Spiritual Quests and Obstacles. A Cultural Paradigm

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Various types of quest, present in the most different genres of stories, ranging from fairy tales to Hollywood movies about the self-made-man, are founded on an ancient narrative pattern of initiation, in which the protagonist is supposed to overcome a series of obstacles that define his development as an individual. Therefore, the two notions, 'quest' and 'obstacles' are inseparable. The paradigmatic purpose of all quests can be regarded as the protagonist's evolution towards a higher inner reality, attainable only if/when obstacles have been ultimately overcome.

The common scenario we have detected could be defined as comprehending the following stages: 1) the description of a state of 'normality' of the reality or of the world; 2) the insertion of an element, followed by the disturbance taking place in the 'normal' state of things presented at the beginning; 3) this stage is usually accompanied by the torment of the main character or protagonist who becomes aware that reality is different from what it seemed to be in the beginning; 4) the protagonist's quest to understand the disturbance and confront it in order to overcome it; 5) the successful overcoming of the situation, which only apparently represents a return to the first stage, as the re-instated order in 'reality' is of a higher order, more valuable, and both the protagonist and the new 'reality' are enriched by the encounter with the difficulties (obstacles) that had taken place in the meantime, and were overcome. In this scheme, the obstacle(s), a kind of a 'shadow', is the difficulty that the protagonist had to confront, be it a negative character or situation, the devil, the dark side of one's own personality, etc.

This pattern can be highlighted by using some examples taken from religious or spiritual myths all over the world, from yoga, alchemy and modern psychology.

For the beginning, let's analyze Prince Siddhartha and his spiritual transformation into the Buddha, the Enlightened One. One can notice that the stages of Prince Siddhartha's enlightenment, if not considered as a process pertaining to the development of somebody's psychic or spiritual life, are similar to the stages usually followed by the heroes of fairy tales, in which the singular protagonist has to encounter different obstacles, which he must overcome in order to prove that he is the right one, the truly 'elected one'. An approximately similar pattern is often

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followed in the Hollywood films dealing either with the 'case' of the self-made man, or with the protagonist saving a whole group of people from a disaster (natural calamities, shipwreck, aliens, social injustice, etc.), in which the main character is the representative of the principles of good, while the obstacle he must confront can be defined as the evil. Therefore, one can assume that the 'laic' quests are backed up by a long tradition of 'spiritual' quests, aiming at encompassing inner reality.

Nowadays, in Bertolucci's film *Little Buddha* (1993), Prince Siddhartha's quest, although roughly following the same pattern, is aimed at his discovering of the very roots of evil in the world and of overcoming them. The transition from the first stage of the above described pattern to the second is triggered by Prince Siddhartha's acquaintance with human misery, illness, death, all related to the very human condition in this world that is tied to suffering. Therefore, the future Buddha is engaged in a gnostic quest, aiming at finding out the final truth about the nature of existence itself, about life and death and man's possibility to transcend the misery of his mortal condition and attain immortality. In his *Foreword* to his study *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, Mircea Eliade, the renowned Romanian anthropologist, philosopher and historian of religions points out:

> We cannot neglect one of the most important discoveries made by India: the discovery of the witnessing of consciousness, as freed from its psycho-physiological structures and their temporal conditioning, the consciousness of 'the liberated one', i.e. of the one who has succeeded in overcoming the borders of time and enjoys the true and unimaginable freedom (Elijade 1984: 23).

It is this kind of inner reality we are interested in as an issue of the protagonist's quest.

The liberation Eliade points to is, however, preceded, especially in its final stage, by a long psycho-physiological process, which is rather difficult to understand from the standpoint of modern man, subject to a laic and materialistic *Weltanschauung*, although modern depth psychology, cultural anthropology, physics and other disciplines have revealed different structures and patterns of reality, as hidden beyond the surface of appearances. In this respect, in his last interview, Mircea Eliade (Elijade 1989: 13) reveals the fact that there is no essential difference between a religious fanatic making prostrations in his temple, and an atheist paying his respects to Lenin's Mausoleum, as only the object of the two believers is different, while the *inner pattern* of the two individuals is similar, and appearance should not deceive us. Not that Lenin's Mausoleum is a religious symbol, but it certainly performs *the function* of a religious symbol. Both the atheist and the religious fanatic follow the same deep psychological pattern of behavior, no matter of the space and time they live in. Considered in this manner, many things, only apparently opposite, become, at a deeper scrutiny, identical as far as *their function* is considered. It is at this deeper level where, what is usually defined as *coincidentia oppositorum*, works. As a historian of religions, Eliade notices that

