

Chapter 5 / Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols



I

Religion is never merely metaphysics. For all peoples the forms, vehicles, and objects of worship are suffused with an aura of deep moral seriousness. The holy bears within it everywhere a sense of intrinsic obligation: it not only encourages devotion, it demands it; it not only induces intellectual assent, it enforces emotional commitment. Whether it be formulated as *mana*, as *Brahma*, or as the Holy Trinity, that which is set apart as more than mundane is inevitably considered to have far-reaching implications for the direction of human conduct. Never merely metaphysics, religion is never merely ethics either. The source of its moral vitality is conceived to lie in the fidelity with which it expresses the fundamental nature of reality. The powerfully coercive "ought" is felt to grow out of a comprehensive factual "is," and in such a way religion grounds the most specific requirements of human action in the most general contexts of human existence.

In recent anthropological discussion, the moral (and aesthetic) aspects of a given culture, the evaluative elements, have commonly been summed up in the term "ethos," while the cognitive, existential aspects

have been designated by the term "world view." A people's ethos is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects. Their world view is their picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society. It contains their most comprehensive ideas of order. Religious belief and ritual confront and mutually confirm one another; the ethos is made intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life implied by the actual state of affairs which the world view describes, and the world view is made emotionally acceptable by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs of which such a way of life is an authentic expression. This demonstration of a meaningful relation between the values a people holds and the general order of existence within which it finds itself is an essential element in all religions, however those values or that order be conceived. Whatever else religion may be, it is in part an attempt (of an implicit and directly felt rather than explicit and consciously thought-about sort) to conserve the fund of general meanings in terms of which each individual interprets his experience and organizes his conduct.

But meanings can only be "stored" in symbols: a cross, a crescent, or a feathered serpent. Such religious symbols, dramatized in rituals or related in myths, are felt somehow to sum up, for those for whom they are resonant, what is known about the way the world is, the quality of the emotional life it supports, and the way one ought to behave while in it. Sacred symbols thus relate an ontology and a cosmology to an aesthetics and a morality: their peculiar power comes from their presumed ability to identify fact with value at the most fundamental level, to give to what is otherwise merely actual, a comprehensive normative import. The number of such synthesizing symbols is limited in any culture, and though in theory we might think that a people could construct a wholly autonomous value system independent of any metaphysical referent, an ethics without ontology, we do not in fact seem to have found such a people. The tendency to synthesize world view and ethos at some level, if not logically necessary, is at least empirically coercive; if it is not philosophically justified, it is at least pragmatically universal.

Let me give as an example of this fusion of the existential and the normative a quotation from one of James Walker's Oglala (Sioux) informants, which I find in Paul Radin's neglected classic, *Primitive Man as a Philosopher*:

The Oglala believe the circle to be sacred because the great spirit caused everything in nature to be round except stone. Stone is the implement of destruction. The sun and the sky, the earth and the moon are round like a shield, though the sky is deep like a bowl. Everything that breathes is round like the stem of a plant. Since the great spirit has caused everything to be round mankind should look upon the circle as sacred, for it is the symbol of all things in nature except stone. It is also the symbol of the circle that makes the edge of the world and therefore of the four winds that travel there. Consequently it is also the symbol of the year. The day, the night, and the moon go in a circle above the sky. Therefore the circle is a symbol of these divisions of time and hence the symbol of all time.

For these reasons the Oglala make their *tipis* circular, their camp-circle circular, and sit in a circle at all ceremonies. The circle is also the symbol of the *tipi* and of shelter. If one makes a circle for an ornament and it is not divided in any way, it should be understood as the symbol of the world and of time.¹

Here is a subtle formulation of the relation between good and evil, and of their grounding in the very nature of reality. Circle and eccentric form, sun and stone, shelter and war are segregated into pairs of disjunct classes whose significance is aesthetic, moral, and ontological. The reasoned articulateness of this statement is atypical: for most Oglala the circle, whether found in nature, painted on a buffalo skin, or enacted in a sun dance, is but an unexamined luminous symbol whose meaning is intuitively sensed, not consciously interpreted. But the power of the symbol, analyzed or not, clearly rests on its comprehensiveness, on its fruitfulness in ordering experience. Again and again the idea of a sacred circle, a natural form with a moral import, yields, when applied to the world within which the Oglala lives, new meanings; continually it connects together elements within their experience which would otherwise seem wholly disparate and, wholly disparate, incomprehensible.

