

Letters to the Editor

The Editor
Self & Society,

Dear Editor,

Donald Ellison's thoughtful and stimulating comments on Paul Rebillot's interesting **The Hero's Journey** not only prompts us to include the birth experience in everyman's pilgrimage but suggests its closeness to our feelings about death.

Both represent the unknown, the mysterious. Either can be a source of fear or security. Each symbolizes areas of the deepest meaning, which culturally we celebrate with rituals. Attached to each are experiences of crises, loss and renewal, which are often felt as stages on a journey. Erickson's work on transitional psychology conceptualizes growth as being the product of a death-birth cycle. The poetic interpretation of the hero's journey - "a hard time we had of it" said Eliot - has also often brought together birth and death.

However, it is rosier to reflect on growth than it is to recall rationally movement in the other direction. For one step forward, I generally take two backwards, and sometimes I make such a mess that I go from side to side

also. I am not being fanciful about this: individuals, and the human race generally, makes awful mistakes - the most gifted have helped with concentration camps, A-bombs, and people purges; the most cultured have become addicted and racist. The deviancy theorists do not share the general consensus about backward movement as do humanistic psychologists about the growth movement. Is there sufficient dialectic between us? I remember a prison staff member asking me what the difference was between regression and sin. transgression and regression.

Donald Ellison asks whether it is the anti-hero who refuses the call to adventure. Jimmie Boyle - The Scottish murderer turned Sculptor - has only become a hero since repudiating his early adventures in crime and violence: the prodigal son was welcomed home as a hero after his adventurous waste of family resources. Haven't we got to see the hero's journey in a community context?

Love and peace,

Yvonne Craig

London WC1