> the disappearance of 'religions' does not imply the disappearance of 'religiosity'… 'The profane' is a new manifestation of the same constitutive structure of man, which used to reveal itself in the past in expressions of 'the sacred' (Eliade 1975: 10).

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The structures and functions of human behavior and gestures are, therefore, constant features, unchangeable in time and space, and it is only the temporary *Weltanschauung* that changes the name of things. In an earlier essay, Eliade states:

> There is no general hypothesis that one can prove by any number of facts, there is no rigorous and verified method to study and comprehend human thought. Anyway, can we understand at all any other spiritual relations? The methods and the values change every thirty years and the human 'spirit' is always studied by resorting to the latest method of the positive sciences. 'The human soul is once 'matter,' at other times 'sensation' or 'energy,' a 'vital instinct,' or an 'epiphenomenon', etc., anything but not the *soul* (Eliade 1991: 28).

The long psycho-physiological process Siddharta is subject to before becoming the Buddha, the Enlightened one, follows the pattern of the spiritual transformation, known as initiation, which is also difficult to understand for the modern, profane man, but which equally represents a constant of human behavior throughout the ages. The process is partially known to the *homo religiosus* of all times. Namely, *homo religiosus*, as defined by Eliade, is the individual who is able to escape the 'terror of history': no matter what he believes in, *homo religiosus* can stand and spiritually escape the atrocities and injustice of history, or natural calamities taking place in the time of his life, as he invests historical, diachronic facts with a higher, synchronic meaning, tied to the meaning of life (existence) itself. This process of stepping out of history in order to live spiritually beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of one's existence is known to all civilizations throughout time. Although European thought has insisted upon man's being conditioned socially and historically, Eliade reveals (in the *Foreward* to his *Yoga*… 1984: 19, 20) the fact that Indian thought has also envisaged other, additional 'binds' by which man is tied to the material world he lives in, such as physiologic, geographic, social, biographic, cultural, etc. factors, which condition his existence and reduce his existential freedom. If being a *homo religiosus* means being able to detach oneself from history by investing events with a meta-historical meaning, it appears that, in order to attain enlightenment, man must be able to do more than that, namely to de-condition himself from many more things that define human existence. This is the kind of quest Siddharta takes up. But de-conditioning from the material life, i.e. from all the factors that bind man to physical existence, practically means death. Paradoxically, that is what spiritual initiation is about. In many of the cultures of the world of all times, initiation follows the same scheme: suffering, death, resurrection (Eliade 1974: 33). As a symbol for resurrection, the wheat grain is often cited, which is buried into earth in order to sprout again, giving thus birth to a new life. A spiritually initiated person acquires a new sort of identity, perceived as "resurrection", which changes the person's existential condition.

In the process of initiation, which involves the three stages (suffering, death and resurrection), and which is to be found in most civilizations worldwide, one can envisage the fact that suffering and death, as *the obstacles to be overcome*, are the symbolic expression of the difficult process of de-conditioning from the material world. This is the meaning of fasting, and other renunciations, for example. In a text, belonging to the yoga school of practice, Eliade attended while in Rishikesh, India, known today as The Bihar School of Yoga (whose main yogic master has been and

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is still regarded nowadays Swami Shivananda, whom Eliade met in person), the yogic spiritual development takes place while one's awareness rises from one's physical body and successively passes through all its five energetic *koshas* or sheaths which surround the body (*annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya, anandamaya*), and full enlightenment is attained in *anandamaya kosha* (Satyasangananda Saraswati 2007: 2–3) The process is described as extremely difficult as the illusions of one's ego, as obstacles during the process, are so strong, that they appear as very "real" and lure the disciple to renounce his spiritual quest, while the individual who aspires to enlightenment must be decided and fearless as well as striving to understand that everything that he encounters, his visions, his psycho-physical experiences and troubles, no matter how hard they might be, cannot harm him, as they are only a reiteration of his own past impressions, or of the past of the human species that inevitably come to the surface in the process of yogic meditation:

