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Michael D Loughran, *Universit of Richmond*

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MICHAEL D. LOUGHRAN

At approximately 12:22 in the morning on August 31, 1997 there was a high-speed automobile accident in Paris. A black Mercedes-Benz crashed into the 13th pillar of the Alma tunnel near the Seine River causing three passengers to suffer fatal injuries with one managing to escape alive but severely damaged. Found in the wreckage was Diana, Princess of Wales. Pronounced dead only a few hours later, the world lost the iconic figure of elegance, beauty, and gentle determination. More tragically, her children Prince William, aged 15, and Prince Harry, aged 12, lost their mother. It is impossible to imagine the depth of their misery following the loss of the person who cared for them since birth.

It is commonly believed, however, that pain creates room for growth and inspires perseverance. On the 20th anniversary of the accident, Prince William and Prince Harry were finally able to reveal their emotions and continuous struggle after the passing of their mother as young adults. In a new documentary, *Diana, 7 Days*, Prince William acknowledges that "When you have something as traumatic as the death of your mother when you're 15...it will either make or break you." He continues: "And I wouldn't let it break me. I wanted it to make me. I wanted her to be proud of the person I would become...." (Singer, 2017). The death of Princess Diana caused the United Kingdom and the world alike to feel desolate and somber and her two sons to bear unspeakable pain. Ultimately, it was this pain that triggered the boys' motivation to seek an improved world.

From a heroic perspective, Prince William and Prince Harry demonstrated an extraordinary degree of courage and strength at a very young age. To help console the saddened hearts of thousands of people watching, William and Harry presented themselves as emotionally strong while walking behind their mother's casket at the funeral procession only six days after her death. While wanting to release their emotions of anger and misery, they conquered their inner struggles in order to show the world what it means to be strong in the face of utter despair. Prince William and Prince Harry are not unlike fictional icon Bruce Wayne, who at a very young age lost both of his parents. An important similarity between Bruce Wayne and Prince William is that their personal tragedies inspired them to strive for a world filled with peace and prosperity for their community and others around them. On the other hand, an important difference between both situations is that Bruce essentially blamed himself for their deaths due to his unappeasable fear as a young boy, but it is this trauma and his fear which allows him to grow into a hero.

Throughout this chapter, I provide an analysis of Bruce Wayne's heroic transformation from a young boy filled with fear to the masked man called "Batman" who conquers injustice. While there are many variations of the character since Batman first appeared in comics in 1939, created by Bob Kane, I will focus primarily on Christopher Nolan's interpretation in *The Dark Knight Trilogy* and *Batman Begins* to decipher Bruce Wayne's transformative journey. I describe how this heroic transformation commences, what allows it to prosper and what concludes his heroic tale. An important aspect of Bruce Wayne's journey to heroism is that it is almost exclusively internal as he continuously fights his

inner demons of morality and fear. The concluding thoughts will focus primarily on the importance of Bruce Wayne's heroic transformation as it pertains to the greater good of society, in this case Gotham City, in the face of villainous threats.

Heroes are widely considered the peak of human evolution. It is also commonly believed that only the greatest of humankind are able to earn the title of 'hero.' Comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell (1949) provided the prototypical evolution of heroic behavior that describes the journey that one must embark on to become a hero in his iconic book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. This heroic journey is called the hero monomyth, and it consists of three primary parts: departure, initiation, and return (Campbell, 1949). Ultimately, the hero sets out on a journey in an unknown, dangerous situation and is charged with performing a daunting task. The hero always needs to find a missing quality within himself to accomplish his mission, and to find this missing truth the hero usually must endure great suffering. These painful trials will eventually enable him to transform into a hero capable of delivering a great boon to society (Allison & Goethals, 2017).

Suffering is crucial to the hero's journey. Suffering is redemptive, encourages humility, inspires compassion, and most importantly it endows the hero with a sense of meaning and purpose (Allison & Setterberg, 2016). Without this suffering, the heroic transformation may never occur. It is important to note that all heroes begin their journey 'incomplete' and only during pivotal moments on the journey do they begin to process of obtaining the missing inner quality. While attempting to discover their true and complete self, the hero faces significant obstacles, which explains why a helpful mentor is essential. The mentor assists the hero in finding himself and allows the hero to complete his journey by defeating a villainous obstacle (Allison & Smith, 2015).

