

THE SELF-REFERENTIAL CYCLOPS

By
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The Cyclops are here, the Cyclops are here. Monocular monsters that ravage and ruin the lives of people throughout the land, these self-justifying, self-indulgent, self-glorifying entities are virtually unstoppable. These are Cyclops, but we experience them as single sighted individuals and organizations that pursue their self-referential agenda without regards to the needs or rights of anyone else. Whether religious, economic, political or other types of Cyclops, these “fundamentalists” pursue the satisfaction of their hunger for power, control or prestige with unflinching certainty. They follow their own interests and suck the life from the soul of the world. The Cyclops are truly here.

In order to deal with the Cyclops problem, we need to turn to mythology to realize the solution. The key lies in the words of Polyphemus, when he says to Odysseus, “The Cyclops pay no heed to Zeus, who bears the aegis, nor to the blessed gods, since truly we are far mightier than they.” (Od. 9, 275). The self-referentiality of the Cyclops make them a law unto themselves. There is no appeal to an outside authority in dealing with a Cyclops as far as the Cyclops are concerned.

However, within the structure of mythology the Cyclops are actually the children of the god of the sea, Poseidon. We know from the Odyssey that Poseidon was enraged when he learned of the injury that Odysseus had caused Polyphemus. Presumably, if Poseidon cared about the fate of his children, they must have some relationship with their father. Therein, perhaps, lies the key to the problem. Getting Poseidon to control his children. In short, rather than avoiding mystery, we need to embrace it in order to control the Cyclops problem.

This is a spiritual problem that requires us to drink deeply of the wine of wonder and to become wayfarers on the wine dark sea of mystery. By abandoning the soft white sands of the shore of certainty and casting ourselves upon the waves once more we can encounter the divine (Poseidon) and implore him to control his wayward children. We cannot do this from the safety of the shore, we must pour our libations from some frail craft there upon the wine dark sea of mystery.

Perhaps that is the function of Cyclops in our world, to impel us back to mystery and a relationship with the divine. Like the people of former ages, we must surrender to the ocean of mystery that surrounds us. The longer we delay embarking on our journey, the more Cyclops we may have to deal with—until maybe there is no escape. So, let us hasten our departure cast our fortunes once more upon the wine dark sea of mystery.