> (a) All of these experiences /of man's evolution throughout time/ are stored in the *vijnanamaja kosha*. In order to step into the arena of spiritual ecstasy, you have to go through this zone and face what is stored there eye to eye. […] In modern psychology, the causal body or *karana sharira* is known as the realm of unconsciousness. You may even term it the psyche of man. It is the mythical Pandora's Box, virtually the skeleton in the closet. You cannot know what is stored there until there is awakening in the *vijnanamaya* kosha (Satyasangananda Saraswati 2007: 8).

All these terrible experiences, although seemingly coming from the outside, are, in fact, part of the individual's own psyche, in which, to put it into terms of psychology, the subconscious and the unconscious are lying. What we called at the beginning 'the shadow', as 'obstacle(s)', appears to be a constitutive part of the human psyche in Buddha's case and in the case of the yogic practice. In the movie *Little Buddha* by Bertolucci, for example, like in the Buddhist scripts, Siddhartha goes successively through the different experiences of de-conditioning, and after fasting and renunciation, when he finds the famous 'middle path,' his experiences can also be described in terms of the yoga practices as follows:

> (b) So one can say that *vijnanamaja* is the doorway to *anandamaya*. The experiences of *vijnanamaya* provide you with glimpses of what is in store for you as your awareness begins to experience pure bliss, but the experience again drops due to the appearance and disappearance of distractions and the one-pointedness of mind. All siddhas and saints must have passed through this stage before they attained enlightenment. The tales about Buddha, point out that prior to nirvana he encountered the demons and bewitching damsels, as the forty days and forty nights when Christ encountered temptation before he experienced God. When there is awakening in the *vijnanamaya kosha* […] the practitioner becomes clairvoyant and telepathic; he begins to know many things about people and events before they happen, which come to him in the form of dreams, thoughts or visions. […] He develops the power to read other people's thoughts and also to change them. Or else he may develop healing powers. […] In some exceptional cases, depending on the extent of his advent into the level of the *vijnanamaya kosha*, he may be even able to resurrect life, or enter another person's body (Satyasangananda Saraswati 2007: 6–7).

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> (c) The most important thing you have to know is that *vijnanamaya kosha* is the realm of your unconscious mind or psyche. It is a world of signs and symbols, colours and lights. And your unconscious is part of the collective unconscious. It is directly linked to the collective unconsciousness or *hiranyagarbha*, the golden womb, which holds everything that has ever come into existence or is waiting to come into existence. It is the cosmic storehouse to which the unconscious mind of each and every individual is linked. That is why, when you experience *vijnanamaya kosha* you become intuitive, because you begin to perceive things which belong to the four dimensions of time: past, present, future, and, beyond those, to eternity (Satyasangananda Saraswati 2007: 15).

In the story of Buddha, as in the 20th century film *Little Buddha,* the quotations (a) and (b) are illustrative for Siddhartha's experiencing successively de-conditioning first from simple things, as thirst and sexual desire, but his experience goes deeper into the history of the evolution of mankind, and he experiences floods and wars, as well as "the five bewitching damsels", representing: Pride, Greed, Fear, Desire, and Ignorance. As he does not give in, in the process of his encounter with the "shadow," as we have put it, Siddhartha becomes, under the famous banyan tree, the Buddha, or the Enlightened One. It appears that in Buddha's case, 'the obstacles' reside in one's own ego. In the final scene under the tree, after having succeeded in going beyond forms and beyond time, Buddha's own image appears as a mirror image from the pond, taking him by his hand, dragging him downwards into the water, and saying: 'You live in me, I am your house'. But, having got rid of the five symbolical bewitching damsels that we have named before, Buddha is able to discern: 'Lord of my ego, you are pure illusion'. The Lord of Buddha's ego is god Mara, the god of death, which means that in order to attain enlightenment, or 'nirvana', or immortality (here synonymous terms), one has to renounce his ego, which is viewed also as an illusion, and which (so deeply rooted/conditioned in the material world) is the main obstacle in attaining enlightenment. With Buddha, it is man's ego that can be identified as the 'shadow', the 'obstacle' in the spiritual quest for inner reality.

