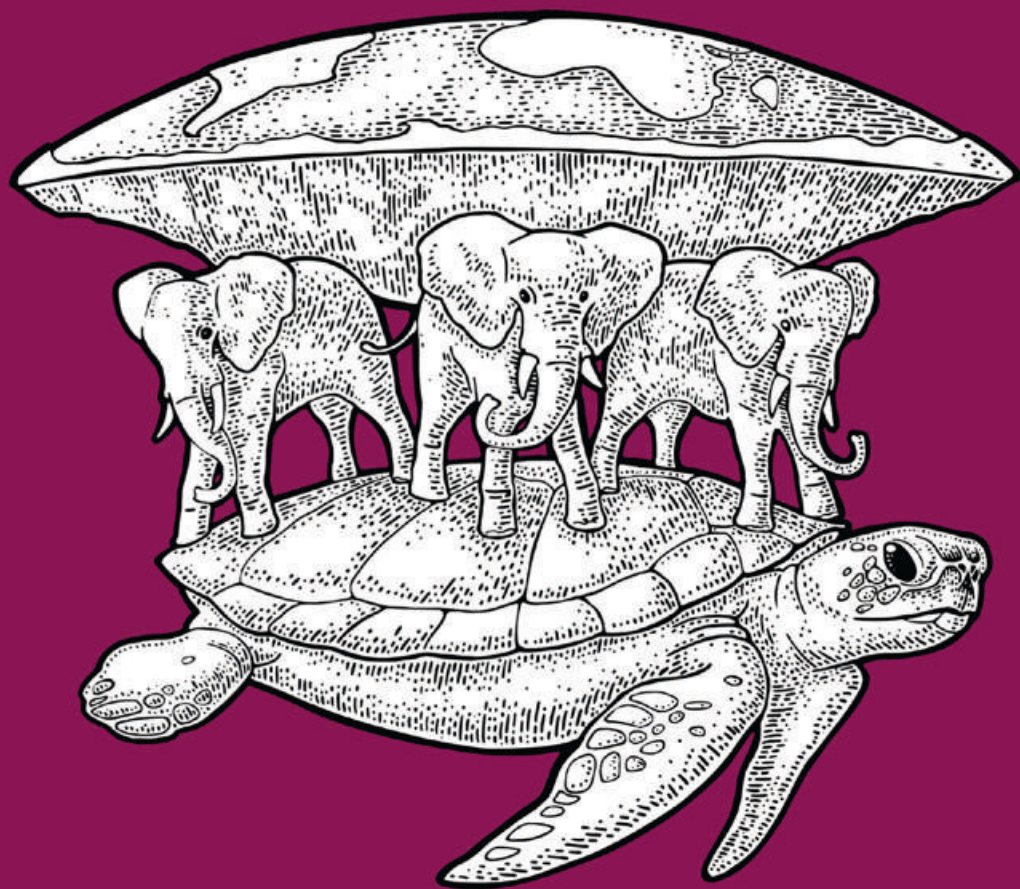


MYTH AND IDEOLOGY



Lawrence Krader

Edited by Cyril Levitt and
Sabine Sander



PETER LANG

This posthumously published work by Lawrence Krader surveys the study of myths from ancient times (in classical Greece and Rome, Egypt, Babylon, Akkad, Sumer, China), in the Biblical traditions, of the indigenous peoples of the Americas and Australia, and from Northeastern and Central Asia. It also covers the various approaches to the study of myth in Europe in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and Enlightenment, and the Romantic movement in the late eighteenth and early to mid-nineteenth century; it discusses evolutionist, structuralist, hermeneutic, and linguistic approaches. The book covers on the one hand the treatment of myth from the inside, that is from the experience of those committed to the myth, and on the other the perspective of those ethnologists, philosophers and other students of myth who are outsiders. Krader takes up the theme of esoteric and exoteric myths as he rejects some of the assumptions and approaches to the study of myth from the past while singling out others for approval and inclusion in his general theory of myth. The book includes a discussion of myth in science and in infinitesimal mathematics. It also considers the relationship between myth and ideology in the twentieth century in relation to politics and power. It both incorporates and broadens Krader's theory of nature as a manifold consisting of different orders of space-time which he developed in his magnum opus *Noetics: The Science of Thinking and Knowing*.

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Myth and Ideology

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Foreword

Mayán Cervantes

Lawrence Krader was an exceptional man. I had the good fortune to work with him and share some 3 years of his life—from 1979 to 1982. Over these years, I came to know him, love him, and respect him deeply as a teacher, as a philosopher, as a thinker, as a scholar, as a human being. He spoke six languages fluently and had a workable knowledge of many more. He had a deep knowledge and appreciation of art, music, literature.

Guillermo Bonfil, Director of the CISINAH (Centro de Investigaciones Superiores del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia), convinced Krader to come to Mexico and live here, so a group of professors could learn from him and with him. I was one of the privileged few he invited to work with him. Only a few of us endured the rhythm of the work, the extensive readings and the intense reflections needed to approach and understand his theoretical proposals, his critical positions which were so innovative and, at times, incomprehensible—at first.

The very topic of this book shows that Krader was a very open-minded thinker, for he chose a complex and slippery subject, myth, as the object of study, a “bricolage” in its form and substance. Myth, he wrote, “is unsystematic, fantastic, mystical, utopian, and without autonomy for it is bound to the people and the traditions from where it comes.”

This novel approach led him to argue that myth is nothing if it is not part of people's lives. Krader's approach states that myths and subjects are linked, which in itself is a great contribution. Most typical studies of myth treat the objects of study without the subjects who perceive and believe them.

Krader took the risk of writing his "divertimento." In this work, he freely shapes his perceptions regarding art, as well as many of the emotions of his aesthetic experience. He also includes material from his unpublished fieldwork. His myth research is less ideologically committed and less formal than his previous works; it is more accessible. I was attracted to it for these reasons along with the great erudition and the subject matter which was also close to my heart. I was greatly honored when he asked me to play a major role in translating the book. I am extremely gratified to see that this important work will be made available to an audience of English readers.

Mayán Cervantes was a student and colleague of Lawrence Krader during his extended trips to the Centro de Investigaciones Superiores in Mexico City. She is the translator of the Spanish edition of *Myth and Ideology* [*Mito e Ideología*, 2003].

Editors' Preface

Cyril Levitt and Sabine Sander

The publication of *Myth and Ideology* is the fifth by Peter Lang of works by or about Lawrence Krader¹ (1920–1998), the last four under the aegis of The Lawrence Krader Research Project at McMaster University. Krader's formative years were spent at the City College of New York (CCNY) as a student of philosophy (1936–1941) which included a year (1939–40) of study with Morris Raphael Cohen and Rudolf Carnap at the University of Chicago.² It was upon his return to City that Krader made the acquaintance of Franz Boas whose influence in part led him to study anthropology after his return from serving in the US Merchant Marine during World War II. Having worked as an assistant to Karl August Wittfogel at the University of Washington in the late 1940s, Krader entered the doctoral program in anthropology at Harvard University focusing on the Altaic speaking peoples of the Central Asian Steppes. His many field expeditions to Soviet Central Asia (he was the first Western anthropologist allowed to conduct field research in that part of the world in the 1960s) allowed him to observe the customs of the indigenous populations and the telling of their myths. In this he was following in the footsteps of Vladimir G. Bogoraz³ and Waldemar Jochelson⁴ who had done pioneering work among the peoples of Eastern Siberia, some of it in conjunction with the work of Boas in British Columbia. Krader's ethnographic research and writing on Chukchi myth and shamanism among the Buryats, and

his secondary appreciation of the work on myth by Bogoraz, Jochelson, Paul Radin, Franz Boas and other ethnographers and ethnologists provide the grounding for the ambitious project which resulted in *Myth and Ideology*.