Although there are numerous understandings and nuances to the definition of heroism that could fill pages, the definition of heroism that is most useful comes from Franco et al. (2011) who state, "Heroism is the willingness to sacrifice or take risks on behalf of others or in defense of a moral cause." According to Allison and Goethals (2011), there are distinct character traits needed for heroism. These

eight characteristics, called "The Great Eight," are as follows: smart, strong, selfless, caring, charismatic, resilient, reliable, and inspiring. Heroism is very subjective, meaning that what can be called heroism lies in the eye of the beholder as Joseph Campbell made very clear in *The Power of Myth* (1988). However, the journey to become a hero is an inward one dependent on the hero's ability to conquer inner demons in order to transform into an extraordinary individual capable of transforming society.

CALL TO JUSTICE AND EXPOSURE TO TRAUMA

As a young child, Bruce Wayne grows up as heir to the most powerful family in Gotham City. His father, Thomas Wayne, is the owner of Wayne Enterprises and an illustrious billionaire determined to use his wealth and status as a means for good in his city. He seeks to provide affordable public transformation for all citizens as well as aid in the clean-up of the city's deteriorated areas. Along with focusing on the betterment of society, he and his wife Martha care deeply for their only child, Bruce. As a boy with the most wealthy and powerful parents in Gotham City, Bruce appears destined to coast through life effortlessly under the wing of his father, one day taking charge of Wayne Enterprises himself. Although life is relatively easy for adolescent Bruce, he struggles with a fundamental element of human nature: fear. Bruce is deathly afraid of bats which provides great insecurities as it is demoralizing for him to feel weak and submissive to an outside force. This fear is so great that it causes him to have painful nightmares and panic at the mere sight of the flying creature. Bruce relies heavily on his father Thomas Wayne to help alleviate his worries and phobia, as many children do.

This becomes clear when one day, while exploring the vast property owned by his family, Bruce accidentally plummets down into an old water well. Of course, his father eventually comes to the relief of his son and pulls him out of the dark abyss. While carrying him back to their mansion and doctoring the minor injuries suffered by Bruce, Thomas says, "And why do we fall Bruce? So we can learn to pick ourselves up" (Nolan, 2005). Bruce becomes accustom to the fact that whenever he is afraid or whenever he is in trouble, his father will be there to offer assurance, protection, and diminish his worries.

However, after one tragic incident, this steady influence will be no more. While enjoying a casual night out, Thomas accompanied by his wife, takes Bruce to see a theatrical production. Unfortunately, unbeknownst to Thomas, the performance includes the depiction of actors dressed as bats terrifying the protagonist, as well as Bruce. The sight of fictional bats becomes too much for Bruce to handle so his father suggests they leave through a back door and proceed home. Inauspiciously, while exiting the theater and heading down a grim alley, a man holds the Wayne family at gunpoint, demanding money in exchange for their lives. Thomas Wayne attempts to save his family by reaching for his wallet, however the criminal, clearly unstable, fires his weapon striking two bullets into Thomas and Martha. While bleeding out on the decrepit street, Thomas' last words to his son are as follows: "Bruce, it's okay, don't be afraid" (Nolan, 2005).

Until this moment, Bruce had never truly fallen and had never truly been affected by his fears because of his privileged upbringing. Now he is required to pick himself up. Throughout the introduction to Batman and Bruce Wayne, Nolan relies heavily on fear as a motivating factor for his protagonist. This becomes clear when Bruce says to his butler and now only parental figure, "Alfred, it was my fault. I made them leave the theater. If I hadn't gotten scared..." (Nolan, 2005). Langley states that research indicates that losing parents for kids old enough to understand is the single most stressful common life event that a child can experience (Langley, 2012). Bruce experiences the most stressful situation a child can endure, not to mention his tremendous guilt for indirectly causing their deaths.