If we consider the situation of Jesus Christ, things look similar, although one can notice some differences. Here no physical or psychological practices are mentioned as such. Still his initiation, which is his being baptized, is described in *The Bible* (we used King James's version of *The Bible* for illustration) in the same terms of being tempted. In order for Jesus to become the Christ (or the Messiah), he had to confront another type of 'obstacles', which are presented as NOT being inside himself, but outside, in the shape of Satan. After his baptism, Jesus went to the desert, where he stayed for forty days and forty nights during which, when Jesus got hungry, Satan, the tempter, appeared and tempted him three times: 1) 'If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread'. But he answered and said, 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God'. 2) 'If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down /from the pinnacle of the temple/, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone'. Jesus said unto him: 'It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God'. 3) 'Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain

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and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; And saith unto him: 'All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me'. Then saith Jesus unto him, 'Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written: Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve'. (*The New Testament*, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* 4: 3–10). After Jesus didn't give in while tempted by Satan, as Buddha didn't give in while lured by god Mara, Satan disappeared, as god Mara did also in Buddha's case.

In one way or another, the testing of Jesus during his encounter with 'the obstacle', or 'shadow' (Satan) also comprises elements defining one's ego, such as greed, ignorance, desire, pride and fear, as in Buddha's case. So the encounter with 'the shadow' of the two protagonists, after initiation, and before attaining enlightenment is similar. Both Jesus and Siddhartha met 'the obstacles' while retiring from the world in their endeavor to de-condition themselves from the material world, and fight 'the obstacles', in the solitude of their retreat, within an inner reality. It appears that the only difference is the fact that Buddha, following the yogic conception, confronts his own ego, in the shape of the god of death Mara, while Jesus has to face Satan, following the main obstacle present in his own spiritual practice or belief – within his inner reality. Moreover, the yogic quotations given above as (b), (c), and partially (a), also match some of the facts related to Jesus in *The New Testament*. Such are, for example, the power of healing, the resurrecting of Lazarus from the dead, appearing without one's physical body in several places, the perception of different temporal dimensions, and all sorts of miracles described as the deeds of the enlightened people, attained psychical powers, as being the side effects of enlightenment in all cases. The main difference in the case of the two protagonists is the conception of sin. While for a yogi 'sin' is ignorance, according to the Christian belief, sin is viewed as not paying heed to the holy texts, to what has been written. Buddha is, allegedly, the beginner of a new spiritual path, although his yogic gurus are known (Mircea Eliade even states that Buddhism is not essentially different from yoga), while Jesus performs many deeds just in order to follow what has been written (in *The Old Testament*), and thus prove that he is the expected Messiah.

However, the convergence between Buddhism and Christianity, which might not be apparent in the film *Little Buddha* is the viewing of Nirvana, respectively of God's Kingdom (in *The New Testament*), after the initiation has taken place. As Mircea Eliade states (Eliade 1982 vol. 2: 91), Buddha would never answer the question where *nirvana* is, whether it is outside the individual perception or outside it, or on the state of the holy man in *nirvana*. According to Eliade, Buddha refuses to answer such a question, as the answer would distract the aspirant to enlightenment from his own, individual quest, as he would again follow a new doctrine, while nirvana or self-realization goes beyond the level of the mental, and represents an issue of total experience, in which the self, as inner reality, unites to the cosmos. The very aim of the spiritual quest is to envisage that both inner and outer reality belong to a unique, to one and the same reality, which is overall existence. Buddha says that a man hit by a poisonous arrow, should not waste his time in discovering who shot it (a *kshatriya* or a Brahman… to what family he belongs, whether he is tall, short or of a medium height; from what village or city he comes), what kind of poison he

