

The Ode to Man (800 BC)

Oh, you silly mortal simple man.
You who thinks he is a god!
I give each of you a flaw and this tiny fissure, despite all of your good deeds
Will bring you down and destroy all that you love!
For unless you, simple mortal man
Unless you know thyself,
You will be the cause of your own undoing.
The sins of the fathers are visited on their sons
Without self-knowledge, you become He.

How is change then possible? Part of the answer lies in the Greek concept of *hubris* (Pronounced: who-briss). The best definition of *hubris* is a fall from grace. Hubris entails a huge setback or an awful experience that almost kills us. Hubris is sent by the gods to humble us. Men in victory think themselves immortal and that one victory leads to another. The gods know otherwise. The immortal gods love nothing more than to trip up the proud, to scar the beautiful and to offer another bowl of wine to the drunkard. Hubris' purpose is to shake us to our very core so that we have to look at ourselves. Hubris is sent by the gods, to wake us up, because if we never wake up we will never change. Hubris is visited on people who think they have the world by the balls. Hubris can be a script breaker.

Homer's epic poem *The Iliad* is full of glorious examples of hubris. For nine long years the Greeks had thrown themselves against the walls of Troy, and for nine long years they met failure. Nothing changed. Men died by the thousands and the putrid stench of death were everywhere. Each day was the same as the next. Year after year the bodies piled up in the killing fields before Troy. Like Sisyphus, the Greeks pushed the awful boulder up the steep hill, only to have it roll back down again. Then in the tenth year, multiple disasters struck: Hector thrust a spear threw the throat of Patroclus in an horrible instance of mistaken identity: the Greek champion Achilles suffered a slow and agonizing death from a poison arrow shot into his heel: the Greek hero Ajax ripped out his own throat, committing suicide out of his despair over the loss of Achilles: the Greek camp along the beach became infested with plague, killing hundreds.

By the tenth year of war, military catastrophe was staring the Greek army in the face. Defeat was just a matter of time. Agamemnon's once proud army was rotting away on a foreign beach, far, far from home. Despair and hopelessness filled the Greek camp. Only Odysseus understood what was happening. The multiple disasters were a sign from the gods. The Greeks so proud and arrogant after the death of Hector needed to be humbled. Odysseus recognized that they either had to change their "Siege of Troy Script" or they would all die.

One morning the Trojans awoke to see a cloud of smoke hanging over the Greek camp. To their surprise they discovered the Greeks had gone leaving their camp in ashes. The only thing that remained was an enormous wooden statue of a horse dedicated to Grey-Eyed Athena, the goddess of wisdom. The Trojans were mystified. What could it mean? King Priam ordered the statue hauled along the great plain before Troy on rollers. When they reached the impregnable walls, they found the statue was far too large to get through the mighty Scaean gate. Part of the walls had to be taken down, leaving a gaping hole. Sweating in the awful heat of the day, the Trojans struggled to pull the horse into Troy. They found their path blocked by Priam's beautiful daughter, Cassandra and a Priest of Apollo, Laocoön.

"It's full of men!" screamed Cassandra. "It's a Greek trick!" she wailed, but she was ignored. Troy was drunk with victory.

"You arrogant fools! Beware of Greeks bearing gifts!" screamed Laocoön and he hurled his spear at the horse. The weapon struck quivering in the wood and there was a distinct sound of metal inside the statue. "Burn it!" screamed the Priest of Apollo, spittle flying from his mouth. "Throw the monster over the walls!" No one would listen, so excited by victory was Troy.

That night the Trojans held a great feast to celebrate their victory. Around midnight, after the city was silent and exhausted from the drunken orgy, 120 elite Greek warriors led by Odysseus, slid down ropes from a trap-door in the belly

of the great horse. Odysseus' cousin, Sinon, grabbed a torch and climbed to the top of the towering Scaean Gate. Sinon waved the torch, signaling the Greeks off in the distance. The flame was seen on the heights of the island of Tenedos and passed on to Agamemnon who was waiting with the fleet. By the light of the moon the Greeks clambered aboard their ships and strained at their oars until the black hulls were skimming across the glittering water.

The Trojans were still in a drunken slumber after their riotous night of victory celebrations. The Greeks poured through the hole in the dismantled wall. The population was slaughtered as they slept. The rape was awful. Ten years of pent up frustration drove the Greeks to horrible acts of sexual violence. Women, boys and girls were raped multiple times and then slowly killed. Agamemnon ordered the entire city put to the torch. When Troy (probably Troy VI) was discovered by Heinrich Schliemann, an amateur German archeologist in 1870, the walls still showed signs of intense heat and burning.

So what is the lesson of the *Iliad*? Consider this: 75% of all human behavior is generated at the unconscious level. So habitual is our speech and so mechanical are our actions that we are not even aware what we are doing. Our life scripts are imbedded so deeply in our unconscious minds that the abused girl does not even realize that she is attracted to the abusive men. Her behavior has become automatic. As a child she memorized and rehearsed her script for surviving abusive men and as a young woman she will perform her script to perfection. Granted she will be miserable, but she at least is living with what she knows.

Because so much of who we are is at the unconscious level, hubris, or a script breaker, must be an earth shattering event. It must be an event that makes us feel hopeless, helpless and out of control. These three things describe what psychologists call the *rage reaction*. By definition, a script breaker must force the unconscious behavior to the conscious level and only by producing a rage reaction is this possible. The rage reaction is different for everybody. For some people it must be an actual life threatening event where they actually feel like they are going to die. Afterward they change and they are different people. For others it can be a feeling of overwhelming failure and psychological death. The reason why so many high school students are so lazy and so irresponsible is that schools no longer allow students to fail; there no longer are any consequences for immature behavior. Because extra credit is always possible and because there is credit recovery programs and because students are allowed to be tardy and to turn in late work, few kids today ever experience the rage reaction in high school. Because of this sad fact, behaviors never have to change.

There is one further aspect to consider: even when people are shattered by script breakers not all people choose to change. *The Rule of Threes* shows us how difficult change is. After three years, only 3% of people who attempt a major change in their lives will actually be able to change. For example in the treatment of alcoholics, three years of sobriety is considered the turning point in the recovery process. After three years of being sober, the alcoholic has a chance. Let us be clear: they will always be an alcoholic; the disease is always there. But after three years, the disease will be somewhat managed and under control.

Long-lasting change is so painful and so difficult that most people fall back to their original behaviors. Because we haven't been scripted for these new behaviors, "the new me" if you will, change will feel very, very uncomfortable. We don't know the rules; we haven't spent the bulk of our lives memorizing and rehearsing the new play book. It's not that the abused woman wants to be abused. It's just that she is scripted for abusive men who are always in their Child ego states. When she meets a strong, healthy male, the abused woman doesn't know how to act or how to feel, so at an unconscious level, she will find a way to screw up the relationship. This is called *behavior sabotage*.

Hubris will show us what we have to do. All of us are going to be served up a number of huge script breakers in our lives. The question is whether we have the strength and the courage to face our Fates and to change.