

# ***SUPERMAN***

The story of Superman fits the Hero Journey archetype, the linear story. In this story an extraordinary individual, coming to terms with his uniqueness, afraid of his own power, finds himself conflicted between isolation and intimacy as he learns to be a hero.

## ***KRYPTON AND SMALLVILLE***

***SUPERMAN DROPS OUT OF THE SKY. HE IS KAL-EL, THE LAST REMAINING CHILD OF THE PLANET KRYPTON, SENT TO EARTH TO SAVE HIM FROM THAT PLANET'S DESTRUCTION. HIS BIOLOGICAL PARENTS HAVE SELECTED EARTH TO BE HIS HOME, FEELING THAT HIS UNIQUENESS WILL NOT ONLY DIFFERENTIATE HIM FROM EARTH'S INHABITANTS, BUT ALSO PROTECT HIM; EARTH'S YELLOW SUN WILL GIVE HIM GREAT POWERS, AND VIRTUAL INVINCIBILITY.***

***HIS SPACECRAFT, WHICH DELIVERS KAL-EL FROM HIS FAMILY'S DESTRUCTION, BRINGS HIM TO NEW PARENTS: JONATHAN AND MARTHA KENT, HUMBLE, POOR FARMERS FROM THE TOWN OF SMALLVILLE, KANSAS. IT IS HERE THAT KAL-EL IS TAUGHT TO VALUE LIFE, HONOR, HUMAN DIGNITY, TAKING ON THE NAME THEY GIVE HIM (A COMPOSITE OF THEIR NAMES): CLARK KENT.***

***GROWING UP IN KANSAS, CLARK KNOWS HE CAN OUT-RUN, OUT-THROW, AND OUT-DO EVERYONE AROUND HIM IN ABILITIES. SO HE FEELS HE IS DIFFERENT - CUT OFF FROM EVERYONE ELSE. BUT HIS PARENTS KNOW THAT SHOULD HE USE HIS POWERS FOR SELFISH GAIN, IT WILL LEAD TO HIS OWN DOOM; HIS ENEMIES WILL TRY TO CONTROL HIM BY THREATENING THOSE HE LOVES, OR HE WILL BE TURNED INTO A TYRANT. SO INSTEAD, THEY ENCOURAGE HIM TO HIDE HIS ABILITIES UNTIL HE IS MATURE, AND READY TO FACE THE WORLD.***

***WHEN HE IS FINALLY OLD ENOUGH, HE WILL LEAVE SMALLVILLE, BEGIN LIFE IN METROPOLIS, AND BEGIN HIS ADVENTURE.***

The hero begins as one who is different, and knows it. These differences, which he receives without his consent from a history that has abandoned him, are initially regarded negatively, as they isolate him from others. His uniqueness is directly connected to his isolation, and so believes that uniqueness is somehow the cause of his isolation: that his power will push those he loves away from himself.

In his immaturity he will want to end his uniqueness, be accepted, and like everyone else. Should he venture forth, disclosing his true nature prematurely however, that uniqueness, which he *cannot* escape, will be used destructively, only furthering his isolation. He may try to dominate others, and will instead either enslave them or make enemies of them. So if he can, he must be guarded until he is matured, and develops a moral centre that corresponds in strength to his uniqueness. His uniqueness has thus *become* his strength, thanks to his *adoptive* parents.

One could thus say that Superman is the product of two sets of parents, and a composite of Kal-el (uniqueness) and Clark Kent (discipline and humility, which protect him and those he loves).

## ***SUPER-SUIT***

***SUPERMAN WEARS BLUE TIGHTS, SKIN TIGHT, A RED CAPE, AND A RED “S” ON HIS CHEST, WHICH ORIGINALLY WAS AN “S” THAT STOOD FOR SUPERMAN, BUT THEN CAME TO BE UNDERSTOOD AS A KRYPTONIAN SYMBOL OF HIS FAMILY LINEAGE. HE WEARS NO MASK.***

***CLARK KENT, ON THE OTHER HAND, DRESSES LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, ALTHOUGH EVEN MORE AVERAGE THAN AVERAGE, TO THE POINT OF INVISIBILITY. HE ALSO WEARS GLASSES, WHICH FOR SOME REASON, NO ONE CAN SEE THROUGH.***

Superman’s suit displays colors of virility and power, as does his suit, which displays his incredible power and physical strength. His emblem and exposed face show that his super suit displays the true self.

