultimate genius, however, does not lie in the generation of light, but in the precise recognition of brilliance where it exists (=fire, the source of light and warmth) and its incorporation into the everyday life of mankind.

In contrast to both Satan and Prometheus, Dionysus is not himself explicitly a rebel. He is rather an avenger and a revealer of the barbaric depths suppressed by civilization. But his actions provide stages for the unacknowledged rebellions of others—those who are subjected to suffering from the existing structure of civilization. And it is only the others who suffer the exhaustion and emptiness which follows, at least in Euripides, the orgy of mad destructiveness inspired by Dionysus; their mover, "wearing a mask with a fixed smile," merely goes away for another travelling exhibition of his sinister powers. The Dionysian rebellion is directed not against a power system as a whole or its specific commandments, but against the ordered routine of everyday life, against "quotidianity" or "rationalization." His rebellion—and the kind of "significant disordering of the senses" it represents—can be used by an established power system for strengthening its own position, if it knows how to associate itself with, or even arrange, protests against ordered routines (Even Mao has, in the "cultural revolution," sought to employ Dionysus.)

In the emotional character of the rebellions he provokes (and in the importance of the performing arts in these rebellions), the collectivist Dionysus is comparable to the medieval European individualist, Tristan. But there are two differences between the cult of the Greek god and the medieval European tale: (1) In the environment of Dionysus, normally suppressed, powerless collectivities—women and the lower classes—intentionally seek the intoxication of rebellion against the routine order. Aristocratic Tristan has to be infused with an external agent to become a rebel against the
customary roles and his own contractual obligation of fidelity to the King. He accidentally swallows the love potion intended for the King and is overcome by a madness he does not understand. No longer, as in Prometheus, is rebellion the expression of unsurpassed intelligence. The primordial romantic hero is not the responsible agent of his own rebellion, but an "accidental rebel"—with a cause but without his own purpose—the mechanical receptacle of an externally generated passion. In contrast to his more interesting (as well as more real) near-contemporary, Abelard, the Tristan of the twelfth-century "canonical" version does not have mind enough to have a will of his own in his body. (2) The cult of Dionysus establishes opportunities for shared—though savage—emotional experiences in a temporary community of the intoxicated from which, in principle, no one who appears as a mindless adherent is excluded. The emotional potentials of Tristan and Iseult are withdrawn from everything else and totally concentrated in an exclusive pair relationship (as a Western ascetic might withdraw from the "world" for the sake of his "soul" alone).

The love potion was apparently lacking in the Celtic sources of the myth, in which love was initiated by a conscious agent, the king's wife. What had started as a woman's spontaneous passion in Celtic mythology became, in the hands of the courtly poets of twelfth-century France, an impersonal power overwhelming both man and woman and transforming them into sadly exalted "mechanical toys," an early version of "escape from freedom." At the roots of the "alchemy" of romantic love is the transformation into a power-driven machinery, separated from consciousness, of that activated receptivity called emotion.

Perhaps to make a historical advance in the understanding of an emotional (or intellectual or moral) quality, it needs first to be "alienated" from the organic flow of everyday existence of human beings, "con-
structed” as a mechanism so that it could be seen more clearly (at the risk that what is helpful as a visual aid becomes a source of corruption when literally imitated in social action). Whether this interpretation clarifies the historical function of the “objectification of love” in the Tristanic legend or not, the contents of the myth document a ritualism of mutuality without spontaneity (and hence without change) and of individualism without self-determination (and hence without responsibility). It is as if a courtly Confucian had to make sense out of the emerging emotional dynamics of modern Western civilization.

The contraction of an individual’s emotional life to the totalization of a passion alienates the individual not only from everyone not included in such a relationship, but also from aspects of his own self that cannot be encompassed within it and must therefore be suppressed. The Tristan story suggests that such transformation of the life world into a mechanism of private passion transforms emotion itself into a “thing,” an alien substance, for the individual in whom it materializes (=the love potion, an intrusion detached from, but compelling, one’s personality); and it ends up transforming the person on whom it is totally focused also into a “thing” that is programmed to perform a highly stylized ritual. In a collectivized form, this also happens in Dionysian rites.