The common roundness of a human body and plant stem, of a moon and a shield, of a *tipi* and a camp-circle, give them a vaguely conceived but intensely felt significance. And this meaningful common element, once abstracted, can then be employed for ritual purposes—as when in a peace ceremony the pipe, the symbol of social solidarity, moves deliberately in a perfect circle from one smoker to the next, the purity of the form evoking the beneficence of the spirits—or to construe mythologically the peculiar paradoxes and anomalies of moral experience, as when one sees in a round stone the shaping power of good over evil.

¹ P. Radin, *Primitive Man as a Philosopher* (New York, 1957), p. 227.

II

It is a cluster of sacred symbols, woven into some sort of ordered whole, which makes up a religious system. For those who are committed to it, such a religious system seems to mediate genuine knowledge, knowledge of the essential conditions in terms of which life must, of necessity, be lived. Particularly where these symbols are uncriticized, historically or philosophically, as they are in most of the world's cultures, individuals who ignore the moral-aesthetic norms the symbols formulate, who follow a discordant style of life, are regarded not so much as evil as stupid, insensitive, unlearned, or in the case of extreme dereliction, mad. In Java, where I have done field work, small children, simpletons, boors, the insane, and the flagrantly immoral are all said to be "not yet Javanese," and, not yet Javanese, not yet human. Unethical behavior is referred to as "uncustomary," the more serious crimes (incest, sorcery, murder) are commonly accounted for by an assumed lapse of reason, the less serious ones by a comment that the culprit "does not know order," and the word for "religion" and that for "science" are the same. Morality has thus the air of simple realism, of practical wisdom; religion supports proper conduct by picturing a world in which such conduct is only common sense.

It is only common sense because between ethos and world view, between the approved style of life and the assumed structure of reality, there is conceived to be a simple and fundamental congruence such that they complete one another and lend one another meaning. In Java, for example, this view is summed up in a concept one hears continually invoked, that of *tjotjog*. *Tjotjog* means to fit, as a key does in a lock, as an efficacious medicine does to a disease, as a solution does to an arithmetic problem, as a man does with the woman he marries (if he does not, they will divorce). If your opinion agrees with mine we *tjotjog*; if the meaning of my name fits my character (and if it brings me luck), it is said to be *tjotjog*. Tasty food, correct theories, good manners, comfortable surroundings, gratifying outcomes are all *tjotjog*. In the broadest and most abstract sense, two items *tjotjog* when their coincidence forms a coherent pattern which gives to each a significance and a value it does not in itself have. There is implied here a contrapuntal view of the universe in which that which is important is what natural relationship the

separate elements have to one another, how they must be arranged to strike a chord and to avoid a dissonance. And, as in harmony, the ultimately correct relationships are fixed, determinate, and knowable, so religion, like harmony, is ultimately a kind of practical science, producing value out of fact as music is produced out of sound. In its specificity, *tjotjog* is a peculiarly Javanese idea, but the notion that life takes on its true import when human actions are tuned to cosmic conditions is widespread.

The sort of counterpoint between style of life and fundamental reality which the sacred symbols formulate varies from culture to culture. For the Navaho, an ethic prizing calm deliberateness, untiring persistence, and dignified caution complements an image of nature as tremendously powerful, mechanically regular, and highly dangerous. For the French, a logical legalism is a response to the notion that reality is rationally structured, that first principles are clear, precise, and unalterable and so need only be discerned, memorized, and deductively applied to concrete cases. For the Hindus, a transcendental moral determinism in which one's social and spiritual status in a future incarnation is an automatic outcome of the nature of one's action in the present, is completed by a ritualistic duty-ethic bound to caste. In itself, either side, the normative or the metaphysical, is arbitrary, but taken together they form a gestalt with a peculiar kind of inevitability; a French ethic in a Navaho world, or a Hindu one in a French world would seem only quixotic, for it would lack the air of naturalness and simple factuality which it has in its own context. It is this air of the factual, of describing, after all, the genuinely reasonable way to live which, given the facts of life, is the primary source of such an ethic's authoritativeness. What all sacred symbols assert is that the good for man is to live realistically; where they differ is in the vision of reality they construct.