Clark Kent on the other hand is intentionally dressed to achieve anonymity, to fade into the mob. The irony of this disguise is how bad it is; anyone can see that such a huge man wearing only glasses must be the man of steel, but they don’t. This is a symbol of the inability that we so often have of seeing the uniqueness and power that exists in each individual. Clark will hide himself behind this mask, to protect those he loves, and perhaps to protect himself from the responsibility that comes from his unique abilities.

## ***LOIS LANE***

***COMING TO METROPOLIS, CLARK KENT GETS A JOB AT THE DAILY PLANET AS A MILD MANNERED REPORTER, AND THERE MEETS LOIS LANE. SHE’S A HEAD-STRONG, ADVENTUROUS, FREE AND ALIVE AND BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, WHO STEALS CLARK’S HEART. BUT BECAUSE OF HER LIVELY SPIRIT, SHE REPEATEDLY EXPOSES HERSELF TO PERIL, FROM WHICH SHE MUST BE SAVED BY SUPERMAN, TIME AND TIME AGAIN. AS A RESULT, LOIS FALLS IN LOVE WITH SUPERMAN – AND YET, ALL THE WHILE IGNORES CLARK KENT.***

The hero will emerge as such as a result of a crisis that he alone can resolve *because* of his uniqueness. So his uniqueness will be called out; the time to express itself has come, because there is another who is in need.

This other, in this case, Lois Lane, represents an end to Kal-el’s isolation. Her virility and liveliness remind him of his own, but at the same time make her expose herself to danger, and threaten that she will suffer the same fate as that of Krypton. So Kal-el must now use the uniqueness that once isolated him to *save* her from danger, and Superman is revealed to the world.

However, Superman has learned through his upbringing that his loved ones will be threatened should the world know his true identity, so he lives out his normal life in a disguise, Clark Kent, his discipline and humility, which now hide his powers.

His secret identity also serves another function. Having Superman running a 24 hour shift all the time, solving ALL the worlds problems all the time (as it dwells within his power to do so), the people he saves, represented primarily by Lois, might by comparison identify themselves as the non-hero, and thus yield all of their personal

responsibility. That same virility and specialness that attracted Clark to Lois so powerfully (and activated his powers) would then be squelched.

Lois too is conflicted. Loving Superman, she needs to know that Superman loves her back, but *exclusively*, and has trouble dealing with having to share him with the rest of the city. So Superman, for her, means either that she too is special, or that she is just like everyone else that has ever been saved by him.

But Lois is in love with Superman, not Clark. The “Clark Kent” identity continues to act as an isolating factor in Kal-el’s relational life. He must remain Clark Kent to protect her, so he thinks, and must not reveal ALL his uniqueness to her, for fear that doing so will result in her isolation or destruction. As such, Superman is afraid of his own power.

Likewise, Superman will regard the collective peoples of Metropolis in the same way. He will refuse to be their leader, to impose rules and laws on them, fearing he will become a dictator to them. He will also fear that his powers may destroy them. And also fears that calling them to action, will lull them into complacency, expecting him to solve all their problems for them. And so his isolation will continue.

Here we see the hero journeying forward in the search for intimacy. His uniqueness will now confront him with a potential counterpart, a heroin, with whom he shares certain characteristics, and therefore for whom his uniqueness can be salvific. But he still does not trust himself, and appropriately so, for the complete vulnerability of self-disclosure may destroy rather than create relationship. So he must remain guarded until he can trust her, and can trust himself, and until his specialness can activate her specialness, rather than negate it.

### ***THE ARCH-ENEMY - LEX LUTHOR***

***SUPERMAN’S ARCH-RIVAL IS LEX LUTHOR, WHO HAS HAD CHANGING ORIGINS AND IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS THROUGHOUT SUPERMAN’S THE HISTORY. AT ONE TIME HE WAS THE BRILLIANT MAD SCIENTIST, ENRAGED AT SUPERMAN FOR CAUSING HIS BALDNESS – ALTHOUGH IT WAS ACTUALLY LEX’S OWN EXPERIMENTS THAT REALLY CAUSED IT, AND SUPERMAN BY CHANCE HAPPENED TO BE FLYING BY... LATER, LEX WAS CHANGED INTO THE BILLIONAIRE TYCOON, THAT RULED METROPOLIS – AT TIME, DISHONESTLY – UNTIL SUPERMAN CAME ALONG THAT IS. IN BOTH CASES, LEX LUTHOR IS A HUMAN BEING, AND AS AN EVIL ARCHVILLIAN, IN A WAY WAS CREATED BY SUPERMAN, AND LEX WILL NEVER BE SATISFIED UNTIL HE HAS PERSONALLY BROUGHT AN END TO SUPERMAN’S LIFE.***

As Lois, confronted by Superman’s uniqueness, is attracted to it, Lex Luthor is turned into a jealous maniac, who will lose touch with the value of human life. Lex, both as mad scientist and billionaire, and later on as President of the United States, is a representation of human corporate, institutional and technological power. He is human nature as it tries to turn *itself* into Superman, to *earn* its specialness – feeling that he does not already possess it. So to him, Superman’s entrance onto the scene will signify the futility of Lex’s very reason to exist: to make himself special. Thus Superman will inadvertently turn Lex into a disfigured version of human nature, or perhaps reveal it as such.