But it has not happened to Abelard, whose intellectual rebellion preceded, and then overlapped, the unorthodoxy of his secular love for Heloise; he had purposes of his own in both, and continued to analyse and to do his work—though, as he thought, less creatively—even while he loved. Hence the hypothesis on Tristanic-Dionysian (as contrasted to Promethean or Abelardian) behavior: Emotionality detached from normal everyday concerns, from ethics, and from the habit of analysis—and also from the people who do not immediately participate in its making—“freezes” both
its sender and its recipient into a death-like state of compulsion, whatever their self-perceptions of "emotional vitality." The search for intensity in self-sufficient emotion transforms emotion itself into a mechanism. "Miraculous intrusion" at its purest processes its recipient to the most exact specifications. In dreams begin factories.

Yet in the Tristan legend, for the first time, mythology provides a model for man and woman to be equal fellow-rebels.¹ For Satan—as currently for the mass advertiser—woman was a promiscuously used instrument to attract other men into his field of domination. For Prometheus, she—his apparently wholly domestic wife—was an attached non-participant in his rebellion. For Dionysus, she was a temporarily self-involving mass of faceless followers.

The Tristanic model of a joint rebellion by equal individuals for the sake of an interest that they do not share with anyone else has, however, simultaneously established the Western paradigm of private suffering: the impossibility of intimacy when individuals relate to each other by that which alienates them from their own identities.

IV

The Satanic theory of rebellious behavior appears to require both a social structure built for the maximization of obedience and elimination of independence, and an intellectual tradition of rigorous (non-cooperative) dualism. A civilization like the traditional Chinese, which comes close to eliminating individual independence in politically relevant action, but does not favor rigorous dualism in thought, does not generate Satanic interpretations of rebellious behavior. And in the post-medieval bourgeois societies of Western Europe, including those of the most rigorous Calvinistic shaping—which tended, however, to legitimate individual
independence (through "voluntary consent")⁴⁸—the hold of Satan declined with the stabilization of the new order. Given an obedience-maximizing structure and a dualistic tradition, social strains and particularly threats to this structure and tradition increase the likelihood, and the virulence, of Satanic theories.⁵.⁴⁶ Thus it is when an obedience-maximizing social structure is beginning to break down—or to appear "untidy"—that Satanic theories—and revolutionary (or counter-revolutionary) movements which frequently become their carriers—emerge into prominence.⁷

If there is little culturally visible untidiness, or if one takes it for granted that there will always be untidy areas in human experience and gets used to them, Satanic theories of rebellious behavior should have a limited appeal—or Satanic rebels might be perceived in the relatively innocuous guise of merely "romantic" or "decadent" eccentrics, as they tended to be in nineteenth-century England. But with Byron we leave the realm of mythology for that of aesthetics, and with Swinburne we witness the transformation of the Satanic into the Dionysian mode of the avant-garde culture.

It is conceivable that conditions under which Satanic theories arise also favor Satanic behavior, as the twentieth-century totalitarianisms (promoted and legitimated by the rigorous dualism of racist and class ideologies) suggest. However, a mythological construct should not be seen as a reflection of observed, that is already existing behavior, but rather as a selective editing and creative elaboration of fantasy dispositions that arise in response to the conjunction of a particular organization of social relations and a particular set of basic forms for the intuitive perception of order and disorder. In imagination, alternative possibilities of behavior are actively tried out (and sometimes judged to be wanting). But the trials of what is currently experienced are conducted in the courthouse of the basic categories and formalizations explicitly provided by
one's intellectual tradition or implicit in it.

Thus the analysis of the interpretations of rebellious behavior underlines the impossibility of understanding the distinctive symbolic designs of particular civilizations either without reference to their social structures or as direct reflections of their social structures. Nor, in all likelihood, should differences in symbolic designs be read as registering corresponding differences in visible behavior, or the absence of a particular symbolic design be interpreted as indicating the absence of the behavior which other peoples objectify in such designs. What symbolic designs in their totality express exists, outside of them, only in the imagination; and not all the "raw materials" of experience that exist outside of the active imagination are transmuted into its splendid and horrifying craftsmanship.