However, it is not only positive values that sacred symbols dramatize, but negative ones as well. They point not only toward the existence of good but also of evil, and toward the conflict between them. The so-called problem of evil is a matter of formulating in world-view terms the actual nature of the destructive forces within the self and outside of it, of interpreting murder, crop failure, sickness, earthquakes, poverty, and oppression in such a way that it is possible to come to some sort of terms with them. Declaring evil fundamentally unreal—as in Indian religions and some versions of Christianity—is but one, rather uncommon, solution to the problem; more often, the reality of evil is accepted

and characterized positively, and an attitude toward it—resignation, active opposition, hedonistic escape, self-recrimination and repentance, or a humble plea for mercy—is enjoined as reasonable and proper, given its nature. Among the African Azande, where all natural misfortune (death, illness, crop failure) is seen as caused by the hatred of one man for another acting mechanically through witchcraft, the attitude toward evil is a straightforward and practical one: it is to be dealt with by means of reliably established divination in order to discover the witch, and proven methods of social pressure to force him to abandon his attack, or failing this, by effective vengeance-magic to kill him. Among the Melanesian Manus, the conception that illness, death, or financial failure are the result of a secret sin (adultery, stealing, lying) which has offended the moral sensibilities of the household spirit is coupled with an emphasis on public confession and repentance as the rational way to cope with evil. For the Javanese, evil results from unregulated passion and is resisted by detachment and self-control. Thus, both what a people prizes and what it fears and hates are depicted in its world view, symbolized in its religion, and in turn expressed in the whole quality of its life. Its ethos is distinctive not merely in terms of the sort of nobility it celebrates, but also in terms of the sort of baseness it condemns; its vices are as stylized as its virtues.

The force of a religion in supporting social values rests, then, on the ability of its symbols to formulate a world in which those values, as well as the forces opposing their realization, are fundamental ingredients. It represents the power of the human imagination to construct an image of reality in which, to quote Max Weber, "events are not just there and happen, but they have a meaning and happen because of that meaning." The need for such a metaphysical grounding for values seems to vary quite widely in intensity from culture to culture and from individual to individual, but the tendency to desire some sort of factual basis for one's commitments seems practically universal; mere conventionalism satisfies few people in any culture. However its role may differ at various times, for various individuals, and in various cultures, religion, by fusing ethos and world view, gives to a set of social values what they perhaps most need to be coercive: an appearance of objectivity. In sacred rituals and myths values are portrayed not as subjective human preferences but as the imposed conditions for life implicit in a world with a particular structure.

III

The sort of symbols (or symbol complexes) regarded by a people as sacred varies very widely. Elaborate initiation rites, as among the Australians; complex philosophical tales, as among the Maori; dramatic shamanistic exhibitions, as among the Eskimo; cruel human sacrifice rites, as among the Aztecs; obsessive curing ceremonies, as among the Navaho; large communal feasts, as among various Polynesian groups—all these patterns and many more seem to one people or another to sum up most powerfully what it knows about living. Nor is there commonly but one such complex: Malinowski's famous Trobrianders seem equally concerned with the rituals of gardening and those of trade. In a complex civilization such as that of the Javanese—in which Hinduistic, Islamic, and pagan influences all remain very strong—one could choose any of several symbol complexes as revealing one or another aspect of the integration of ethos and world view. But perhaps the clearest and most direct insight into the relation between Javanese values and Javanese metaphysics can be gained through a brief analysis of one of the most deeply rooted and highly developed of their art forms which is at the same time a religious rite: the shadow-puppet play, or *wajang*.