So as far as Lex is concerned, Superman is a continual reminder that Lex is not special – next to Superman, Lex feels that he has no *real* power at all – and so Lex seeks to regain his sense of specialness and power *through* the destruction of Superman.

His means for doing so will vary. As corporate and technological image, he will represent become a conscienceless machine, and the mob mentality. So his methods will consist in creating technological adversaries that only Superman can defeat, attempts to distort public opinion of Superman and make the people fear his uniqueness, plots to dominate Superman by discovering his secret identity, continual threats to Lois, and most significantly, the use of Kryptonite.

Lex Luthor is the complete antithesis of Superman, for contrasting Superman's uniqueness, he represents the dehumanized, conscienceless mob. Lex once had the potential to enhance the human spirit through his own specialness, which is considerable; but in the light of Superman's entrance onto the scene, he jealously measures his own shortcomings rather than his gifts, and then blames Superman for those shortcomings. Lex wants to be special in order to be better than everyone else. Lex wants to have control and to have power. Lex wants to be the dictator that Superman would never be. And he wants to destroy Superman or dominate Lois, through murder *or marriage*, which would represent the total loss of Lois's individuality and specialness, and result in Superman's disintegration.

And so the unique hero is confronted by an external force, a monster, which seeks to deny him of his opportunity for intimacy by either robbing him of his potential counterpart, or removing the counterpart's uniqueness – which motivates the hero in the first place. But that monster's most potent weapon will not be from without, but within.

## ***KRYPTONITE***

***AS IT TURNS OUT, METEORITE ROCK, REMNANTS OF HIS HOME PLANET OF KRYPTON, ACCOMPANIED KAL-EL ON HIS JOURNEY. NOW, WHEN HE ENCOUNTERS THEM, THEIR RADIATION EFFECTIVELY TAKES AWAY HIS POWERS, AND CAN EVEN KILL SUPERMAN.***

Kryptonite removes Superman's uniqueness completely. He is weak, vulnerable, and can be killed by it. When faced with Kryptonite, it is Superman who needs to be rescued by someone else.

Kryptonite of course is Superman's past – that is his weakness. It is his separation from his parents. It *is* a reminder of his isolation that caused his uniqueness and his power – and so will be a reminder of his fear of reliving that isolation through exercise of his powers.

Most of Lex's methods are plots that call on Superman time and time again to show his uniqueness, drawing attention to that uniqueness. As such, in each case, they would make Superman question if he should remain as the hero – thinking that perhaps he would better secure his quest for intimacy and the safety of his loved ones by becoming ordinary. If Lex can demoralize Superman until he choose no longer to be Superman, or give up Lois, Lex will have effectively won. A parallel result would be Superman's submission to the institution, perhaps through blackmail.

So we see that Kryptonite and Lex's attempts to demoralize and control Superman will correspond with each other. Both are signs of Superman's internal fear of his own power, that it could result in his isolation *again* as it once did.

It's worth noting that General Zod and Doomsday (the monster that killed Superman) are also both from Krypton.

The irony is that Lex will not stop once he has subdued Superman. Should Superman retire, give up his powers, submit to death, allow himself to be ordinary, etc., Lex will certainly dominate Lois, who will have lost her uniqueness, and take over Metropolis, seeking to control everything.

### ***A JOB FOR SUPERMAN***

For Superman, integration will consist in accepting his identity as Superman, his outright refusal not to continue the struggle against the forces of corporate dehumanization and the conscienceless mob. Superman must be unique, he must accept his power and use it to save those he loves, but in a way that asserts *their* uniqueness, empowering them. Superman must not be demoralized, and must not fear the consequences of exercising his power.

Superman must accept that he is unique, receive the powers he gains from above (the sun), and forgive himself for his isolation, recognizing that he played no part in causing it. His past is not the enemy. He must rest in his fortress of solitude, his utopian home above our earthly home, signifying the acceptance and integration of his past.

Superman must eventually trust himself enough to reveal himself to Lois completely. He must eventually marry her, showing that he loves her in a special, individual way – showing her that she too is unique, and even now shares his uniqueness with her.