V

The Greeks have provided two mythological models for rebellion: a "rational" rebellion for the privileged individual (Prometheus) and an "emotional" rebellion for the underprivileged collectivity (Dionysus). The modern European civilization inverts the equation: an "emotional" rebellion for the privileged individual (Tristan), a "rational" rebellion, later on, for the oppressed collectivity (Marx). Dionysus has been individualized, Prometheus collectivized.

Both Greece and the modern West knew morally justifiable, rational rebellions, but located them differently; and psychologically understandable, emotional rebellions, but conceived the emotions underlying such rebellions as divinely inspired in one case (Greece, where it was the emotion of the downtrodden), as artificially induced in the other (the West, where it became the emotion of the cultivated). Only the downtrodden need divine inspiration for their rebellions; the cultivated hold the means to inspire themselves in their own hands (even when they do not know what they hold).
But the medieval paradigm of the Satanic rebellion continues to insinuate itself into the modern shapes of both Prometheus and Dionysus. Greek mythological rebels could be exactly what they were: gods, titans. Satan (and, with him, a multitude of nineteenth- and twentieth-century rebels) are functionaries who seek to be gods capable of creating themselves. In our times, it has become a legitimate aspiration to make of oneself, individually or collectively, an artificial god. We are condemned to discover whether the Satanic rebellion is destructive only when it is "defined as deviant" by the surrounding society, or whether it too constitutes a sociopsychological model universally valid for that which it comprehends.

VI

I conclude by re-emphasizing two methodological points. (1) An effective starting point in the comparative study of the symbolic designs of civilizations is to focus on a particular theme, found in several civilizations, and embodied in a cultural product that lends itself to both psychological and sociological analysis. Such a comparison, carried far enough, reveals differences in the symbolic interpretations and elaborations of the shared theme as well as the interconnections of this theme with other major components of each civilization (if the probable presence of such interconnections can be persuasively demonstrated).

(2) A productive method in civilization analysis is the tracing of the linkages between the key notions—culturally strategic general concepts the historically specific embodiments of which are treated, in particular civilizations, as necessarily associated with each other, or as mutually exclusive or as having an indeterminate and variable relationship between themselves. Linkages between an ideological notion, such as rebellion, and a psychological mechanism presumed to underlie the behavior oriented to this notion are also worth not-
ing. Presumed interdependencies between the notions of power, knowledge, virtue, and law in the Greek and the Judeo-Christian traditions have been brought out as particularly important in the present case. But, for an adequate analysis of the symbolic designs of civilizations (and their changes over time) through linkages among key notions, an inventory of perhaps twenty to fifty such notions, for each civilization at distinguishable stages of its development, might be needed.  

Dickinson College

Notes

* Expanded version of a paper presented at the Conference on Civilizational Patterns and Intercivilizational Encounters, held by the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations, August 30-31, 1973, at the University of Chicago.

a In my usage of these terms, a "structure of consciousness" refers to a relatively coherent set of categories of thought, a "mode of sensibility" to an empirically given set of perceptual orientations, that are shared and relatively enduring in a given socio-historical setting.

b "Promethean" culture heroes who have stolen, "through cunning or daring," fire, grain, or the sheep from the gods are familiar to a variety of preliterate societies above the level of archaic cultivators.19 But the myths dealing with these heroes constitute descriptions of the origin of a cultural trait rather than explanations of the behavior of an individual. In the mythology of the Dogon, personal motivation for stealing fire, by the "ancestral constructor," from "the workshop of the great Nummo, who are Heaven's smiths," is replaced by an impersonal assignment: he steals because "his future task was to teach men the use of iron to enable them to cultivate the land."16 In a sense, the primeval blacksmith of the Dogon is the idea of Prometheus without his personality.