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used, whether the arrow has got feathers or not, if it has a metal end or not, but must hurry up to take it out of his body as soon as possible and in the most efficient way. 'The man died without knowing these things, […], just like the one who would refuse to follow the way of holiness before solving one or another philosophical problem' (Eliade 1982 vol. 2: 92–93). In the *New Testament*, there is also a confusion as to what *The Good News* is, and whether it is a synonym for *the kingdom of God*, or *the kingdom of heaven* (*Mark*, 1: 15, *Matthew*, 4:17). Moreover, in *Luke* 17: 21, Jesus says: 'the kingdom of God is within you,' and, in other places (*Mark*, 4: 26; 30, and *Matthew*, 13: 28), the Kingdom (nirvana, in the case of Buddha) is compared with the development of the mustard seed that grows alone, or with the yeast that makes the dough grow. But unlike Buddha, Jesus had to fight two kinds of 'obstacles', or 'shadows': the one in the shape of Satan, after his baptism, and a historical 'obstacle'. He seems to have succeeded in overcoming only Satan; the historical 'obstacles' might be regarded as part of a new 'initiation ritual,' of dying and being resurrected, reiterating once again, by his Christian followers, the symbol (ritual) of a corn of wheat, which is buried in order to make possible a new life.

If 'the obstacles' remain confined within the borders of the individual's ego in Buddha's case, in the case of the Christians, it is *imago Christi*, which means identification with Jesus Christ's suffering and martyrdom in history, that defines the meta-historical meaning that provides Christians with an example for stepping out of history, by following Jesus Christ's model. Jesus himself after his resurrection points out to his followers 'the signs' or criteria for identifying those who will be redeemed: 'he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved'. He further delineates the tasks of his followers, the Apostles: 'In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover' (*Mark*, 16: 16–18) – which all seem to point back to quotations (a), (b), and (c).

This might lead to the conclusion that, in the case of the spiritual quest, after 'the obstacles' are defeated, the enlightened person makes immediately contact with a higher inner/outer reality that has also a feed-back impact on his psycho-physical state, enabling him to handle in a new manner the laws of time, space and causality, as we normally accept them, and which, in the case of an enlightened person, appear as different. As the description of these experiences is unsayable in terms of logical discourse, they can become obvious only in terms of symbols, colours and lights, or parabolas, as it appears in the yogic text (c) quoted above. The perception of nirvana or God's kingdom as inhabiting ourselves is dealt with in Mihai Eminescu, whose poem *Ta Twam Asi* (*That Is You*) defines that view, as well as in Mircea Eliade's early essay *The Journey towards the Centre* (*Drumul spre centru*), to which, among other Romanian philosophers and writers belonging to the existentialist (*trairist*) period between the two World Wars, we can also mention Cioran, the skeptic, who seems to have made the effort towards de-conditioning himself from the material world, and '*nullified*' the value of the mere intellectual, logical discourse, but who seemed unable to connect with the cosmos, as the enlightened people are said to do. For Cioran, the encounter with the 'obstacles' of history and with himself represented the main event in 20th century Existentialism.

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A possible encounter with spiritual obstacles does not necessarily take place only with exceptional people, in their quest and practice to attain enlightenment. The psychologist Carl Gustav Jung harbors the idea that people's psychological crises are founded on their impossibility to accept a side of their existence or life experience, which they deeply consider as unjust, or evil, or as 'a shadow,' as we called it. Jung supports his argument on the Biblical character of Job, in *An Answer for Job*/ *Un răspuns la Iov* (Jung 1997: 220 et sq.), who was mistreated by God at the suggestion of Satan, only in order to make sure his belief was genuine. After the faithful Job, lost everything, not only what he owned, but his family as well, and while keeping silent about the kindness of God, he succeeded in accepting God as he is and still believed in him. In Jung's opinion, Job succeeded in putting his belief beyond what is good or bad, or, in psychological terms, he succeeded in integrating 'good' and 'evil' in his belief, and thus experienced a successful process of individuation. This is a process, usually referred to by the Christians as 'Thy will be done' (in *the Lord's Prayer*), that can also be regarded as an encounter with the 'obstacle', the 'shadow', as well as a psychical integration with it – as is the case of the film *Little Buddha*.