The hero-journey archetype, represented by Superman, must also actively involve himself directly in the event of human history. He must indeed be unique, fighting against mob dehumanization and dictatorship in order to allow all people to realize their uniqueness, to become heroes. He must fight the monster, but must do so without becoming a monster of a different form. And if that struggle costs him his life, he must give it.

Herein lies the unresolvedness of the conflict for Superman. For Superman has no guarantee that his power will not be turned to evil by forces outside of himself. He has no proof that Lois will not be damaged or destroyed as a result of his self-disclosure. At times his past will continue to be a danger; there will be Doomsday monsters and General Zods that he must either control or destroy. He must control his power, even though he may not be able to. So he must either simply trust *himself*, essentially *blindly*, that this chain of events won't be realized, or he must rely on *another* to act as a check for him – to ensure that he can be stopped, or that any damage he might cause can be repaired.

# BATMAN

The Batman story is a representative of the redemption or return archetype, the cyclic story. This time the individual involved is ordinary, and because he is ordinary, finds himself a victim of the powerful and random forces of the world around him, so finds himself in conflict with those forces as he tries to come to terms with his lost innocence.

## **CRIME ALLEY**

**BATMAN CRAWLS OUT OF THE DARK RECESSES OF HUMAN EVIL. HE IS BRUCE WAYNE, A CHILD OF WEALTHY PARENTS, LIVING A VIRTUALLY IDEAL FAMILY LIFE. THEY ARE COMING HOME FROM SEEING A MOVIE, "THE MASK OF ZORRO," WHEN YOUNG BRUCE, POWERLESS, FROZEN WITH FEAR, WATCHES HIS PARENTS MURDERED, VICTIMS TO A RANDOM ACT OF VIOLENCE. BRUCE IS FULL OF REGRET AND RESPONSIBILITY, AND FEELS HE MUST AVENGE HIS PARENTS' DEATH.**

**SO HE DEDICATES HIS FORMATIVE LIFE, AND ALL HIS RESOURCES, TO MAKING HIMSELF INTO A WEAPON, DEVELOPING HIS PHYSICAL PROWESS, HIS MARTIAL ART ABILITIES, HIS TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS, AND DETECTIVE SKILLS. HE WILL BECOME A SELF-MADE GENIUS, PHYSICALLY AND TECHNOLOGICALLY UNMATCHED.**

**FINALLY, HE WILL CHOOSE AS HIS EMBLEM, INHABITANT OF THE CAVES BELOW HIS FAMILY HOME WHERE HE SOUGHT SOLACE FROM HIS MOURNING, THE BAT, BECOMING THE VAMPIRISH IMAGE OF DEATH, THE FRIGHTENING CONSEQUENCE OF CRIME, A SYMBOL TO STRIKE FEAR INTO THE HEARTS OF HIS FOES; SO WILL BEGIN HIS ADVENTURE.**

Batman begins his journey with the existential crisis wherein he recognizes his powerlessness and vulnerability in the face of the random forces of the world. He is unwillingly robbed of his innocence and his connection to the powers that created him. He is the victim of sin, the sins of others, but also the victim of his own fears and regrets, and his own inability to accept that he was, indeed, powerless to save his family.

So he makes himself powerful, equipping himself with the ability to fight against those forces, seeking not just to bring vengeance on the specific criminals who killed his parents, but on all crime, the forces of evil and chaos themselves, real guilty party.

And as power confronts power, fear will confront fear. He will take on the symbol of a bat as his marker, emerging from the womb and tomb of his Bat-cave home, a symbol of fear of the subconscious itself.

As such, Batman represents the quest of the conservative, to return to "the good old days," his lost innocence, to respond to the attack on his innocence with vengeance, to take control of the chaos of the universe, and re-create a new world order.

## ***THE BAT SUIT***

***BATMAN IS DRESSED AS A BAT, TO SCARE HIS ENEMIES; KNOWING THAT FEAR IS THEIR MOTIVATION, HE WILL TURN THE CRIMINAL'S FEAR AGAINST THEM. HIS COLORS, THEREFORE, WILL BE DARK, MATCHING THE NIGHT, AND HIS OWN FACE HIS WILL BE COVERED, HIDING HIS HUMANITY, HIS WEAKNESS,***

***BUT HE STILL WEARS TIGHTS, REVEALING HIS IMMENSE PHYSICAL PROWESS. IN FACT, HIS BODY LOOKS THE SAME AS SUPERMAN'S, ONLY HE HAS BUILT UP THAT PHYSIQUE HIMSELF THROUGH YEARS OF TRAINING. HE ALSO WEARS HIS UTILITY BELT, CONTAINING MANY TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS WITH WHICH TO FIGHT CRIME, AND PREPARE HIMSELF FOR ALMOST ANY CONTINGENCY.***

Batman's costume conceals rather than reveals his identity. It makes those who look upon him think that he is a monster, a vampire, a bat, a raven (symbol of sub-conscious fear), a manifestation of the very motivation for the criminal element.