The shadow play is called so because the puppets, which are flat cut-outs of leather, painted in golds, reds, blues, and blacks, are made to cast large shadows on a white screen. The *dalang*, as the puppeteer is called, sits on a mat in front of the screen, with a *gamelan* percussion orchestra behind him, an oil lamp hanging over his head. A banana tree trunk lies horizontally in front of him into which the puppets, each of them fastened to a tortoiseshell handle, are stuck. A performance lasts a whole night. As the play progresses, the *dalang* takes and replaces characters from the tree trunk as he needs them, holding them up in either hand over his head and interposing them between the light and the screen. From the *dalang's* side of the screen—where traditionally only the men were permitted to sit—one sees the puppets themselves, their shadows rising up dominant on the screen behind them; from the reverse side of the screen—where the women and children sit—one sees their shadows only.

The stories dramatized are mostly episodes taken from the Indian epic Mahabharata, somewhat adapted and placed in a Javanese setting.

(Stories from the Ramayana are sometimes dramatized, but they are less popular.) In this cycle there are three major groups of characters. First, there are the gods and goddesses, headed by Siva and his wife Durga. As in the Greek epics, the gods are far from uniformly righteous, are marked by human frailties and human passions, and seem peculiarly interested in the things of this world. Second, there are the kings and nobles, who are, in theory, the ancestors of the present-day Javanese. The two most important groups of these nobles are the Pendawas and the Korawas. The Pendawas are the famous five hero brothers—Yudistira, Bima, Arjuna, and the identical twins, Nakula and Sadéwa—who are usually accompanied, as a general advisor and protector, by Krisna, an incarnation of Visnu. The Korawas, of whom there are a hundred, are cousins of the Pendawas. They have usurped the kingdom of Ngastina from them, and it is the struggle over this disputed country which provides the major theme of the *wajang*; a struggle which culminates in the great Bratajuda war of kinsmen, as related in the Bhagavad Gita, in which the Korawas are defeated by the Pendawas. And, third, there are those Javanese additions to the original Hindu cast of characters, the great low clowns—Semar, Petruk, and Garèng, constant companions of the Pendawas, at once their servants and their protectors. Semar, the father of the other two, is actually a god in all-too-human form, a brother to Siva, king of the gods. The guardian spirit of all Javanese from their first appearance until the end of time, this gross and clumsy fool is perhaps the most important figure in the whole *wajang* mythology.

The types of action characteristic of the *wajang* also are three: there are the “talking” episodes in which two groups of opposed nobles confront one another and discuss (the *dalang* imitates all the voices) the issues between them; there are the fighting episodes, in which diplomacy having failed, the two groups of nobles fight (the *dalang* knocks the puppets together and kicks a clapper with his foot to symbolize the sounds of war); and there are the slapstick comic scenes, in which the clowns mock the nobles, each other, and, if the *dalang* is clever, members of the audience or the local powers-that-be. Generally, the three sorts of episodes are differentially distributed over the course of the evening. The declamatory scenes are mostly toward the beginning, the comic ones toward the middle, and the war toward the end. From nine until midnight, the political leaders of the various kingdoms confront one another and state the framework of the story—a *wajang* hero

wishes to marry the daughter of a neighboring king, a subjugated country wants its freedom, or whatever. From midnight until three o'clock or so difficulties of some sort set in—someone else is bidding for the daughter's hand, the imperialist country refuses freedom to its colony. And, finally, these difficulties are resolved in the last section, ending at dawn, inevitably, by a war in which the heroes triumph—an action followed by a brief celebration of the accomplished marriage or the achieved freedom. Western-educated Javanese intellectuals often compare the *wajang* to a sonata; it opens with an exposition of a theme, follows with a development and complication of it, and ends with its resolution and recapitulation.