But Krader situates the empirical and theoretical anthropological material within a much broader view in the history of ideas.⁵ The book is more than its simple title suggests. It does indeed present the main features of myth from ancient Greece and Rome, Egypt, Babylon, and China, from the world's major religions, from indigenous peoples of Latin America, North America, Mongolia, Siberia and Central Asia, but it does this by tracing at the same time the history of the reception and study of myth, mythology, from earliest times down to the late twentieth century. As the reader will come to appreciate, the text does not develop a straight-forward theory or understanding of either myth or ideology. Rather, it wrestles with the differences in approach adopted by the leading figures in the study of myth from the beginnings of recorded history and traces these differences as they developed over time. And yet Krader explicitly attempts to outline a theory of myth and of ideology which is the product of a rigorous assessment of all the approaches of his predecessors in which he accepts some but rejects many of their assumptions and conclusions. The result is a new understanding of myth and ideology which the reader may not be able to readily access due to the sheer volume of detail concerning differences among the various thinkers and their schools. In addition, the significant number of qualifications that Krader makes throughout the book may impede access to all but those who possess a commanding overview of the field. This introduction will serve as a guide to understanding Krader's main points of critique and his own theory of myth and ideology.

Most of the book concerns myth, the study of myth, myths of myth, the possibility of the science of myth which involves a serious look at the myth of science and aspects of the myth of mathematics. Ideology is only brought explicitly into play by the author in the last few score of pages. And as with myth as outlined above, the various approaches to ideology represent such vast differences that the reader may find it difficult to find the foothold that Krader offers in relation to a new and viable approach to both myth and ideology.

In this introduction, we attempt to outline Krader's understanding of myth and ideology, selectively review his extensive treatment of the attempts to comprehend myth over the millenia, to highlight Krader's rejection of some of the ideas of his predecessors and the reasons he offers for doing so, to bring out in a focused way Krader's own theory of myth and ideology, and to take up certain aspects of this work in light of Krader's other writings with which the reader may not be familiar.

Notes

- 1 In chronological order they are: *Labor and Value* (2003), *Noetics* (2010), *Beyond the Juxtaposition of Nature and Culture* (2018) and *The Beginnings of Capitalism in Central Europe* (2020).
- 2 When Krader returned to CCNY in 1940, he served as a research assistant to Polish logician Alfred Tarski, whose book on an introduction to logic he helped translate into English. Further information on Krader as a scholar can be found in D. Schorkowitz (ed.). *Ethnohistorische Wege und Lehrjahre eines Philosophen: Festschrift für Lawrence Krader zum 75. Geburtstag*. Frankfurt a. M. 1995; C. Levitt and R. Hay (eds.). *Labor and Value*. New York 2003; C. Levitt (ed.). *Noetics: The Science of Thinking and Knowing*. New York 2010; S. Sander, C. Levitt, and N. McLaughlin, Beyond Fields, Networks and Fame: Lawrence Krader as an “Outsider” Intellectual, *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 53 (2017) No. 2, pp. 155–175; C. Levitt and S. Sander. “Introduction,” in: C. Levitt and S. Sander (eds.). *Beyond the Juxtaposition of Nature and Culture*. New York 2018, pp. 3–82; and The Lawrence Krader Research Project, www.lawrencekrader.com, Krader Biography.
- 3 See the obituary of Bogoraz by Franz Boas published in the *American Anthropologist*, 39:2 (1937), pp. 314–315. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1937.39.2.02a00100>
- 4 For an overview of Jochelson’s life and fieldwork among the Koriaks, Yukagirs, Yakuts, and other peoples of Eastern Siberia, see D. Brandišauskas, (2009) “Waldemar Jochelson—a prominent ethnographer of north-eastern Siberia,” *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia*, 10 (1– 2), pp. 165–179. doi: 10.15388/AOV.2009.3665. Krader was likely first made aware of the pioneering work of the two Waldemars (Vladimirs) through their association with Franz Boas.
- 5 As a graduating student at CCNY in 1940– 41 Krader won the prestigious Ketchum Award in the history of philosophy which is all the more noteworthy considering that his competition for the award included some of the leading American intellectuals of the next generation, including, but not limited to: Daniel Bell, Irving Howe, Irving Kristol, Seymour M. Lipset and the future Nobel prize winner, Kenneth Arrow.

Editors' Introduction

Cyril Levitt and Sabine Sander

We begin our Introduction with Krader's own words outlining his scope and purpose in writing the book:

The purpose of this book is twofold, first to write a short book on a rich, complex, and fantastic field, and therein to confront a number of viewpoints to one another, which are not usually brought under one heading. The second is to advance a theory which arches over the several viewpoints of the anthropologists, the Biblical and classical scholars, folklorists, the cultural critics of modern society, historians, philosophers, students of political ideology, psychologists, and sociologists. (lxvi)¹

My purpose is to advance a theory of myth, to add other perspectives to it, some of which are well known, likewise some of which have been overlooked and forgotten. There is, as we shall see, a common direction extending over many centuries in the study of myth. (2)

And beyond this focus, Krader writes, that by means of the book's "... exploration we learn something of ourselves, and indeed the more deeply we probe into the study of myth, the more profound and telling will be our understanding of how we think, how we feel, how we see the world and how we relate to one another in these human processes." (lxvii)

In a way, this is reminiscent of Durkheim's [1912 (1995) 8] claim in his last and perhaps greatest major work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, that religious thinking was the *fons et origo* of logical, scientific and philosophical thinking. According to Durkheim,

If philosophy and the sciences were born in religion, it is because religion itself began by serving as science and philosophy. Further, and less often noted, religion has not merely enriched a human intellect already formed but in fact has helped to form it. Men owe to religion not only the content of their knowledge, in significant part, but also the form in which that knowledge is elaborated.²

Reading Krader's book *Myth and Ideology* is both an enriching and daunting task: Not only is the subject matter covered in the book vast in scope, enormously broad in terms of time, and deep with regard to the logical, epistemological and philosophical concepts he pursues, but it cannot be approached from within one discipline or scholarly perspective. For not only is the reader confronted with Krader's unparalleled erudition in philosophical, historical, cultural, and political matters, but reading this instructive work also requires the reader to wear different hats and view it through different glasses—to read it as an ethnographer, a philosopher, a sociologist and linguist, as a scholar and as a reader with an interest in the marvelous stories of myth. Krader not only writes about myth but allows myths to speak for themselves.