Using his costume, he controls his enemies with camouflage, with technology, with fear. Batman's suit becomes the image of chaos in order to control that chaos; a reflection of evil and its consequences back upon itself: an orphaned boy morphed by rage into a bat.

Underneath, however, Batman remains a human, in fact, to an extent, he remains the powerless child victim. His weakness is only truly known to his sagely housekeeper, Alfred, who supports Bruce's quest to avenge his parents, knowing it really to be a quest to redeem himself. Where Superman covers his true identity and his power under the ordinariness of his Clark Kent suit, Bruce covers his weakness and vulnerability under the power of his cape and cowl.

However, the Bat is also a symbol of Bruce's subconscious, emerging from his own inner womb, and his own inner darkness. He has unleashed his own inner monster, but now he must control it.

Here we see the archetypical tendency of the victim to use the weapons of the enemy against it, but in doing so finds himself fighting a new battle, between his own inner child, and his inner demons. He becomes the enemy he fights.

## ***THE DARK KNIGHT***

***SO BATMAN BEGINS HIS FIGHT WITH CRIME, FIGHTING AN ENDLESS BATTLE AGAINST CRIME, AS A VIGILANTE, HAVING LITTLE TRUST IN THE GOTHAM CITY POLICE, HE TAKES MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS, IN MANY WAYS ACTING OUTSIDE THE LAW. HE DOES, HOWEVER, PUT HIMSELF AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE, COMMISSIONER GORDON, AND TO PREVENT HIMSELF FROM BECOMING AS BAD AS THE CRIMINALS HE FIGHTS, HE LIVES BY TWO RULES. HE WILL NOT USE A GUN, AND HE WILL NOT TAKE A LIFE.***

Batman quickly recognizes the futility of his quest. He can never bring back his parents, yet he cannot forgive either their killers or himself, particularly knowing that now, he has power to fight.

However it is insufficient to him to leave this battle in the hands of the law enforcement establishment, which he also blames for his parents' death, having not

protected them. His regard for human nature grows increasingly pessimistic. But he must have a reason to fight go on fighting. So he finds Gordon, a individual human face, that will provide some motivation for him, and at the same time provide him with a standard of accountability, that they mutually feel will allow him to continue his struggle without becoming the enemy he hates.

Needless to say, his mission remains futile, in spite of his new relationships with Gordon, and with other like-minded anti-heroes (like Cat-woman). This Archetype cannot return to the paradise he once knew, so his struggle is in vain.

## **ROBIN**

***A SURPRISE TO EVERYONE, BATMAN, THE LONER, TAKES ON A SIDEKICK, YOUNG ORPHAN, WHO HAS ALSO LOST HIS FAMILY TO CRIME. IDENTIFYING WITH HIS PAIN, BATMAN ALLOWS ROBIN TO JOIN HIS QUEST FOR JUSTICE, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME SERVING AS ROBIN'S PROTECTOR AND SURROGATE FATHER.***

***ROBIN IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM BATMAN HOWEVER. HIS COLORS ARE BRIGHT, HIS SPIRIT IS LIVELY. UNLIKE BATMAN, ROBIN IS CAPABLE OF OPTIMISM.***

***AND SO BATMAN AND ROBIN'S RELATIONSHIP IS, AT TIMES, A STRAINED ONE. AT TIMES, BATMAN CAN TEND TO BE OVERPROTECTIVE AND CONTROLLING, ALIENATING HIS PRODIGY, AND ELICITING A TEENAGED BOY-WONDER TO REBEL.***

In the face of the futility of his struggle, Batman has to find a new motivation, and does in Robin, a youngster suffering the same fate that he once did. So in Robin, Batman will see his own inner child-victim, and will seek to save and empower that inner child by saving and empowering Robin. He can also resurrect his lost parents by being the parent to his new child. Robin has become the new path for redemption for Batman: the true nature of Batman's adventure has become known. Batman must see to it that Robin can grow to adulthood and become the re-integrated individual that he himself could not become.

But Batman's nature is to try to control the uncontrollable, and to protect the vulnerable inner-child, both of which Robin now manifests both in personality and appearance. This may lead to tension between them, and potential alienation.