Another comparison which, offhand, strikes the Western observer is with Shakespeare's chronicle plays. The long formal scenes in the courts with the messengers coming and going, interspersed with short, breathless transitional scenes in the woods or along the road, the double plot, the clowns speaking a rough common language full of worldly-wise ethics, caricaturing the forms of action of the great nobles, who speak an elevated language full of apostrophes to honor, justice, and duty, the final war, which, like those at Shrewsbury and Agincourt, leaves the vanquished beaten but still noble—all these suggest Shakespeare's historical dramas. But the world view the *wajang* expresses, despite the surface similarities in the two feudal codes, is hardly Elizabethan at base. It is not the external world of principalities and powers which provides the main setting for human action, but the internal one of sentiments and desires. Reality is looked for not outside the self, but within it; consequently what the *wajang* dramatizes is not a philosophical politics but a metaphysical psychology.

For the Javanese (or at least for those of them in whose thought the influence of Java's Hindu-Buddhist period from the second to the fifteenth centuries still is dominant), the flow of subjective experience, taken in all its phenomenological immediacy, presents a microcosm of the universe generally; in the depths of the fluid interior world of thought-and-emotion they see reflected ultimate reality itself. This inward-looking sort of world view is best expressed in a concept the Javanese have also borrowed from India and also peculiarly reinterpreted: *rasa*. *Rasa* has two primary meanings: "feeling" and "meaning." As "feeling" it is one of the traditional Javanese five senses—seeing, hearing, talking, smelling, and feeling, and it includes within itself three aspects of "feeling" that our view of the five senses separates: taste on the tongue, touch on the body, and emotional "feeling" within the "heart"

like sadness and happiness. The taste of a banana is its *rasa*; a hunch is a *rasa*; a pain is a *rasa*; and so is a passion. As "meaning," *rasa* is applied to the words in a letter, in a poem, or even in common speech to indicate the between-the-lines type of indirection and allusive suggestion that is so important in Javanese communication and social intercourse. And it is given the same application to behavioral acts generally: to indicate the implicit import, the connotative "feeling" of dance movements, polite gestures, and so forth. But in this second, semantic sense, it also means "ultimate significance"—the deepest meaning at which one arrives by dint of mystical effort and whose clarification resolves all the ambiguities of mundane existence. *Rasa*, said one of my most articulate informants, is the same as life; whatever lives has *rasa* and whatever has *rasa* lives. To translate such a sentence one could only render it twice: whatever lives feels and whatever feels lives; or: whatever lives has meaning and whatever has meaning lives.

By taking *rasa* to mean both "feeling" and "meaning," the more speculatively inclined among the Javanese have been able to develop a highly sophisticated phenomenological analysis of subjective experience to which everything else can be tied. Because fundamentally "feeling" and "meaning" are one, and therefore the ultimate religious experience taken *subjectively* is also the ultimate religious truth taken *objectively*, an empirical analysis of inward perception yields at the same time a metaphysical analysis of outward reality. This being granted—and the actual discriminations, categorizations, and connections made are often both subtle and detailed—then the characteristic way in which human action comes to be considered, from either a moral or an aesthetic point of view, is in terms of the emotional life of the individual who experiences it. This is true whether this action is seen from within as one's own behavior or from without as that of someone else: the more refined one's feelings, then the more profound one's understanding, the more elevated one's moral character, and the more beautiful one's external aspect, in clothes, movements, speech, and so on. The management of the individual's emotional economy becomes, therefore, his primary concern, in terms of which all else is ultimately rationalized. The spiritually enlightened man guards well his psychological equilibrium and makes a constant effort to maintain its placid stability. His inner life must be, in a simile repeatedly employed, like a still pool of clear water to the bottom of which one can easily see. The individual's proximate aim is, thus, emotional quiescence, for passion is crude feeling, fit for children, animals, madmen, primitives, and foreigners. But his ultimate aim,

which this quiescence makes possible, is gnosis—the direct comprehension of the ultimate *rasa*.