With the loss of his parents, Bruce's call to a heroic journey begins at an early age. His guilt suffocates him because he believes his parents would still be alive if he didn't allow his to fear to control him. This pain and anger is Bruce's motivation as it spurs his heroic transformation when he begins to search inward to conquer his inner demons, primarily fear. He will also have to learn that contrary to his father's advice, it is okay for him to be afraid as long as he doesn't let it become debilitating and controlling.

Psychologist Phil Zimbardo provides a checklist of the chief features of a heroic act, including that it must be engaged voluntarily and it must involve physical risk or potential sacrifice (Zimbardo, 2007). A person's "calling" in life is generally voluntary and is directed toward improving the welfare of others compared to being driven by self-interest motivation (Dik & Duffy, 2009). There are obvious connections between such a calling and heroism. It becomes clear that Bruce Wayne experiences a calling as a young man attempting to live in a world without his parents. He is determined to make his parents proud, although his personal sentiment clouds his judgement. Before his call to defeat injustice can be fully realized, he must realize himself the importance of morality and the difference between revenge and justice.

Fourteen years after the death of Thomas and Martha Wayne, their murderer attends a sentencing hearing with the possibility of release for cooperating in a major criminal case. In attendance is Bruce Wayne with a pistol in his jacket and the intent to kill the man who brought him terrible amounts of pain. Due to the murderer's role in the criminal case, someone else fires a bullet into his chest thereby denying Bruce the opportunity. Bruce stares intensely at this dying man because his desire for closure and revenge which he has focused on for 14 years has been taken from him. After this incident, Bruce says to his lifelong friend Rachel Dawes, "My parents deserved justice," while she responds, "You're not talking about justice, you're talking about revenge…. They're never the same. Justice is about harmony, revenge is about you making yourself feel better" (Nolan, 2005). Bruce then confesses his potential sin: "I'm not one of your good people, Rachel. All these years, I wanted to kill him. And now I can't." Rachel then slaps Bruce across the face for his evil intentions, saying curtly, "Your father would be ashamed of you" (Nolan, 2005).

Bruce finally realizes how different his definition of justice is from his father's, the man he admires so deeply. He almost destroys the possibility of being a symbol of good as his father had been, and this recognition motivates Bruce to transform his beliefs and morals. This is an example of a metaphorical fall from which Bruce must recover to attain heroic status. Alone in the world, lost emotionally, Bruce throws the pistol he intended to use into the river, signifying his readiness and willingness to pursue justice instead of revenge. Randall M. Jensen argues in *Batman and Philosophy: The Dark Knight of the Soul*, that

"Bruce wants not only to atone for their deaths, but also give meaning to their lives by ensuring that their legacy doesn't die with them…. Batman isn't just trying to defeat and destroy the evil forces of Gotham, he's trying to build something as well" (White, 2008). His morals begin to align with his father's ideals but first he must begin the first part of his heroic journey: departure.

Departure: The Call to Adventure

Aware of his mistakes for desiring revenge and aware of the criminal activity occurring in the underbelly of Gotham City, Bruce Wayne voluntarily seeks out the means to conquer his goals of bettering himself to improve society. Allison et al. (2017) describe departure as the phase which begins the hero's journey and is necessary for a hero to acquire the important quality that he lacks. In this case, Bruce lacks the ability to control his fear, he lacks the ability to fight injustice, and he lacks the ability to represent his family's name. This departure is often characterized by an internal source of transformative change involving human transgression and failure. After "fallings and failings," people often undergo drastic change due to being humbled (Rohr, 2011; Worthington & Allison, 2018). This is the case for Bruce Wayne who, after hitting "rock bottom," leaves his wealthy inheritance and popular name behind and seeks resolution. As previously stated, suffering instills the hero with meaning and purpose (Allison & Setterberg, 2016), and Bruce's purpose now centers on avenging his parents' death by seeking justice for his community.