## **THE ARCH-ENEMY – THE JOKER**

***BATMAN'S ARCHRIVAL, OF LARGELY UNKNOWN ORIGIN, IS THE UTTERLY INSANE, LAUGHING IMAGE OF MADNESS – THE JOKER. HIS APPEARANCE IS INITIALLY NON-THREATENING; LIKE A CLOWN OR A CHARACTER IN A DECK OF CARDS, AND HE IS ALWAYS SMILING AND LAUGHING.***

***HIS COLORS ARE PURPLE AND ORANGE, BRIGHT BUT DISTORTED, AND HIS FACE, PALE WHITE, THE COLOR OF DEATH ITSELF.***

***THE JOKER CANNOT BE REASONED WITH. WHILE HE IS BRILLIANT, HE IS ALSO COMPLETELY RANDOM AND UNPREDICTABLE, AND KILLS WITHOUT REASON, MOTIVATION AND PATTERN.***

***HE ALWAYS MANAGES TO EITHER ELUDE CAPTURE OR TO ESCAPE IMPRISONMENT, ONLY TO KILL AGAIN.***

***HE IS BY FAR BATMAN'S MOST DANGEROUS FOE, HAVING CRIPPLED BATGIRL, ONE OF BATMAN'S PRODIGIES (ALTHOUGH MORE INDEPENDENT THAN ROBIN), AND KILLED JASON TODD, THE SECOND ROBIN.***

***BATMAN IS OFTEN TORMENTED BY THE DEATHS THE JOKER CAUSES, AND WONDERS IF HE IS PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR SO MUCH DEATH – BY ALLOWING THE JOKER TO LIVE.***

The Joker is the symbol of the chaos itself with which Batman struggles, the image of the randomness of mortality, that cannot be controlled and cannot be reasoned with. He is an innocent childhood image, morphed into a sinister, frightening murderer, the color of death. He is the wild card, signifying anything and everything. His laughter is his relentless taunt at the Dark Knight, informing him that his quest for reason behind his parents death will always be in vain, his need to blame someone will be unanswered. For the Joker cannot be incarcerated, he cannot be controlled, he cannot be reasoned with – in some ways, the Joker is invulnerable. The Joker *is* the futility of Batman's struggle.

His laughter, always taunting Batman, continually dares him to cross the line that Batman has set for himself, to kill the Joker. It is clear to everyone that this is the only way to finally control the Joker's destructive madness. The Joker is aware of this of course, and is largely unconcerned, having little concern for his own life anyway. He would much rather drive Batman to killing him, and in doing so, turn Batman into the monster that he fights. So the Joker's motivation is clear.

So the hero finds his nemesis, the random force of nature itself, the causes of mortality, that essentially have caused his loss of innocence in the first place, prevent him from return, and threaten his progeny. But this dark force is not the real enemy.

## ***THE BAT***

***BATMAN IS CONSTANTLY STRUGGLING TO TAME HIS RAGE, WHICH IS SOMETIMES A REAL THREAT TO THE CRIMINAL ELEMENT HE THREATENS, SOMETIMES A THREAT TO HIMSELF AS HE TURNS IT INWARD IN DEPRESSION. AT TIMES HIS COSTUME HAS BEEN MODIFIED TO THE POINT OF GROTESQUE AND HORRIFYING, EVEN TO ROBIN.***

***AND HIS TENDENCY TO CONTROL IS SIMILAR AT TIMES, CAUSING HIM TO DISTRUST HIS ALLIES, AND PARTICULARLY TO INHIBIT ROBIN'S ACTIVITY, RATHER THAN EMPOWER ROBIN TO FIGHT EVIL ON HIS OWN.***

***SO RATHER THAN PROTECT ROBIN, IT CAUSES ROBIN TO FEEL ENSLAVED, AND SO TO REBEL, IN TURN LEADING ROBIN INTO THE VERY PERIL BATMAN WISHED TO PROTECT HIM FROM. IN THE CASE OF THE SECOND ROBIN, JASON TODD, HIS REBELLION LED HIM RIGHT INTO THE CLUTCHES OF THE JOKER HIMSELF, WHO MURDERED HIM.***

Batman has made himself powerful, capable of fighting virtually any foe, standing among super-humans as an equal. His steady increase in power has been motivated by his anger of course. So Batman's real enemy, as the Joker knows, is the inner monster, the need to control everyone and everything, to have a rational explanation

for everything, to end all forms of chaos and all causes of fear in life – essentially by creating a new order.

Inner fears may lead him to control his Robins, his offspring, becoming a dictator over them, which lead to either their enslavement or their rebellion. Once they have rebelled, they are then at the mercy of chaos itself.