Javanese religion (or at least this variant of it) is consequently mystical: God is found by means of spiritual discipline, in the depths of the self as pure *rasa*. And Javanese ethics (and aesthetics) are, correspondingly, affect-centered without being hedonistic: emotional equanimity, a certain flatness of affect, a strange inner stillness, is the prized psychological state, the mark of a truly noble character. One must attempt to get beyond the emotions of everyday life to the genuine feeling-meaning which lies within us all. Happiness and unhappiness are, after all, just the same. You shed tears when you laugh and also when you cry. And, besides, they imply one another: happy now, unhappy later; unhappy now, happy later. The reasonable, prudent, “wise” man strives not for happiness, but for a tranquil detachment which frees him from his endless oscillation between gratification and frustration. Similarly, Javanese etiquette, which comprises almost the whole of this morality, focuses around the injunction not to disturb the equilibrium of another by sudden gestures, loud speech, or startling, erratic actions of any sort, mainly because so doing will cause the other in turn to act erratically and so upset one’s own balance. On the world-view side, there are yoga-like mystical techniques (meditation, staring at candles, repeating set words or phrases) and highly involved speculative theories of the emotions and their relations to sickness, natural objects, social institutions, and so on. On the ethos side, there is a moral stress on subdued dress, speech, and gesture, on refined sensitivity to small changes in the emotional state both of oneself and of others, and on a stable, highly regularized predictability of behavior. “If you start off north, go north,” a Javanese proverb says, “don’t turn east, west, or south.” Both religion and ethics, both mysticism and politesse, thus point to the same end: a detached tranquility which is proof against disturbance from either within or without.

But, unlike India, this tranquillity is not to be gained by a retreat from the world and from society, but must be achieved while in it. It is a this-worldly, even practical, mysticism, as expressed in the following composite quotation from two Javanese petty traders who are members of a mystical society:

He said that the society was concerned with teaching you not to pay too much attention to worldly things, not to care too much about the things of everyday life. He said this is very difficult to do. His wife, he said, was not

yet able to do it much, and she agreed with him, e.g., she still likes to ride in motorcars while he doesn't care; he can take them or leave them alone. It takes much long study and meditation. For example, you have to get so that if someone comes to buy cloth you don't care if he buys it or not . . . and you don't get your emotions really involved in the problems of commerce, but just think of God. The society wants to turn people toward God and avoids any strong attachments to everyday life.

. . . Why did he meditate? He said it was only to make the heart peaceful, to make you calm inside, so you will not be easily upset. For example, if you're selling cloth and are upset you may sell a piece of cloth for forty rupiah when it cost you sixty. If a person comes here and my mind is not calm, well then I can't sell him anything. . . . I said, well, why do you have a meeting, why not meditate at home? And he said, well, in the first place you are not supposed to achieve peace by withdrawing from society; you are supposed to stay in society and mix with people, only with peace in your heart.

This fusion between a mystical-phenomenological world view and an etiquette-centered ethos is expressed in the *wajang* in various ways. First, it appears most directly in terms of an explicit iconography. The five Pendawas are commonly interpreted as standing for the five senses which the individual must unite into one undivided psychological force in order to achieve gnosis. Meditation demands a "cooperation" among the senses as close as that among the hero brothers, who act as one in all they do. Or the shadows of the puppets are identified with the outward behavior of man, the puppets themselves with his inward self, so that in him as in them the visible pattern of conduct is a direct outcome of an underlying psychological reality. The very design of the puppets has explicit symbolic significance: in Bima's red, white, and black sarong, the red is usually taken to indicate courage, the white purity, the black fixity of will. The various tunes played on the accompanying *gamelan* orchestra each symbolize a certain emotion; similarly with the poems the *dalang* sings at various points in the play, and so on. Second, the fusion often appears as parable, as in the story of Bima's quest for the "clear water." After slaying many monsters in his wanderings in search of this water which he has been told will make him invulnerable, he meets a god as big as his little finger who is an exact replica of himself. Entering through the mouth of this mirror-image midget, he sees inside the god's body the whole world, complete in every detail, and upon emerging he is told by the god that there is no "clear water" as such, that the source of his own strength is within himself, after which he goes off to meditate. And third, the moral content of the play is

sometimes interpreted analogically: the *dalang*'s absolute control over the puppets is said to parallel God's over men; or the alternation of polite speeches and violent wars is said to parallel modern international relationships, where so long as diplomats continue talking, peace prevails, but when talks break down, war follows.