This integration of 'good' and 'evil,' regarded by both Jung and Eliade as an example of *coincidentia oppositorum* (Jung – Eliade: 26–28), coincides with the process in alchemy by which *opus magnum* is obtained. Eliade notices that if the Christians wanted to save man, the alchemists intended to save the whole Creation: their aim was *apokatastasis*, or cosmic salvation. Their goal was not the study of the matter, but the way to liberate the soul from the matter, which matches the process of initiation and its different approaches, as described above. In alchemy, the process ranges from the stage of *nigredo* (darkness/devil/shadow) to the stage of *albedo*. This process goes necessarily through a state of *rubedo*. However, in order for *albedo* to take place (or, let us say enlightenment, in the cases described before), and in order for *rubedo* to be sustainable, blood/*rubedo* (the red of life) was necessary. It was only in this case that *nigredo*/the shadow/the obstacle was integrated. Therefore, in all the described cases (Buddha, Christ, Job, alchemy and depth psychology), an encounter with the 'obstacle' and a sacrifice on the part of the individual is needed to make the final process of integration possible. In Eliade 1989: 12, Eliade also points to the fact that, although he and Jung were both interested in yoga, alchemy and shamanism, their 'paths' were parallel. Eliade had been dealing with the issue of alchemy since high school, and published his first book on Indian alchemy before Jung published anything in that field. Besides that, 'for Jung alchemy is a model for the process he named individuation. After my stay in India, alchemy was for me a spiritual technique, a technique for spiritual self-realization'.

It appears that in all the described situations, the individual is able to spiritually evolve not necessarily by opposing 'the obstacles,' by fighting with them, but by confronting them in the sense of being aware that 'the obstacles' exist as part of one's life experience, and lie at the very roots of human existence. The 'obstacles' are necessary as, for example, an earthquake is necessary for the earth to restore its balance after an inner tension, which is beyond of what man usually regards as 'good' or 'evil'. In this respect, obstacles are also beyond the moral categories of

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'good' and 'evil'. If in modern psychology successive encounters with 'the shadow' and integrations with it might take place, in the traditional cultures, or in different religions, the process is described as essential and is linked to man's understanding of the meaning and aim of physical existence itself, and life, generally speaking.

The quest for inner reality, which is in all cases necessarily followed by 'obstacles', is a reiteration of the ancient process of initiation, which takes the protagonist from a lower to a higher level of perception and understanding reality. It is hard to establish if man's quest for 'a higher reality' became symbolic, or if human experience itself was illustrated in myths, symbols and parables in order to provide examples of human behavior and wisdom, able to stand the passage of time, space, and different kinds of *Weltanschauung*, which can be equally followed in fairy tales, films, and modern science alike.

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Abstract

Various types of quest, present in the most different genres of stories, ranging from fairy tales to Hollywood movies about the self-made-man, who overcomes all obstacles, are actually founded on an ancient narrative pattern of initiation, in which the protagonist is supposed to overcome a series of challanges (spiritual quests) that define his development as an individual. Explicitly or implicitly identified with "the evil", the obstacles which are to be met are a mere pretext for the inner evolution of the protagonist, for his "growing up", and for his final understanding of the difference between the "true" and the "false" values of the world. Man becomes a model of wisdom, only by overcoming the challenging obstacles of "the evil". This pattern of evolution is equally frequent in traditional myths and rituals all

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over the world, in yoga, in the suffering of the Biblical Job, in Jesus' encounter with Satan after the Christian initiation (baptism), in alchemy, while in modern psychology the obstacle, the ‚evil', represents a necessary step within the individuation process of human personality. Maybe contrary to expectations, the presence of obstacles does not necessarily imply a real confrontation between the good and the evil, as the obstacle itself represents a mere stage man must go through within the process of evolution; otherwise, as modern psychology envisages it, man must equally phychically integrate what seems good and what seems bad (*coincidentia oppositorum*), within his process of individuation. This paper explains how obstacles, as challenges, contribute to the development of the protagonist in the process of his quest for a higher identity and reality. Overcoming obstacles brings higher awareness of what is "good" and what is "evil", what is "reality" and what is "illusion", which is actually the ultimate aim of the protagonist's inner quest. Therefore, the paradigmatic purpose of all quests can be regarded as the protagonist's evolution towards a higher conscience, attainable only if/when obstacles have been ultimately overcome. The spiritual Christian, yogic and Buddhist models, as highlighted in this paper, seem to be essential paradigms for spiritual quests and obstacles to be overcome, on a larger cultural scale.

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