Of course, turning Batman into such a dictator, a criminal, with no accountability to anyone, is the Joker's agenda all along. Getting Batman to kill him, and to then become the unaccountable god-monster Batman has always fought against – will signify the Joker's ultimate victory over him. As such, if Batman continues his struggle for justice at the expense of his offspring, his mission becomes a contradiction. Batman will have become like the criminals he fights; *controlled by* fear to control others with fear. The Bat will no longer be a reflection of his evil foes back on themselves; it will be himself completely. Both Robin, and his own inner child, will be lost inside his suit.

Archetypically, this is the regression to becoming a machine, a de-humanized, conscienceless god-monster, a dictatorship, that controls its offspring rather than empowers it, turning it into a mob, and leading much of it into enslavement or rebellion. So the progeny of the hero, and source of redemption has been estranged, not from without, but from within.

### ***TAKING BACK THE NIGHT***

So Batman may be redeemed, but only if he dedicates himself to empowering his Robin-offspring, as he once empowered himself, and trusts Robin enough to define himself and to be free. Batman must adopt Robin, but then let him go. Once he does that, he will have faced the forces of chaos that alienated him from his paradise, and answered them with hope.

Becoming a father figure for Robin, he will become a father figure for his own inner child. And letting go of Robin, he will essentially let go of the victim that is his inner child, allowing that child to become an empowered man, but a man that also knows that he need not use his power to control and destroy, but to create and to give freedom.

The redemption-hero archetype, represented by Batman, must be freed from his fear of trusting the world around him. Choosing between the two symbols of that unpredictable world, the Joker and Robin, a disintegrated, pessimistic present and an optimistic, hopefilled future, Batman must choose Robin. And he must *trust* Robin, or risk Robin's flight from him, potentially turning Robin *into* the Joker. If he can find that trust, he will no longer be the victim – he will have conquered his own inner night, and emerged into a new day.

But Batman too, like Superman, has an unresolved dilemma and potential conflict. Batman has proven his immense power – he has become the symbol of potentially infinite human potential. As he increases in power, those who keep him in check, Alfred, Gordon, Robin, and so on, those who prevent him from succumbing to the Joker's temptation to make himself a god by taking human life, become increasingly ineffective. This risk thus becomes a problem for Batman, similar to Superman's, requiring him to find some source of accountability outside himself, to ensure he can be stopped, and be prevented from becoming the bat-monster.

**SUMMARY**

<b><i>SUPERMAN</i></b>		<b><i>BATMAN</i></b>
Hero-Journey Linear Story	Archetype	Hero-Redemption Cyclic Story
Uniqueness leading to Isolation Last Son of Krypton	Original Problem	Ordinariness leading to Victimization Witnesses Parents Murdered
Intimacy Lois Lane Identifies with Lois's Uniqueness Seeks to nurture uniqueness of counterpart	Goal	Creativity Robin Identifies with Robins Tragedy Seeks to Heal woundedness of offspring
<b><i>Their Own Power</i></b> <b>Powerlessness of Others</b> <b>Responsibility for their Actions</b>	<b>Fear</b>	<b><i>Their Own Powerlessness</i></b> <b>Power of Others</b> <b>Ineffectiveness of their Actions</b>
From Above – the Sun, Krypton Motivated by Desire to be Intimate Tempered by Honor and Humility – Clark Kent personnae	Source of Power	From Within – the Batcave, Anger Motivated by Desire for Vengeance Tempered by Justice – Batman personnae
Lex Luthor Institution, Structure, Technology Lack of Freedom, Human Dignity and Empowerment Dictatorship	Arch Enemy	The Joker Chaos, Forces of Nature Lack of Order, Responsibility, and Justice Anarchy
Kryptonite Fear that his own power will hurt those he loves, leads him to choose between his uniqueness or his intimacy, choosing one or the other will end up loosing both	Enemy Within  Anti-climax  Disintegration	The Bat Fear that his own powerlessness will fail to protect those he loves, Leads him to control those he loves, or destroy his enemy, Turning him into a dictator, Alienating his progeny
Accepts his uniqueness, signified by his past Trusts <i>himself</i> enough to reveal himself in special relationship with intimate other	Integration	Accepts his powerlessness to bring back the past Trusts <i>other</i> enough to let go Protects other through empowerment

# **BATMAN AND SUPERMAN**

## ***BATMAN AND LEX LUTHOR; SUPERMAN AND THE JOKER***

One may immediately be struck by the similarities between Lex Luthor and Batman: both are merely human; both are victimized by forces beyond their control; both become symbols of human power and empowerment, because both are rich, brilliant, technological geniuses; both are in a quest to control the random universe around them. We could go so far as to say that as Batman approaches disintegration, and loses touch with his underlying submission to a moral code, he tends toward becoming Lex Luthor.