Mentorship

Bruce travels half-way across the world due to an identity crisis and encounters Henry Ducard, or Ra's al Ghul, master of the League of Shadows, a society intending to restore balance to the world through purges. Henry Ducard becomes pivotal to Bruce's transformation as he helps Bruce understand how controlling himself is the key to helping him control others. One of the most important aspects of the heroic transformation is the arrival of a mentor (Allison & Goethals, 2017). Tom Landry, former football coach for the Dallas Cowboys, clearly states that a mentor is someone "who tells you what you don't want to

hear, who has you see what you don't want to see, so you can be who you have always known you could be" (Farcht, 2007, p. 294). Mentors retain the capability of benefiting the hero by guiding them, but the wrong mentor can also cause a hero to fail by leading them down a malicious path (Allison & Smith, 2015). It becomes clear that Henry Ducard is an already transformed person, helping Bruce transform himself, but his mentorship requires Bruce to be morally inclined and deviate from the villainous aspects of the League of Shadows.

When Bruce arrives, Henry Ducard realizes that "...a man like you is only here by choice, or because he is truly lost" but Bruce responds by clearly identifying his goals: "I seek the means to fight injustice. To turn fear against those who prey on the fearful" (Nolan, 2005) but he doesn't know how to accomplish this yet. Through training, Ducard manipulates Bruce's fear, anger, and guilt in order to teach him how to control them, rather than let them control him. Wisely, Ducard says, "Your anger gives you great power. But if you let it, it will destroy you..." along with, "...and what you really fear is inside yourself. You fear your own power. You fear your anger...Now you must journey inwards... Breathe in your fears. Face them. To conquer fear, you must become fear...Feel terror cloud your senses. Feel its power to distort. To control. And know that this power can be yours. Embrace your worst fear" (Nolan, 2005).

Ducard serves a very important role as Bruce's mentor because he identifies Bruce's insecurities and exposes them therefore creating room for growth. He says, "You are afraid...but not of me. Tell us, Mr. Wayne, what do you fear?" (Nolan, 2005) and proceeds to engage him in combat to provoke his mental fears as well as the physical fear of death. He enlightens Bruce; he demonstrates that fear can be used advantageously, but only if mastered and used correctly. Thomas Wayne taught his son that the elimination of fear is crucially important in finding peace, and Bruce naively follows his instructions. Contrary to this notion, Ducard reveals that "to manipulate the fears in others, you must first master your own" (Nolan, 2005).

Initiation

The second component of the Hero's journey is initiation, which requires the hero to prevail in overcoming obstacles, challenges, and enemies (Allison et al., 2017). A famous example of initiation comes from Star Wars (1977) during which

the protagonist hero Luke Skywalker, without mentorship from Obi-wan Kenobi, faces battle against the evil Empire to save Princess Leia. In Batman Begins (Nolan, 2005), Bruce's initiation requires him to face his mentor, Henry Ducard, in order to maintain his definition of justice and avoid a path of self-destruction.

After learning to control his fears and channel his anger to something positive, Bruce becomes aware of the villainous aspect of the League of Shadows. Henry Ducard claims to desire worldly justice, just as Bruce does, but the means by which he seeks to accomplish this goal is far different than Bruce's. In order to become a member of the League of Shadows, Ducard commands Bruce to execute a criminal convicted of stealing. Ducard says, "We have purged your fear. You are ready to lead these men. You are ready to become a member of the League of Shadows. But first, you must demonstrate your commitment to justice," and he hands Bruce a sword with which to strike the felon. After Bruce refuses, Ducard claims, "Your compassion is a weakness your enemies will not share." This is a rather momentous moment as Bruce is required to truly define what his definition of justice is compared to his mentors. He states, "That's why it's so important. It separates us from them" (Nolan, 2005), 'them' implying criminals and villains. This is the most essential aspect to Bruce's journey towards becoming the hero known as Batman. The League of Shadows rests on the fundamental belief that in order to conquer injustice, societal destruction is required to rebuild. Ducard explains that Gotham, due to its resounding injustice, is beyond saving. Bruce, on the other hand, recognizes that their interpretation of justice is villainy. Doing what he claims is necessary, Bruce sets fire to the League of Shadows and combats his former mentor, eventually saving his life before he dies.