c Prometheus' relations with feminine figures are specifically worth noting. By some accounts, it was Athena (whom Prometheus, by splitting the skull of Zeus, helped to be born; thus a woman "of the younger generation") who taught him many of the practical skills he then transmitted to men. And it was his mother, Themis, who provided him with his ultimate resource—knowledge of the future. Prometheus not only does not misuse women to gratify his
whims (as Greek gods habitually do), but he makes good use of the creative strengths women possess and willingly share with him. He is unafraid to be dependent on women at the same time that he helps them. In contrast, there are no significant women in Satan’s early history, and in his later career he manipulates women to achieve his goal of seducing men to do his bidding. In this respect, he is somewhat comparable to Zeus who sends Pandora, the first human woman, to punish men for receiving the Promethean gift of fire. But in the Greek scheme of metaphysical sobriety it was the highest god—not an evil spirit—who both misused women to indulge himself and manipulated them to exercise his control over men.

d Perceptions of the individual actor as either a blameless agent of a greater power (who does not consider himself responsible even when he commits evil acts) or as an entirely independent actor who establishes his own responsibilities by his own moral decision are peculiar to the Western civilization, but they (especially the latter, “Promethean” perception) tend to be lacking in other civilizations. Both notions are alien to Confucianism.10,12

e In Christian religious thought, the evil is sometimes perceived as “objectively necessary” to enhance man’s understanding of the nature of the good or as a stage in man’s development, through guilt and expiation, toward proper humility. But even when necessary for the benefit of mankind, the evil itself, as a component of the underlying moral structure, remains evil, does not evolve into the good or fuse with the good. Nor does the good, in its perfection, need evil; it is only men, with their imperfect understanding of the moral structure, who need evil as a “visual aid.” The crucial point is that, in the medieval Christian tradition, the objective moral structure within which human existence is comprehended is not perceived as evolving through confrontations of “good” with “evil.”

f Social conditions favoring the original elaboration of a mythical construct do not have to be exactly replicated in the historical environments in which some versions of that construct later on acquires more or less of a popular appeal. Thus the popularity of the Promethean theme in the literature of Augustan Rome is to be explained partly by the esteem it gave to Greek culture, and in part by its need for models of secular, activistic heroism. Once the Promethean theme is available, it lends itself to be drawn upon, in literature, by the secular humanists and, in the visual arts, by the cultists of passion and suffering, whether religious or secular.41 The theme had considerable prominence in Renaissance and Baroque art.

And Denis Donoghue sees as the Promethean “form” or “genre” of feeling what is in fact a conflation of Dionysian and Faustian themes. It is not Prometheus who has sought “intensity
and vehemence" above all else, and it is not his myth that can be "interpreted as testifying to the endlessness and namelessness of man's desire." Such conflations of distinctive mythological paradigms, or the appearance of one in the guise of another, seem to be characteristic of periods in which the basic symbolic structure of a civilization is undergoing a breakdown or reorganization.

h In China, "legitimated protest was an intellectually central and institutionally prominent aspect of the traditional political culture." Byzantine Christian officials, much more than Chinese Confucianists, were a despot's faceless men." Karl A. Wittfogel does not recognize the importance of the "symbolic" distinction made here.

i Like Prometheus, Drystan started out, in the medieval Welsh tradition, as a trickster—an origin unimaginable for the ever-serious Satan.

j By 1210, however, a version of the Tristanic myth appears in which love potion is but a symbol of spontaneous mutual responsiveness.

k In Chinese Confucian thought, strong emotion between the sexes has tended to be perceived as not originating in the internal dynamics of a personality, but as "the work of others," induced from without.

l The reality of man and woman as equal cooperators in an important creative task emerged almost at the same time in the movement of affective mysticism.

m Mary Douglas points out that "when moral rules are obscure or contradictory there is a tendency for pollution beliefs to simplify or clarify the point at issue." 

REFERENCES

5 Cohn, N. The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Messianism in Medieval and Reformation Europe and Its Bearing on