But neither icons, parables, nor moral analogies are the main means by which the Javanese synthesis is expressed in the *wajang*; for the play as a whole is commonly perceived to be but a dramatization of individual subjective experience in terms at once moral and factual:

He [an elementary schoolteacher] said that the main purpose of the *wajang* was to draw a picture of inner thought and feeling, to give an external form to internal feeling. He said that more specifically it pictured the eternal conflict in the individual between what he wanted to do and what he felt he ought to do. Suppose you want to steal something. Well, at the same time something inside you tells you not to do it, restrains you, controls you. That which wants to do it is called the will; that which restrains is called the ego. All such tendencies threaten every day to ruin the individual, to destroy his thought and upset his behavior. These tendencies are called *goda*, which means something which plagues or teases someone or something. For example, you go to a coffee-shop where people are eating. They invite you to join them, and so you have a struggle within—should I eat with them . . . no, I've already eaten and I will be over full . . . but the food looks good . . . etc. . . . etc.

Well, in the *wajang* the various plagues, wishes, etc.—the *godas*—are represented by the hundred Korawas, and the ability to control oneself is represented by their cousins, the five Pendawas and by Krisna. The stories are ostensibly about a struggle over land. The reason for this is so the stories will seem real to the onlookers, so the abstract elements in the *rasa* can be represented in concrete external elements which will attract the audience and seem real to them and still communicate its inner message. For example, the *wajang* is full of war and this war, which occurs and reoccurs, is really supposed to represent the inner war which goes on continually in every person's subjective life between his base and his refined impulses.

Once again, this formulation is more self-conscious than most; the average man "enjoys" the *wajang* without explicitly interpreting its meaning. Yet, in the same way as the circle organizes Oglala experience, whether the individual Sioux is able to explicate its significance, or indeed has any interest in doing so, so the sacred symbols of the *wajang*—the music, characters, the action itself—give form to the ordinary Javanese experience.

For example, each of the three older Pendawas are commonly held to display a different sort of emotional-moral dilemma, centering around

one or another of the central Javanese virtues. Yudistira, the eldest, is too compassionate. He is unable to rule his country effectively because when someone asks him for his land, his wealth, his food, he simply gives it out of pity, leaving himself powerless, poor, or starving. His enemies continually take advantage of his mercifulness to deceive him and to escape his justice. Bima, on the other hand, is single-minded, steadfast. Once he forms an intention, he follows it out straight to its conclusion; he doesn't look aside, doesn't turn off or idle along the way—he “goes north.” As a result, he is often rash, and blunders into difficulties he could as well have avoided. Arjuna, the third brother, is perfectly just. His goodness comes from the fact that he opposes evil, that he shelters people from injustice, that he is coolly courageous in fighting for the right. But he lacks a sense of mercy, of sympathy for wrongdoers. He applies a divine moral code to human activity, and so he is often cold, cruel, or brutal in the name of justice. The resolution of these three dilemmas of virtue is the same: mystical insight. With a genuine comprehension of the realities of the human situation, a true perception of the ultimate *rasa*, comes the ability to combine Yudistira's compassion, Bima's will to action, and Arjuna's sense of justice into a truly moral outlook, an outlook which brings an emotional detachment and an inner peace in the midst of the world of flux, yet permits and demands a struggle for order and justice within such a world. And it is such a unification that the unshakable solidarity among the Pendawas in the play, continually rescuing one another from the defects of their virtues, clearly demonstrates.

But what, finally, of Semar, in whom so many oppositions seem to meet—the figure who is both god and clown, man's guardian spirit and his servant, the most spiritually refined inwardly and the most rough-looking outwardly? Again one thinks of the chronicle plays and of, in this case, Falstaff. Like Falstaff, Semar is a symbolic father to the play's heroes. Like Falstaff, he is fat, funny, and worldly-wise; and, like Falstaff, he seems to provide in his vigorous amoralism a general criticism of the very values the drama affirms. Both figures, perhaps, provide a reminder that, despite overproud assertions to the contrary by religious fanatics and moral absolutists, no completely adequate and comprehensive human world view is possible, and behind all the pretense to absolute and ultimate knowledge, the sense for the irrationality of human life, for the fact that it is unlimitable, remains. Semar reminds the noble and refined Pendawas of their own humble, animal origins.

