The Theory Of Chaos To Cosmos In Reference To Man S Journey To Self-Understanding Essay, Research Paper

There is a force that drives man through life. Mythologist Mircea Eliade tried to find that force when he came up with his theory of chaos turning to cosmos. Eliade described chaos as imperfection, disorder, and disorganization, and described cosmos as a state of perfection, utopia, and justice. Thus, chaos to cosmos can be described as the resolving of a problem or a situation. Eliade used Creation, either by God or by man, as one example of the chaos to cosmos theory. A historian as well, Eliade claimed in addition that history tries to create cosmos by learning from its mistakes and driving onward. This idea relates closely to Carl Jung s Golden Age archetype, which tells of man s yearning for a better life. This yearning causes man to drive onward in his life; man revels at the prospect of a better life and a better world. One way man tries to create a better world is by improving his personal life. Other men, such as philosophers, try to make life better for all mankind. Throughout life, man embarks on a journey to self-understanding, with hopes of making life better.

There are always skeptics who will believe that life is a series of unrelated events that end in unhappiness and confusion. Simply put, these people believe the exact opposite of Eliade s theory, which would be cosmos to chaos. One example such people might use may be Nathaniel Hawthorne s short story Rappacini s Daughter. In this story the young Giovanni arrives in a small Italian village wealthy and intelligent. His life could not be better as he lives at a house where people wait on him and he goes to school to enhance his knowledge. Unfortunately, he falls in love with the beautiful but mysterious Beatrice, daughter of Dr. Rappacini. During their romance, Giovanni discovers that Beatrice is a horrific experiment of her father, and that she is poisonous. However, it is too late, and Giovanni becomes poisonous as well, just in time to see Beatrice die. Giovanni ends up alone and destroyed; he ends up in a state of chaos. This short story is an example of the opposing view, cosmos to chaos. However, what some people do not realize is that Giovanni began courting Beatrice because she was so mysterious and beautiful. He thought that he could be utterly happy with her, and thus pursued her, as well as pursuing a better life. Those who believe the idea of cosmos to chaos fail to realize that man s journey drives him onward.

The journey to self-understanding helps men create personal cosmos by allowing them to see truth and understanding in their own lives. Personal cosmos most often arrives in the form of an inner conflict being resolved. The character of Arthur Dimmsdale in Nathaniel Hawthorne s novel The Scarlet Letter is one example. Dimmsdale struggles with his secret: he is the one who committed adultery with Hester Prynne. However, through the hiding of his secret (and the close watch and verbal torture of Hester s husband ) Dimmsdale endures emotional agony. Eventually, Dimmsdale reveals his secret to the town, stands at the pillory with Hester, and through accepting and reconciling his sin, dies a happy man. Another example would be Jim Burden from My +ntonia, by Willa Cather. Burden struggles with his relationship with +ntonia Shimerda because even though he loves her, he can never have her. Even after +ntonia is married, Burden still longs to be with her. However, when he visits her and sees how happy +ntonia is with her family, Burden learns to find happiness though +ntonia s happiness. Burden realizes that both he and +ntonia have happy lives, and he becomes content with his personal cosmos. Both Jim Burden and Arthur Dimmsdale create cosmos for themselves by resolving their inner conflicts.

Some men s journeys lead them to create cosmos for many people, not just themselves, by finding understanding, justice, and truth and then passing it on to others. In 1692, the chaotic Salem Witch Trials struck the Boston village of Salem. In Arthur Miller s play about the trials, The Crucible, John Proctor is a man who sees the truth during the trials, but is battling his own internal sin. In the end, Proctor reconciles his sin to himself by becoming a martyr. His death forces some characters in the play, such as the Reverend Hale, to think the trials over and consider whether or not justice was served. Similarly, Owen Lattimore sought justice during the McCarthy trials in the 1950 s when he was accused of being the top Soviet spy in the United States. Lattimore looked for truth and self-redemption saying, I realized McCarthyism is not a thing to be fixed, it is an octopus to be fought. Another example of man creating cosmos for others is the young Henry Fleming in Stephen Crane s The Red Badge of Courage. Like Proctor, Fleming also endures a personal battle as he fights a real battle of the Civil War. Wondering if he will be a hero or a coward, Fleming fights what Nancy H. Banks, in her critique of the book, calls either Battle of the Wilderness or the Battle of Life (218). In the end, he picks up the United States flag in an extraordinary show of courage and helps rally his fellow soldiers to victory. Just as Fleming rallied soldiers to victory, civil rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr. rallied supporters for black equality, showing how much one man could do for the good of others. Amidst the chaos of the segregation of blacks, King triggered the events that led to equality; King took America one step closer to cosmos. As societies draw closer to cosmos, they are helped along by those whose journey leads them to help create cosmos for others.

By understanding himself and the world around him, man creates cosmos. Whether man s journey is for his own good of for the good of others, it is a journey towards a better life. Perfection, understanding, truth, Utopia, justice, and knowledge are all at the end of this journey in the form of cosmos. Whether man completes his journey is up to Fate.

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