

Cyclic Cults, Seasons and Man

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In fertility cults and cyclic religions; particularly more modernly the concept of the Wheel of the Year, and in more ancient times the Eleusinian Mysteries, the cult of Demeter and Persephone, etc. the basic overall theme that strings throughout it's various themes is cyclic, and of birth-growth-death-decay-rebirth. These were not only based upon the natural cycles of the seasons, but also astronomical alignments and particular phenomenon of astrological interest. In ancient Egypt, they had a concise understanding of astronomy, which acted as the basis for much of their religious and cultural developments. The precession of the equinoxes was observed and known to the ancient Indian astrologers since CE era.

Astrological phenomenon played a crucial role in many developments of many various cultures. In the Wheel of the Year, the cycle of the year is the central time-scale of mind, which at the end, returns to the beginning as in a circle. The alignment of the Earth in relation to the Sun is the crucial key to understanding the Wheel of the Year, because that is the basis for it. The point of mentioning the Wheel of the Year, is the importance to man the various placings of stars and planets, and why he does engage in his various ritual-enactments at those observed stages when they arrive.

The four seasons of the year have always effected directly the ecology around Man, as well as Man himself. The seasons are 'controlled' by the placing of two orbiting objects in space, which just so happen to be relevant to Man, as they effect him. The marking of these particular stages of the [cyclical] orbit of the Earth around the Sun through ritual-gestures and acts grew and matured in curious and different ways in the diverse cultural and societal civilizations upon the earth through time, and manifested, for instance, in the West we have the Greek *horae*, or the goddesses of the Seasons, which personified the stages of the year as it progressed. We also have the mythological story of Demeter and Persephone, which was a way to explain the changing of Spring into Summer, and Summer into Fall/Winter (and then round again, cyclically) through mythological figures.

The seasonal phenomenon - to humans - are only important to *us* because they effect us directly, physically, mentally and emotionally; we live within them. So it is not illogical to understand that a person of little-learned knowledge, that these stories were (and indeed are) a 'colourful' way to explain those changes. Psychologically, the characters of those ancient polytheistic religions which represent physical and natural phenomena and forces, their interplay of drama-story in their respective various cultures, and their resulting narratives, are a mental way of describing and understanding something that was, at the time, not fully understood. We now can empirically study objective phenomena to learn about it's 'rules' and laws of interaction with other objects and so forth at an incredibly detailed and accurate level, that to the primitive man would have seemed almost magical.

In learning and studying the natural forces around himself, Man shrugged off those characters of magic and mythos in favor for a more objective and concrete way of understanding the world around him. In doing this, he casts aside the celebrations and festivities of his 'cultural characters', and studies continuously more and more into the world around and far away, even.

The boundaries of Man's current observable universe is psychologically the same as the 'edge' between the conscious awareness of himself, contrasting to the unconsciousness of the unknown, [just] outside the grasp of his current perceptions – beyond the scope of his awareness. In the religious dramas and tales of cultures, many characters represent celestial and astrological interactions between objects of the Macrocosm, thus represented in the form of story or mythos on a psychological level for Man, on a Microcosmic level; in principle, celebrating those certain rituals belonging to the cyclic-festivities of the Year is a way of celebrating, recognizing, and being aware of the grander movements and interactions between the cosmic forces at play, which are thus beyond our control.

So in the first part of this article, I started by writing about the changes that the cosmos has and the importance it has to man, in relation to him, being observable. I'm now going to continue but diverge into the subject matter of it's function within the human structure of sociality and it's importance within the overall human condition.

Ritual and festive seasonal celebrations that take place in the annual cycle of the year also reinforce the sense of community by group involvement in the activities taking place therein; but this also reinforces the sense of 'outsiders' to that event, having not participated, to an extent - which may or may not result later on in dogma. This sense of community that is created and maintained by these celebrated rituals or events plays one of the most crucial roles in the dynamic of the group, as humans are social creatures.

Ritual also maintains a sort of hierarchy between the participants, the officers of the ceremony, the deities and their respective positions of authority within that culture – and overall the structure and roles the various peoples have in their community. If the religious or mythological characters in that particular culture and ritual are symbolic or personified natural forces or phenomenon, and certain individuals are selected within the community to play as certain roles within those structured rites as those certain characters, then certainly the individuals playing the parts of those characters may in a way 'merge' with those characters or identify with them, or, could be selected to play them because of 'predisposed traits' that resemble the particular Image, as Native American names are often 'phrase names' – 'flying wind' for instance (perhaps indicative that it's owner could be quick witted or agile in combat) – subsequently, the individuals assume the roles of their authority within their Images, and ultimately, giving the structure of the Ritual (in a cyclic cult or festivity) 'validity' by the perceived community, and also, strengthening it and the perceived hierarchy.

On a grander level, this scheme of hierarchy within the human microcosm of society and culture is a mimicking of the 'hierarchy' of the cosmos macrocosm; with it's movements and rotations, various phenomena and so forth, resulting in a string of themes based upon the interactions of the natural world and universe. Just as the universe is constantly interacting and fluctuating, celestial objects being created and destroyed, merging and separating, the interplay of human ritual-drama closely follows these motifs, and shapes the human psyche thorough millennia of observation, it's characters constantly 'quarreling and copulating', forming alliances, destroying or vanquishing, forging or creating. In sum, the cyclic religious celebrations are based upon the wide-range of stellar interactions, which convey 'truths' or certain messages through ritual-drama.

Is the importance of these rituals still held in the minds of our educated selves? Modern educated humans know well about the laws of physics and the 'rules' and order of the natural world, the internal body as

well as cellular biology, modern medicines, down to the microscopic – atomic – level, etc and etc.; Ancient man was not aware of the world to the extreme and minute detail that Modern man is physically capable, so again it does not seem so illogical that the ritualistic celebrations were enacted to remind and inform the participants of certain things which was not yet fully understood, but yet could be grasped through the use of the particular storytelling and ritual-drama.

Modern Man has cast aside these imaginative and fabled celebrations for an immersive empirical study of the world through rationality and science. The natural forces which were not yet fully understood are now generally well researched in their origins, causes and effects. We know why natural whether phenomena occurs under certain conditions whereas Ancient Man had a budding understanding.

In casting aside these cyclical seasonal celebrations, the imaginative aspect of Man is piled with the heavy weight of scientific study, and he loses and shuts the door to the creative mind through his learned understanding. The deities of the past which personified the cosmos in the mind of Man and acted as his internal mental-characters are 'steam-rolled out' and researched clinically, having lost the imaginative meaning that they once curiously held within his mind. Because there is this higher understanding of the world around him, these figures of mythology aren't necessarily needed, because their roles to play in dictating the actions observed in the cosmos are deemed 'sufficiently' studied enough that now they are seen as defunct of their use, having been replaced with modern sciences.

Why then, would a person choose to engage in the mythological ritual-drama of the seasons in this current age when they already understand the forces at play around themselves?