He resists any attempt to turn human beings into gods and to end the world of natural contingency by a flight to the divine world of absolute order, a final stilling of the eternal psychological—metaphysical struggle.

In one *wajang* story, Siva comes down to earth incarnated as a mystical teacher in an attempt to bring the Pendawas and Korawas together, to arrange a negotiated peace between them. He is succeeding quite well, opposed only by Semar. Arjuna is therefore instructed by Siva to kill Semar so that the Pendawas and Korawas will be able to get together and end their eternal struggle. Arjuna does not want to kill Semar, whom he loves, but he wishes a just solution to the differences between the two groups of cousins and so goes to Semar to murder him. Semar says: so this is how you treat me after I have followed you everywhere, served you loyally, and loved you. This is the most poignant point in the play and Arjuna is deeply ashamed; but true to his idea of justice, he persists in his duty. Semar says: all right, I will burn myself. He builds a bonfire and stands in it. But instead of dying, he is transformed into his godly form and defeats Siva in combat. Then the war between the Korawas and the Pendawas begins again.

Not all people have, perhaps, so well developed a sense for the necessary note of irrationality in any world view, and thus for the essential insolubility of the problem of evil. But whether in the form of a trickster, a clown, a belief in witchcraft, or a concept of original sin, the presence of such a symbolic reminder of the hollowness of human pretensions to religious or moral infallibility is perhaps the surest sign of spiritual maturity.

IV

The view of man as a symbolizing, conceptualizing, meaning-seeking animal, which has become increasingly popular both in the social sciences and in philosophy over the past several years, opens up a whole new approach not only to the analysis of religion as such, but to the understanding of the relations between religion and values. The drive to make sense out of experience, to give it form and order, is evidently as real and as pressing as the more familiar biological needs. And, this being so, it seems unnecessary to continue to interpret symbolic activities—religion, art, ideology—as nothing but thinly disguised expressions of something other than what they seem to be: attempts to

provide orientation for an organism which cannot live in a world it is unable to understand. If symbols, to adapt a phrase of Kenneth Burke's, are strategies for encompassing situations, then we need to give more attention to how people define situations and how they go about coming to terms with them. Such a stress does not imply a removal of beliefs and values from their psychobiological and social contexts into a realm of "pure meaning," but it does imply a greater emphasis on the analysis of such beliefs and values in terms of concepts explicitly designed to deal with symbolic material.

The concepts used here, ethos and world view, are vague and imprecise; they are a kind of prototheory, forerunners, it is to be hoped, of a more adequate analytical framework. But even with them, anthropologists are beginning to develop an approach to the study of values which can clarify rather than obscure the essential processes involved in the normative regulation of behavior. One almost certain result of such an empirically oriented, theoretically sophisticated, symbol-stressing approach to the study of values is the decline of analyses which attempt to describe moral, aesthetic, and other normative activities in terms of theories based not on the observation of such activities but on logical considerations alone. Like bees who fly despite theories of aeronautics which deny them the right to do so, probably the overwhelming majority of mankind are continually drawing normative conclusions from factual premises (and factual conclusions from normative premises, for the relation between ethos and world view is circular) despite refined, and in their own terms impeccable, reflections by professional philosophers on the "naturalistic fallacy." An approach to a theory of value which looks toward the behavior of actual people in actual societies living in terms of actual cultures for both its stimulus and its validation will turn us away from abstract and rather scholastic arguments in which a limited number of classical positions are stated again and again with little that is new to recommend them, to a process of ever-increasing insight into both what values are and how they work. Once this enterprise in the scientific analysis of values is well launched, the philosophical discussions of ethics are likely to take on more point. The process is not that of replacing moral philosophy by descriptive ethics, but of providing moral philosophy with an empirical base and a conceptual framework which is somewhat advanced over that available to Aristotle, Spinoza, or G. E. Moore. The role of such a special science as anthropology in the analysis of values is not to replace philosophical investigation, but to make it relevant.