This multi-perspectivity, which interweaves an *emic* and an *etic* perspective on myth, requires an open-minded reader. Myths constitute a world of their own, in which things beyond our empirical experiences occur, and they force us to extend our curiosity beyond the well-known or familiar, or as Krader puts it:

In myths, some people hold that the world rests on an elephant standing on a turtle, others think of the sky as a roof, of life as spiritual breath, and of the world as the offspring of processes of biological generation. Myths are the expressions of the recombination and fabulation of our perceptions in both possible and impossible forms. (167)

Krader was aware of the challenges he was facing and responded by embracing different disciplines, perspectives, and methods:

My ambitus is broad, which, I contend, is the only way to study myth. I leave it to others to extend or deepen it; indeed, this is to be welcomed. For if you touch only the elephant's leg without seeing the other parts of the beast, you may well take it to be a tree. (lxii)

Krader's approach to the study of myth or mythology as he defines it, is indeed reminiscent of the story to which he alludes here of the king's counselors who were sent to report back to the king on the nature of a beast, the elephant, which had never before been seen in that kingdom. Now the elephant was kept in the hold of a ship without light and the king's counselors could only rely on their sense of touch to gather information on the nature of the beast they were to describe to the king. Each counselor felt a different part of the elephant and reported back to the king with his description of the beast as he had experienced it. What resulted from this was nothing but confusion and contradiction. It is much the same with Krader's report on the vast differences in the nature of the study of myth by various individuals and schools of thought over the millenia. Whereas one had seen a deep truth in myth, a revelation of the earliest and deepest strata of the human mind, a valuable secret to be revealed, others have seen in myth nothing but nonsense and noise. Where some have studied myth in terms of popular tradition and folklore revealing something deep about the nature of a culture through the study of myth, others see the ideological reworking of pristine tradition for the benefit of the ruling strata. And as Krader points out: "Myth is greatly variable in form and substance" (11). There are so many diverse aspects in myth and in the approaches to the study of myth in relation to both form and substance, that a question arises as to whether there can be one theory of myth that arches over the disparities, contradictions, differences in the various myths and approaches to the study of myths themselves. Krader answers this in the affirmative, both by rejecting some elements of the approaches to the study of myth while accepting other aspects, adding yet other elements which he feels establish the common features which define the category. As he states:

"Platonists and Neoplatonists, Aristotelians, Neo-Kantians, Hegelians, ideologists, objectivists, subjectivists, cryptanalysts, philologists and structuralists have all looked into myths according to their tenets; each of these schools of thought has fixed on one quality of myth, or a related set of qualities, to the exclusion of others. It is not our task to refute any of them, but rather to confront the different views to one another, to show what about them gives a good account of myth, and what falls short, what is living and what is dead." (283)³

In reading this book a scholarly parkour through the history of ideas unfolds before the eyes of the reader, as Krader accompanies his readership through the writings on myth of the most important figures in the history of philosophy from ancient Greece and Rome to the twentieth century, from the Old to the New World, from various religions and cultures, through Greece, Rome, Egypt,

Babylon, the ancient Near East and China, North and Central America, Siberia, Mongolia and Central Asia. Krader reconstructs and critically comments on theories of the main scholars who studied and wrote on myth, among them Aristotle, Plato, Giambattista Vico, G.W.F. Hegel, Benedetto Croce, Emile Durkheim, Franz Boas, Vladimir G. Bogoraz, Georges Sorel, Paul Radin, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Ernst Cassirer. Moreover, the book is an important milestone in the sociology of knowledge, as Krader emphasizes the close relationship between myth and ideology and studies the secular and religious worldviews included in both ideology and myth.

In terms of the modern study of myth, which, Krader argues, begins roughly in the middle of the nineteenth century, he traces the developments succinctly as follows:

We date the beginnings of the “modern” era in the study of myth very approximately from the middle of the nineteenth century. Up to that time, mythology appears to have had definite ethnic locations which aroused the intellectual ardor and the passions of those who devoted themselves to it. By myth the students of antiquity, the renaissance and the enlightenment had first the myths of the Greeks in mind; this was expanded to include the Romans, then the Egyptians and other peoples of antiquity. The myths of the Arabs and the peoples of India were incorporated into the mythological field, the Bible as myth and the myths of the European peasants were studied. Finally, mythology exploded to cover all parts of the Americas, Oceania, Asia, Africa, and Polar regions. It was still regarded as an object outside the world of the learned, the cities, and the industrial life of the present. It was thought that erudition, urban and industrial conditions spoiled the mind and feelings, and that true myth was only to be found among the literate, the humble, and those who lived in distant places. The industrial proletariat was thought not to have any myths; only late in that century were these prejudices overturned in the minds of the majority of the workers in the field and it was discovered that even science is a myth or has its myth. (46–47)

Myth and Ideology contains a grand overview of myths, approaches to myth, and myths of myth from around the world over five millenia. Given Krader’s careful attention to detail and his parcelling out of similarities and differences with a fine precision regarding the various approaches to myth, the editors are of the opinion that many readers could profit from a clear set of guidelines to serve as an orientation to the text. One might read this work as an instructive first introduction to myth and mythology, to get the bigger picture in a general way, or to focus on parts of it for a more detailed study of the approaches and conclusions of specific thinkers and schools. Of course, this latter approach presupposes

some background knowledge of the authors Krader has selected, without which Krader's critical comments are difficult to follow. Therefore, we would like to offer the reader a series of topics for purposes of orientation concerning those aspects of myth that Krader uses as points of orientation. We follow up on this with a larger number of detailed positions that Krader pursues in the text. And finally, we selectively explore in still greater detail Krader's discussions of specific thinkers and schools as well as some of the important topics that he raises in the text. The chief axes of his analysis are:

1. Myth in time and myth in space
2. Myth as truth and myth as error
3. Sacred and secular myth
4. Myth as rational and myth as irrational expression
5. Myth in thought and myth in feeling (or cognitive and affective elements of myth)
6. Myth and ideology (the myth in action, in political, economic, and religious spheres of social life, especially with regard to matters of power)

Another problem Krader addresses concerns the fact that the various disciplines dealing with myth have largely ignored one another, even though the complexity of the subject can only be mastered by means of an interdisciplinary approach:

Thus, the classicists, ethnologists and folklorists have been in a mutual, fruitful exchange, but have set aside part of the sociological literature. The sociologists contributed mightily to the ethnological study of myth, and drew upon it in turn, as Durkheim attests. Philosophical writings about myth which have here been mentioned have related to the classical, ethnographic and folklorist literature, and to the sociological literature only as it is bore on the one or the other; the same is to be said of the psychological literature. The subject of myth as ideology is likewise conducted in a world of its own. There are always exceptions to these observations and no absolute judgments can be made. Yet the study of myth calls for its investigation by the various fields, from their several viewpoints, and in their interactions, such as those which have been mentioned, and others, which have not, notably the interaction of psychology and literature in the study of myth, and the interaction of sociology and political science. (282)

Rather than offering another "new" theory of myth, Krader reviews the history of ideas and sociology of knowledge and masterfully reconstructs general axes of description that may not portray a true picture of the elephant itself, but

nevertheless provide at least a three-dimensional image of the elephant in time and space. In what follows, we would like to guide the reader through some of the proposed axes of description that Krader's essay offers as a way of providing the reader with a deeper understanding and scope of the subject matter:

1. *Myths are collective*: Myths are shared narratives and beliefs, passed on from one generation to the next, even when they are "owned" and told only within a specific clan or family, as was the case with the Bella Coola myths, according to Boas. There is no private, secretive or individual myth without relevant social context. This holds true for exoteric and esoteric myths, even though the size and nature of the group that commits to the myth might vary. The group takes the myth as an important tool to build its collective identity, and to distinguish itself from non-group others. Thus, myth has both inclusive and exclusive qualities. As such, myth plays an important role in the establishment and preservation of social boundaries and social order.
2. *Myths have rational, non-rational and irrational features*: Myths have scientific, logical, and rational as well as fictional, fabulous, and erratic contents. They include historical and cultural information as well as fictional elements of pure imagination. There may be a rational kernel and a willingly absurd, irrational, or marvelous element that appeals to the collective emotions of those who share the myth. Even though myth often revolves around supernatural elements, it is not the same as a ghost story; while ghost stories are made for entertainment and to thrill, they are not taken for real, even when they cause goosebumps and shivers; some myths, however, have a sacred content, a content that is considered by some to contain an encoded truth or wisdom. The contents of myth enhance the identity of the group and of the individuals that make it up. This is not usually the case with ghost stories.
3. *Myths are often made up of oppositions*: Myths are often shaped by opposing forces battling within it: truth and fiction, esoteric and exoteric elements, rationality and irrationality, light and dark, good and evil, sacred and profane etc. The contradictory and opposing forces are brought together without coherence or consistency, especially in exoteric myth.
4. *Myths express aspects of collective imagination*: Myth is sometimes considered to be a childish, useless, or "primitive" phantasy or fancy invented and narrated by members of tribes who had no (monotheistic) religion

and no science, an immature attempt to deal with inexplicable experiences or to cope with the vicissitudes of nature. Krader, however, sees in myth expressions of collective imagination, in which hopes, fears, wishes, and beliefs are preserved in a condensed form. There is nothing immature about it. Myth and science are both attempts to mediate experiences, perceptions, and sensations of the world and to transform them into meaningful concepts.

5. *Myths are not grounded in universals*: Krader emphasizes that myth is in itself neither superior nor inferior to any other form of human knowledge, such as speculation, science, religion, art, technics or law. There is no difference between the quality of myths of different tribes, cultures, or epochs. And since myths vary greatly in both form and substance, they do not give expression to universal sources or truths of the humankind. Hence, he is critical of structuralists, formalists, romantics and neo-Kantians who derive from myth universal elements of human nature or the human mind. The unifying feature of myths for Krader lies in our relation to it. Myth is manifold in form and content but integral in its social substance.
6. *Dialectic of form and substance*: Myths are found in oral, written or otherwise demonstrative forms, sometimes developing from the spoken word to the written or canonized text. In each case, however, form and substance are connected. Myth is, therefore, effective in a certain aesthetic or literary form, and its emotional effectiveness can be further reinforced by rhetorical elements such as redundancy. It may be spoken, sung, chanted, narrated; but not in every case is the substance put into words, but may be painted, carved, molded, engraved, sculpted, danced or otherwise acted out. Myth comes disguised as tale, law, sacred or profane narration; some are expressions of our woes, fears, and anxieties, of wishes and hopes; some try to explain things beyond our logical capacity or the possibility of our knowledge at any given time. Some are serious, others are funny, bizarre, or weird; some deliver phrases of law and order, others feature mischief and trickery.
7. *Commitment*: Myth never remains external or alien to the group that expresses it and which bonds through it. What makes a myth is its hold on the people who have received it, who take it up as a means of fostering their collective identity, and who pass it on to their descendants. As Krader writes: "A myth is an expression to which a profound commitment by

the people who utter it and hear it is attached.” (lxiv) Oftentimes, myths are of sacred matters and are internalized by means of a leap of faith. However, whether its content is profane or secular and not faith-based, the strong commitment is still to be found among people who share the myth. The group that carries and passes on the myth does so uncritically and affectively. This emotional bondedness to myth is one of the reasons why the boundary between myth and ideology regularly blurs. Krader embraces all sorts of myths and does not assess them in relation to their truthfulness, but nevertheless avoids the logical and substantial pitfalls of extreme relativism. He takes a stand against sentiments aroused in myth that advocate genocide, ethnocide, slavery and other inhuman actions that are to be found in some myths.

8. *Social order*: One of the central functions of myth is to define, explain and to reinforce social order. Law represents a codification of sanctioned rules of behavior and can itself be seen to have mythical components, as in the pomp and tradition of courts of law, terms of address, quasi-religious justification, specific apparel, swearing oaths on holy books, and so on. One of the functions of law is to bind us to it, to the same code of right or legal behavior. Myth of the law, its origin and reception, such as the Decalogue in the bible or the myth of the state in Thomas Hobbes as a Behemoth or Leviathan, intensify and reinforce this binding power over the members of society. Through the law and its myth, we are bound to society and to one another. Even myths featuring a social troublemaker, a common figure in myths of the Winnebago, Pawnee and Chukchi that concern a “trickster” in the shape of a raven, wolf, or coyote, are supportive of social order by defining and addressing breaches or violations of law.
9. *Between hope and Angst*: Myths often meander between the known and the unknown. They are human attempts to speculate about things that seem obscure, inexplicable or go beyond our imagination. They are often cosmogenic, religious or call into being forces like good and evil, light and darkness, friend and foe. As a result of this state of in-between what we know and what we do not know but seek to understand, myth can be located between hopeful positive notes and *Angst*.
10. *Seriousness and play*: The play element in myth stands not in contradiction to the serious role of myth in social life but, on the contrary, reinforces it. Humor can be a means of coping with desperate situations and states of life. We may joke about what is most important to us

but the jocular manner of dealing with the contents of myth does not diminish its importance. The joke relieves the tension of the affective embrace of the myth, but at the same time emphasizes its meaning to us. This is reminiscent of what the sociologist Georg Simmel wrote about sociability—*Geselligkeit*—as the play form of sociation.

11. *The realm of the possible*: Whether it expresses something positive or negative, the relationship of myth to reality is complex and cannot simply be dismissed as fiction. For myth opens a realm of possible worlds but speaks of potentialities and not actualities. In this way myth may be related to utopian thinking, however distantly. Myths are imaginings driven by desires, hopes, fears, threats, and considerations of everything that is conceivably driven by affect linked to cognition. The impossible which is brought into our social reality through myth is seemingly unlimited; objectively, the impossible is limited by the bounds of our experience, whereas subjectively, there may be no limit to our believing in what would otherwise be incredible. Krader tells us, for example, that there is no tropical flora in the myths of the peoples of Siberia. The realm of the possible in myth remains linked to the imaginations of the people who hold it and are committed to it. But the fantastic possibility of myth is opposed to the hypothetical possibility of science:

In myth we are not obliged to enter the realm of reality, but remain, if it pleases us to do so, in limbo, in the grey area which is neither black nor white, neither one thing nor another, in purgatory, which is neither heaven nor hell. (159)

12. *The known and the unknown*: According to Krader, myth comes into being as we speculate about the great unknown or attempt to make sense of an obscure matter or encounter a serendipitous situation. But myth may take up such incommensurate matters of life without offering an explanation, rather it may offer bold declarations which explain nothing, but nonetheless provide a meaningful orientation to the drama of life. In myth, we might proceed from the known to the unknown and back again. Myth does not always aim to be explanatory but may contain utterances of many kinds: In some cases, it is a narrative, in others a symbol, in yet others a law. It might be an abstraction taken for a concretion or a concretion taken for an abstraction.