This aspect of Bruce's transformation is critical because he clearly evolves as a hero. He conquers all three of his inner demons: fear, anger and morality. Interestingly enough, it is his mentor who provides him with the ability through training, and opportunity to become a hero after he becomes a threat. Bruce returns to Gotham City and puts on the cowl for the first time in order to fight injustice and face his former mentor once again to save his famed city.

Return

The final aspect of the heroic journey is the return, defined as when the hero, upon returning to their original world, delivers a great benefit to their society. After completing their personal transformation, the hero now focuses on wider ambitions of benefiting their community (Allison et al., 2017). Drawing once again from Star Wars (Lucas, 1977), Luke Skywalker's return occurs when he finally faces Darth Vader and uses the force he gained through his personal transformation to destroy the infamous Death Star.

A powerful manifestation of Bruce Wayne's heroic transformation is seen when he puts on the cowl and finally becomes Batman. He explains the reasoning behind why he dons the cowl: "People need dramatic examples to shake them out of apathy. I can't do that as Bruce Wayne. As a man…I'm flesh and blood, I can be ignored, destroyed. But as a symbol…as a symbol I can be incorruptible. I can be everlasting. Something elemental…something terrifying" (Nolan, 2005). We first witness Batman help defeat injustice when he raids a drug trade regularly executed by criminals but he instills fear in his enemies to accomplish something that the proper authorities were not able to accomplish before. Although some might consider this vigilantism, Batman provides aid to a city in desperate need of ridding criminals, which is the most important criterion in determining whether or not he is heroic. Alfred instructs Bruce that his plan for saving Gotham cannot be with the intentions of thrill seeking or to prove he's a hero: "For Thomas Wayne, helping others wasn't about proving anything to anyone, including himself…It can't be personal, or you're just a vigilante" (Nolan, 2005). After returning to society, Bruce becomes distracted by his prominent wealth and newly gained power but Alfred helps him remember why he initially desired transformation: to defeat injustice like his father before him.

Although Bruce's return never fully concludes, the first indication of his benefitting Gotham City occurs when Ducard arrives. Ducard has the intent to drive the citizens insane using a hallucinogen which would essentially cause them to destroy themselves while intoxicated. Before Ducard is able to initiate the machine that will spread this hallucinogen across the entire city, Bruce, or rather Batman, faces him. One important aspect of Bruce's morality is that he doesn't

execute criminals; this mercy is what separates himself from evil. So when faced with the decision to either kill his mentor or let his city perish he relies on his father's influence. At the mercy of Batman, his former mentor Ducard exclaims, "Have you finally learned to do what is necessary?" Bruce responds, "I won't kill you…but I don't have to save you" (Nolan, 2005). The train carrying the machine capable of destroying Gotham, along with Ducard, proceeds to crash thus saving the city.

Bruce's return to Gotham City includes his realization that Batman is a symbol of justice in a way that bears similarity to his father's reputation as a helpful philanthropist. Bruce determines that he must always put Gotham City before his personal satisfaction. He recognizes that he must not sacrifice his morality at any cost. This allows him to be truly heroic and benefit Gotham City by protecting the citizens from all villainous threats.

CONCLUSION

Joseph Campbell's (1949) monomyth is the most famous and influential depiction of the hero's evolution and development. When Batman, revered for his physical prowess, defeats villains such as the Joker who is known for his masterful plans, or Bane with his domineering stature, we witness the finished product of this heroic transformation. Batman solely desires justice for Gotham City, a desire spurred by his father's reputation. The man behind the mask is essentially the product of the suffering child standing over his parents' dead bodies. Although this transformed hero gains all the glory, Bruce Wayne's long journey of suffering endowed him with meaning and purpose dedicated to justice that is the root of all his heroic behavior. His painful journey also promoted his mental and physical well-being (Efthimiou, Allison, & Franco, 2018). Bruce, much like Prince William and Prince Harry, relies on the transformative gift of suffering to perform greats acts of altruism and bravery concerning the betterment of society.

It is important for the hero to never forget what spurred their transformation. Heroism is not a final product, but rather a continuous display of bravery

and selflessness for the greater good of society. And it is tenuous. If Batman were ever to forget the child who lost both of his parents, the transformation would be unwound and Gotham City would lose its famed hero.

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