And one may also note similarities between Superman and the Joker: both seem to be uncontrollable and all powerful; both cannot be destroyed; both have total freedom to act as they choose; both represent super-human forces rather than human beings; both are of mysterious origin. Where Superman lacks his moral centre, provided by the discipline of his Smallville upbringing, or should he give up on his heroic quest and choose instead to use his powers for personal gain, one could see him becoming like the Joker.

So from Batman's perspective, Superman and the Joker would certainly possess some similar characteristics, as Batman and Lex Luthor would from Superman's perspective. Batman and Superman hold the potential for becoming diametric foes to one another, should *both, simultaneously* tend toward disintegration.

However, because of this dynamic, Batman and Superman can act as a check for each other, as we have seen them do so in their comics. Superman held Batman back from killing the Joker upon the death of Jason Todd, Superman has entrusted Batman with the Kryptonite ring, once held by Lex Luthor, in case Superman's power be used for ill. As such, these two characters can balance each other, and help each other reach the integration they seek. I would suggest, it is difficult to see how they can reach integration without each other.

## ***BATMAN, SUPERMAN, AND JESUS***

From the Archetype perspective then, we see a necessity of integrating the two stories into one in order to achieve a truly balanced telling – the linear and the cyclic story must become *one* story, first for a linear hero, and then via. that hero's also being a cyclic hero, for all of us.

One could suggest that many heroes of religion and myth fit the description. In particular, Jesus could be described as such:

- Jesus' motivation is both his own uniqueness as the one sent by God (Superman) and his sharing in the brokenness of the human/divine relationship, that results from fear of God as it is passed on from one generation to the next (Batman)
- Jesus holds intimate relationships (Superman-Lois), although with everyone; and his uniqueness is shared with others
- Jesus identifies with the victimization of others (Batman-Robin), and makes their healing possible through his own healing

- Rather than fearing either his power (Superman) or his powerlessness (Batman), Jesus exercises his power AS powerlessness, i.e. love, self-emptying, self-sacrifice. As such he synthesizes the two.
- The source of his power is God the Father, through the Spirit, which comes from above, and is a mark of his unique identity – BUT at the same time, the source of his power is also *compassion* with the human situation, the love he expresses as he cries out from his cross, and gives that Spirit back to the Father. So his power is not only that he willingly accepts it and receives it from above (Superman's struggle), but also that he readily and eagerly gives it back and away (Batman's struggle).
- The enemies he seeks to destroy are both the institutional dehumanization of religious experience through authoritative structure and overemphasis on ritual and hierarchy, which has attempted to pigeon hole God (in the Scribes and the Pharisees; i.e. Lex Luthor), and the unbridled randomness and lack of justice inherent in human suffering and death (the *possessed*, the marginalized; the gentile, i.e. the Joker). But Jesus reveals these two to be two forms of the same problem: the marginalized feel they are abandoned by God – but because the hierarchy has told them so. The hierarchy wants to feel it is in control of God, but only because the reality of random marginalization has scared them into thinking otherwise.
- Jesus will provide healing for both parties:
  - He will teach the Lex Luthors (the Conservatives, the Controllers) to become Batmans – to use their authority to empower and free, not to dominate and destroy. As such, authority is to be expressed as love.
  - He will teach the Jokers (the Liberals, the Anarchists) to become Supermans – their freedom and uniqueness is not a cause for isolation, but for election - God will use it to help others. As such, freedom is to be used for love.
- Jesus fulfills the linear journey in transcending death itself and being reunited with his divine origin – he exercises his power fully. But Jesus also fulfills the cyclic journey by identifying himself with the human crisis, and through acceptance of that crisis, makes possible the handing on of his destiny and entrusting of his power to a generation of followers, who are thus similarly redeemed – he accepts his human powerlessness fully, by handing his power to his disciples. So Jesus fulfills both cyclic and linear at the same time.

I believe that what we have seen here is that these two Archetypes, Batman and Superman, can give us the clues we need to identifying the different sides to any of life's many continua: liberal/conservative; body/soul, transcendence/immanence, fundamentalism/idealism, faith/works, idolatry/iconoclasm, relativism/absolutism, too-much-discipline/not-enough-discipline, optimism/pessimism, which I would even suggest are all really part of ONE continuum, that can then lead us to look to the symbols and lessons and forms that religion provide us with to find an integrative synthesis, a wisest of all options.

Superman is afraid to accept his power; Batman is afraid to accept his powerlessness.  
 Superman is afraid to inhale; Batman is afraid to exhale.