13. *Sense of wonder and a means of orientation to the world:* Aristotle thought that myth had its origin in the human sense of wonder, that it can be traced back to the unexplained and inexplicable, to any event or experience that arouses our fear, curiosity, or reverence. By myths we express our orientation to the world, to nature, to human beings, to our history or our hopes for the future. As such, myth is a means of orientation in and to the world that expresses our commitment to our social group or cultural heritage, to its customs, traditions, and prospects.
14. *Myth and ideology:* Krader is critical of conceptual approaches that set myth into opposition to ideology. Rather, he claims that myth is inevitably an element in political ideology, as the formulation of popular attitudes towards real or fancied sources of hope, joy, misery, in the making of myth. It is pieced together out of the elements of the past and out of our present concerns, in ever newly creative or destructive ways.

Krader's Critique of Aspects of the Theory of Myth Advanced by Predecessors

From the outset, Krader consistently and consequently rejects some of the concepts advanced through the study of myth by his predecessors: Among these “are the notions of myth as a disease of language, as the expression of the childhood of man, as the utterance of a pre-logical mentality, or of a primitive mind or psychology, as the product of the collective unconscious, or as mistakes of scientific explanation.” (3) Krader rejects all notions of a pre-logical or primitive mind and points out that Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, one of the modern originators of this thought, changed his mind about this later in life. And even the great Malinowski and Boas referred to myth in terms of primitive psychology too loosely. He also rejects the notion of an original myth which supposedly leads us to an Ur-religion or Ur-consciousness, or Ur-community, to an understanding of a collective unconscious and universal archetypes. Rather, he emphasizes that myth itself has “manifold disharmonious constituents, objective and scientific, subjective or irrational” (4) and no theory or approach to myth can solve the puzzle it presents by rational means alone.

Krader takes up the structuralist theories of Claude Lévi Strauss who, in his writings about myth, abstracts myth from both time and history. This abstraction is not part of myth but is brought to the study of myth by the ethnologist

as outsider and as such is part of a myth of myth. In his *La pensée sauvage* Lévi-Strauss on the one hand attributes a system to myth but in identifying the signifier with the signified annuls the possibility of that very same system. His structuralism leads him to look at myth as a code which, as Krader points out, conflates a theory of myth with the theory of codes.

Krader's critique of Edmund Leach's structuralism addresses a different matter. Leach defines myth in relation to religious discourse, as a sacred narrative composed through non-logical-mythical statements. But for Leach there is a logic of the mytho-logical or, as Krader puts it, "there is sense behind the non-sense." (155) But for Krader there is no logic to myth for the variety of myth is too great. And this leads Krader to conclude: "We eschew all attempts at homogenizing or rationalizing the mythic traditions in general. Thus, there is no mytho-logic, any more than there is a somno-logic of dream, a thaumo-logic of wonder, or a phantasmologic of the imagination." (156)

The attempts by many to approach the study of myth from a purely rational perspective must remain a one-sided and thus a false endeavor. Exoteric myth and to some extent even esoteric myth which has been rationalized by specialists—priests, literati, enlightenment thinkers, jurists, etc.—contains non-rational, emotional, fantastic and even absurd and contradictory elements—which cannot be simply purged or rationalized by specialists and outsiders like ethnographers and ethnologists without losing key elements in the nature of myth. For myth arises not only intellectually and cognitively but from emotion, feeling, belief and sensation. As Krader explains it:

Myth is likewise sensational, representing in a fabulous mixture the world we see, hear, feel and otherwise sense. That is not all there is to myth, but any theory of myth which ignores the elements of fabulation as they bear on the world of our sensations strikes out a major part of the substance of the mythic traditions. Other parts of the mythic traditions bear on the beliefs, which are held by many, in a marvelous world; it is a world in which our all too human cares and troubles, anxieties and pains are eased. (164)

Now consider myth as an entity existing solely in the ideational world, independently of our sensory experience, of our cares, joys, sufferings, and the sublimation thereof in our myths, hope- and wish-dreams; it is supposed that they do not exist in this sensible world, but only in the idea, the symbolic forms and noumenal being. It is not shown how the unitary mental energy passes to the world of our senses, or how these ideas and forms pass into the world of the sensations, emotions, etc. (164–165)

There are, however, distinctions to be made in the history of myth which Krader acknowledges. The first has to do with early myth or myth found in societies without class divisions or a state. These myths are different from those in civil societies in substance and in the form of their expression. Krader writes:

The myths of peoples without social classes, writing, or specialists in mythography strike the outside observer as bizarre, often without order or internal harmony, as colorful and picturesque but unorganized. The myths of peoples with social classes, writing, scribes and mythographers are often orderly: consistent and harmonious, hierarchized and structured; they appear to be more code-like and systematic. The myths of the latter sort are in many cases secular myths of the state and are indistinguishable from political, philosophical, juridical or religious ideologies. The latter bear within themselves seemingly insuperable contradictions. (301)

And parallel to this division between the communal (classless) and the social (classes and political society), there is the difference in character of exoteric myth as opposed to a mixture of exoteric and esoteric myth with a preponderance of the latter in the civil condition of the humankind. Exoteric myth is anonymous, collective, shared, believed uncritically and requires commitment on the part of the community of believers to the point of self-sacrifice. Esoteric myth is that which has been taken up by classes of intellectuals such as priests or literati, who bring a kind of order, a rational reworking of exoteric myth, who introduce a greater consistency into the often chaotic and absurd and even contradictory elements of exoteric myth. Boas himself called attention to this distinction in his work with the Bella Coola natives in British Columbia which Krader contrasts with the lack of esoteric myth among the Aranda, Chukchi, Inuit and Yupik peoples, Tsimshians, Yukagir, among others. This view stands again in contrast to those who argued for a periodization of history according to which the time of myth is in a different time which is then followed by a succeeding historical period of history. This latter view is an ethnocentrism which, Krader argues, wittingly or unwittingly privileges the classificatory and attributive systems of some peoples over those of others.

And there is a third parallel of development of myth in history, that is from a preponderance of sacred to a preponderance of secular myth over time, or an unfolding of the undifferentiated sacred and secular elements in esoteric myth after which the religious and secular are then differentiated. Writing about the period from ancient to modern myth, from the undifferentiated myth in the pre-civil to the differentiations of myth in civil society, Krader writes that

(d)uring this time, myth has been transformed from an undifferentiated body of representations set forth by a people, into a body of exoteric and esoteric doctrines, which is held on the one hand by the masses of a people, nation, sect or party, and on the other by specialist groups among them. (285)

All myths are equally valid, in Krader's view. Yet, as mentioned above, he does not favor a complete relativism in terms of myth with regard to advocacy of inhuman practices:

A myth which advocates genocide or ethnocide, the exploitation or oppression of one people by another, is an inhuman expression, and we fight against those who utter it. We distinguish between the myth and the judgment expressed in it. For the myth as such does nothing, but expresses the fears, hopes, emotions and worldviews of a people, how they judge their problems, their natural and human surroundings, and themselves. We take up our struggle not against the myth if it is an inhuman expression, but against the judgments, mental set, social acts and relations which the holders of the myth bring out through it. (149)

But this is a very low bar, indeed. Why just these heinous judgments, mental sets, etc.? Of course, the list of intolerable and inhuman judgments, could be extended to include quite a list of "inhuman" judgments. But things become stickier as we get further into details. Taking but a few examples in contemporary Western society, what is inhuman with regard to laws regulating abortion, capital punishment or euthanasia is not as clear as judgments concerning the advocacy of genocide or ethnocide by one people of another. And this would lead us into the discussion of ideology and the relation between ideology and myth which we take up below.

Krader also rejects the assertion advanced by some that myth is a universal feature of human groups or an innate proclivity of the human mind. Myth is, to be sure, found around the world in both traditional and modern cultures but the claim to universality is speculative. Krader criticizes Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Henri Bergson and Ernst Cassirer (on Cassirer see our extensive discussion below) among others for taking up empirical notions in their study of myth and making them into universals. He also suggests that there is no general relation between myth and cult or ritual i.e. we cannot conclude that cult ritual is derived from myth or vice versa. (Myth among the Chukchi, Koryak, Yukagir and Yupik bore no strong relation to their rituals.) Like Lévi-Strauss, Cassirer (and Schelling) abstracted myth from time but on different grounds. Krader, as we have seen, also rejects the notion of stages of human thinking from pre-logical to logical

or primitive to civilized. Myth is generated in time and space although the time and space in myth is varied, as we shall see below. In Krader's words: "Myth and its study have evoked both profound insights into our common humanity and also much nonsense." (3) His goal in the book is to preserve and integrate the profound insights while jettisoning what he takes to be untenable.

Krader's Approach to Myth and Ideology

Having reviewed some of the major criticisms that Krader levels at his predecessors in their approach to the study of myth we now turn our attention to the way in which he sifted, assessed and integrated the various methods of his intellectual forbears. In his words, Krader described his approach to myth in this context as being "... able to embrace the thoughts about myth of writers as diverse as Aristotle, Vico, Hegel, Benedetto Croce and Emile Durkheim, Franz Boas, Vladimir G. Bogoraz and Paul Radin, Georges Sorel and Max Weber, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Barrington Moore." (lxvii)

The following, with qualifications so noted, are aspects of Krader's approach to myth and to the study of myth. For him, myth is first of all an expression of conviction held by a group of people which in turn has a hold on them. It thus requires both belief and commitment by the members of the group or community.

The myth in all cases binds each member of the social group and partakes in its vision to the other by commitment to it, or by belief in it, and by self-identity in the group and its myth. The self-identity may lead to self-surrender and to self-sacrifice for them. (296)

Krader goes on to describe myths as "representations in words, pictures and other human acts of our thoughts and feelings, put into an image, narrative or symbol, a slogan, law, or vision, a lyrical flight, or fantastic voyage in joy, fear or hope." (165)

From Krader's Empirical Ethnography to *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx* and the Periodization of History to *Myth and Ideology*

Krader began his work in anthropology, as we have seen, with a specific interest in the Altaic speaking peoples of the Central Asian Steppes which he continued to

pursue with fieldwork expeditions in the 1960s and 1970s. He extended his interest early to peoples of Mongolia and Siberia and studied aspects of the culture of the Chukchis, Mongols, Buryats, Inuit and Yupik, and the Tungusic-speaking peoples among others. In discussions with his friend, Karl Korsch, he developed an interest in the ethnological notebooks of Karl Marx composed during the last years of Marx's life (1877–1882) which contain excerpts from and interpolations to works of the leading anthropologists of his day. One of the focal points of Krader's work following the publication of his transcription, edition and lengthy introduction to the notebooks in 1972, was the question of the periodization of history. This included his work on the so-called *Asiatic Mode of Production* (1974) (which he argued was not limited to Asia and was to be understood as a mode of production which is communal in form and social in substance) and his *Treatise on Social Labor* (1979) among other publications in the 1970s through to the 1990s, including his last major publication *Die Anfänge des Kapitalismus in Mitteleuropa* (1995).⁴

The publication of Krader's magnum opus: *Noetics: The Science of Thinking and Knowing* (2010) marked a great broadening and deepening of his previous work. In his own understanding, *Noetics* was the culmination of his life's work in philosophy, the history of ideas, ethnography, ethnology, aesthetics, the philosophy of nature and science and philosophical anthropology. The relevance of *Noetics* to *Myth and Ideology* is profound and, in some ways, extends and develops some of the ideas presented in *Noetics*.

What Krader presents to the reader of *Noetics* is nothing less than a new theory of nature. Briefly stated, Krader has identified at least three, potentially *n* orders of nature. The three orders of nature that he outlines in *Noetics* are 1. the *material* order of nature—which basically refers to the universe as it was understood from Newton to Einstein from which men like Darwin, Marx and Freud celebrated the banishment of teleology. But existing in a different order of space-time is 2. the world of the *quantum* in which the space-time configuration is different from that of the material-biotic order of nature and where causality is circumscribed by probability. Where then, does the human world fit into this new schema of nature? 3. Krader accords the *human* realm its distinctive order of nature in which the relation of concretion and abstraction is different from the wholly concrete material and quantum orders. Only in the *human* order is space abstracted from time and time from space. Only in the *human* order is there subjectivity and objectivity as opposed to the concrete “thinglyness” (*Dinghaftigkeit*) of nature in the quantum and material orders.

Myth, Time, History and Teleology

All myth is spoken, narrated, sung, danced, acted, read, improvised, reordered and recast in time and space. But within myth, time and space may or may not be those of non-mythical reality or objective time as it is understood within the communities whose myths they are. This is not to ignore the fact that especially in those communal groups without a class of specialists, literati, priests, philosophers and ethnologists, the time within myth flows into the non-mythical time of the community as the spatial representations in myth may infuse those of otherwise objective space. Krader explores mythic time by means of the example of a Chukchi myth as expressed by a shaman as follows: “The Chukchi shaman believed that the lamp walked, and the walls of his room spoke to him in their own voices. These acts take place in another time, which is the time of myth and in our own time. The antlers walking in their procession have their place in another space than our own, and in our space.” (126) When the shaman gave his account of the myth to Bogoraz it was presented in this common space and time shared by Bogoraz and the shaman. Thus, for the shaman there were two senses of the present, the subjective present of the Chukchis and the time of his accounting to Bogoraz. “. . .(T)hat subjective sense was shared with many other Chukchis. Other peoples have their own subjective here and now. These subjective terms of reference are opposed to the objective space and time, or space-time.” (126) But it would be wrong to think that with the coming of our world that mythic time disappeared. There is no implication of a stage theory of the development of time. As Krader writes:

Thus, there is not, in their worldview, a straightforward process in time from the mythic *then* to the historically real *now*, nor a straightforward process in space from the mythic *there* to the real *here*. Two worlds are conceived by the Chukchis to be coexistent, in interacting with one another; the other world acts on our own, and we seek to ward off its desired effects. The mythic work is not supposed to cease to exist when the world as we know it assumed the shape that it has. This permeation of our world by another is both the expression of a cosmo-vision and an anthropovision. The ancestors of the mythic time are supposed also to be still existent and still active. (127)

Krader links this conception of the living time of myth where antlers march in procession to the doctrine of animism according to which the objects of the world are populated by souls like living beings. And myth is part of the human world and has both subjective and objective significance. Krader writes,

Myth is impressively subjective . . . There is also . . . an objective side to it. It has form and substance, sense and meaning; it is sometimes explanatory and sometimes not. It has both internal and external relations and processes. These qualities are shared with other aspects of human life, which is objective, subjective, senseful and meaningful, senseless and meaningless, in its inner and outer relations. The myth has subjective inner meaning to the true believer. Its meaning is other to the ethnographer. The explanatory mythic expression has both outward and inward meaning, and this is as valid as any other. (157–158)

One of the problems with those who have taken up the study of myth as a rational, structural, systematic, universal-ideal position, i.e. Schelling, Cassirer, Lévi-Strauss, Leach, and many others concerns their overlooking or downplaying the interpenetration of the subjective and objective sides, the relation of time in both elements of social life, the importance of belief and commitment both in terms of individual identity and social solidarity. There is, in addition, a minimization or complete failure to account for the role of the senses and the confabulation of the data of the senses in the formation and experience of myth.

The world of myth is not the same as the world of our senses, but is often a confabulation of that world, or a speculation upon it, which does not stray far from the latter; or else, in another confabulating process, the parts of the myth form a wondrous rearrangement of the elements of the sensible world. Therefore, there is no reason to consider myth a law unto itself, or a tautegorical world, for we make fantastic rearrangements of the data of our sense in other ways than myth as well, and we engage in speculations not only in myth but in our non-mythic philosophies. The rearrangements of our sense data, and of parts of animals and plants, were undertaken by Leonardo da Vinci and are undertaken at present by surrealists and others; wish fulfillments are found not only in myth but in many other living contexts. Sometimes there is causality and harmony in myth, but not always; myth is the realm of the arbitrary as well as the casual and harmonious expression. All these utterances are concrete, and do not exist apart from the figures, symbols, actions, visions and declarations of myth. Thus, in respect of its content, there is nothing particular to myth, for themes and subjects found in it are also found elsewhere in our mental life, both in its cognitive and affective aspects, and in our expressive capacities, poetic, graphic, symbolic, nomothetic, narrative, or picturesque. (165)

The Dialectic of Nature and the Problem of Teleology

Shortly after reading *The Origin of Species* Marx (1861) wrote a letter to Ferdinand Lassalle in which he exclaimed: “Of very great significance is Darwin’s book

and it serves me well as the natural scientific foundation of the historical class struggle. Of course, one has to put up with the coarse English manner of development, but for all its defects “teleology” in natural science is not only given the death blow for the first time here, but its rational meaning is analyzed.” (*MEW* 30, 578. Editors’ translation.) One of the implications of Marx’s conclusion from reading Darwin concerned the elimination of purpose or subjectivity in nature. In other words, Marx correctly concluded that Darwin had abolished God from nature and, by extension, from natural science. But Darwin’s book did not abolish God, gods, spirits, devils, genies, souls, etc. from myth, that is to say, these spirits, benevolent and malevolent, exist in the *human* order of nature. And working backwards from gods to teleology, there is teleology in the human order of nature. There is purpose, meaning and subjectivity in nature if we accept Krader’s revised theory of nature in *Noetics* according to which nature is a manifold of different orders of space-time: the space-time of material nature, of the quantum realm and of the human order. Teleology, purpose and meaning exist only in the human order.

In *Myth and Ideology* Krader takes up the dialectic of nature as formulated by Engels. Krader unpacks this dialectic as a myth of science which smuggles teleology back into material nature. Krader introduces the theme of the reintroduction of teleology from within the theory of evolution:

Within the powerful theory of evolution, a teleological notion is often introduced.⁵ Sometimes this teleology is formulated as teleonomy, which is the introduction of a goal according to a law. Telos presupposes a purpose with respect to a goal, and this purposive activity implies a design. The designer is either chance or else it is personified in a great nomothete. Chance is a myth of one kind, and the personification of the lawgiver is a myth of another kind, the one profane, the other holy or tending to the holy. (264)

Krader goes further in taking up Engels’ work on the dialectic of nature according to which there is a dialectical movement built into the process of evolutionary change in material nature. In particular, he shows precisely how design, mystery and teleology are re-introduced into nature by the supposed hard-nosed materialism of this dialectic:

As to the dialectical laws themselves, they imply a direction and movement, together with a directing agency and mover in the process of conversion of opposites, and a teleology in nature of quantitative and qualitative changes. Contradiction is imputed to the non-human parts of nature as it is to the

human parts thereof. A theory of nature which attributes contradiction, oppositions, antitheses or antagonisms to non-human parts of nature ascribes to them a plan or telos. Now we have purposes in human affairs, if not a grand plan or design; those purposes are human processes and of no other kind. We have particular goals in our undertakings, which are often achieved, but as often their achievement is frustrated. A theory of nature which proceeds by introducing the conversion of opposites into one another, of quantity into quality and vice versa, is a theory of design; mystery is introduced into [material—eds.] natural reality, a design without god, a telos without a guiding spirit. This theory is a subtle way of leading to god, but the designing agency has not yet been generated within it. It will lead to a god eventually, for the question remains: if there is a purpose and design in nature, who or what has introduced it? Thus, an erstwhile anti-theological doctrine has been converted into its opposite by a human hand. Dialectical materialism generated mystery where no mystery existed. (264)

What is the connection between the reinsertion of teleology into material nature and myth? Recall that in *Noetics* Krader had applauded the removal of teleology from the material order of nature and yet he recognized that purpose, design, meaning, and thus teleology exist in the human order of nature. In other words, the attribution of teleology to the material order of nature is one of the “mythic conceptions” of the dialectic of nature. Krader writes further:

Teleology and design are mythic conceptions when they are attributed to [Krader should have inserted the word ‘material’ here to be true to his argument in *Noetics*—eds.] nature; the dialectic of nature is a part of that myth. Teleology, design, and the dialectic are neither in nor of nature save insofar as human beings have put them there. There they are, in the human parts of nature, in the human world, and are then introduced into the non-human parts of nature by an act of anthropomorphism, which is a feature of myth. [It is clear that Krader had not yet fully revised his theory of nature as it appears in *Noetics*—eds.]. Teleology and design in nature have little to do with scientific theory and practice as such but serve as a myth of orientation in our human concerns. Negation and contradiction themselves, as well as opposition, are human acts of judgment, and of statement, and are in some cases objective; in others they are a mixture of objective and subjective activities, and in yet others they are purely subjective. One of Engels’ aims was to trace the development of socialism from utopia to science.⁶ (264–265)

The notion of the development of socialism (before Marx and Engels) from utopia to science is yet another myth of science. But Krader does not rest there

either. He goes on to show that the myth of the dialectic of nature implicitly reintroduces God into material nature which, ironically, the banishment of God from nature Marx singled out in his letter to Lassalle as Darwin's great achievement. Krader follows the logic of the argument for teleology in material nature from this myth of science to theology:

It is possible to give further support to the idea of the dialectic of nature as a myth. The dialectic of anything, of history, of society, or of any other process, is an interrelation of theory and practice. There is no dialectic without theory, but that theory is in an immediate relation to practice, and there is no practice apart from theory. This is the materialist doctrine of the dialectic; the idealist doctrine is not at issue. Now theory in relation to practice, or apart from it, is a human process, according to the materialist dialectic. It is a human undertaking, and we ourselves are the theoretical and practical parts or our own social and historical processes. Given that there is natural *praxis*, if there is a dialectic of nature, then there ought to be a natural *theoria*. But then there ought to be a theorist who has generated the *theoria*. Who or what is that theoretical agency of nature? The grand theoretician of nature, if there is a dialectic of nature, must be god. The materialist has restored god to the universe. (265)

Following Engels' notion of the dialectic of nature, Lenin and the Leninists developed an ideology out of elements of the myth of the dialectic of nature. The word "utopia" itself, meaning "no place" or "nowhere" is accurate in that it exists nowhere in material reality but is a product of the imagination which is to be found only in the mind, i.e. in the human order of nature. And the supposed development of socialism from utopia to science is an aspect of the myth of science which has been linked to the political ideology of Leninism. As Krader writes:

The Leninists formulated a political ideology which contains mythic elements of the dialectic of nature and the utopian vision of the future of society. The mythic elements of the Leninist ideology are uncritical, and contain certain mystical notions, such as the idea of the dialectic of nature; in this case, the sacred and the secular, or the supernatural and the natural are not kept apart . . . The supernatural element of the dialectic of nature is a part of the Leninist ideology; it derives from a notion of the dialectic originating in Friedrich Engels' work. This element is mythic, and as such is uncritical. Thus, the Leninist myth has both mystical and naturalistic elements in it. It is the object of a deep commitment to it which has had many peoples in its grasp. The vision of the future of society in that ideology is not a sacred one and is without a supernatural element. No myth is as such clear and distinct. (283–284)

Krader's Reception of Myth in the Enlightenment, by Romanticists and Idealists

From the period of the Renaissance, then increasingly during the Enlightenment, myths were re-discovered as something of interest to the present time. This renewed curiosity about an ancient phenomenon came with increasing knowledge of the myths and customs of indigenous peoples from European travelers, colonial authorities, missionaries, and the like to Africa, Asia and America, together with a renaissance of interest in classical antiquity. Various notions of these "savage customs" could be discerned among the Europeans at the time. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, one of the most influential thinkers in the eighteenth century, imagined the aboriginals to have been a natural folk uncorrupted by the civilized conditions of life among the Europeans. Rousseau did not counsel a movement "back to nature" but he sought to reorganize civil society on the basis of the general will in order to return to civil life the freedom which individuals enjoyed in the state of nature. Rousseau became famous for his very own version of a myth, that of the "noble savage," who lived close to nature, unsullied by the corrupting effects of the civil condition of humanity. His great work on the philosophy of education, *Emile*, shows how nature and not the imposition of another human will, is the great teacher and educator of youth both practically and morally.

Others, at the time, took the opposite view regarding "savage populations." Many Enlightenment scholars and their predecessors considered myths and fables to be the products of an irrational, narrow, dark, superstitious and childish way of thinking, at best as a premature and unsuccessful attempt at enlightened thinking.

While reconstructing the efforts of the scholars of this time, Krader proposes that their importance is not so much related to their interpretation of myth. Rather, he admires their deep scholarship and diligence, their mastery of the ancient Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Arabic, Coptic and other ancient languages, and their valuable contributions to modern philology, linguistics, hermeneutics, geography and history; yet he remained critical of their judgement of myth. Among the Enlightenment scholars there were two groups: one, like Giambattista Vico, considered myth as the first (although premature stage) of the emerging scientific consciousness of the humankind. The other group, following in the footsteps of Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle, claimed myths were pointless, childish phantasies, revealing nothing but the pre-enlightened state of mind of their believers.

With Johann Gottfried Herder and Christian G. Heyne however, and the Romantic movement in general, the reception of myth moved in a different direction: Those who followed them admired and praised the allegedly pure form of consciousness and religion in which they hoped to discover a spark of original divinity. But they also represented the beginnings of an empirical and critical study of myth which was increasingly admired for its aesthetics and praised as an art form.

The Romantic movement in Germany was a response to the overemphasis of logical reasoning during the period of the Enlightenment, yet the Romantics were not entirely opposed to the Enlightenment; rather they took up the reverse side of the same coin. There is no light without darkness, and there is no enlightenment without the dark, unknown, mysterious, instinctual, sensual, etc. Whereas scholars of the Enlightenment opposed myth to rational thinking, the scholars of the Romantic period and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries made efforts to understand myth and mythology as a symbolic form, culminating in Cassirer's three volume opus magnum *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, with the second volume being exclusively dedicated to myth and religion (For more on Cassirer, see below).

Members of the Romantic movement from early to late Romanticism in Germany and Europe were by no means consistent and homogeneous in how they opposed or objected to the rhyme and reason of the rational: The early Romantics, for instance Novalis, in *The Apprentices at Saïs (Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs)*, evoked religion and art, while writers and thinkers of the late romantic period focused on topoi such as madness, irrationality, or the technically and automated monstrosities produced by man, such as Frankenstein's creature in Mary Shelley's novel, or the automaton Olimpia in E.T.A. Hoffmann's short story *The Sandman*, who incites the protagonist's madness after he realized that he was passionately in love with nothing but a mechanical clockwork or robot.⁷

If rationalism attempted to penetrate and understand the world of experience by means of logical reasoning and empirical evidence, the romantics tended to withdraw from the empirical world; they withdrew either into the sublime, solitary nature, such as portrayed for example in Caspar David Friedrich's famous painting *Monk by the Sea*, or Daniel Defoe's novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, or they escaped from the world into the realm of art through the attempt to poetize reality.⁸

This desire to poetize reality, privileging the transcendental over the immanent, and the associated elevation of art as the highest human symbolic form of expression, ultimately led to the romantics' interest in myth and their efforts to bring forward theoretical concepts on how to understand myths.

A departure point was Christian G. Heyne's understanding that myths are of obscure origin, stemming from a time and culture far removed from him and his contemporaries. He concluded that this makes it necessary for us to interpret these stories historically or philosophically. Johann G. Herder similarly considered myths to be a collective heritage of the humankind, which can be considered a first step in the direction of an anthropological understanding of language and mythical expression. Friedrich Schlegel and Georg Friedrich Creuzer developed this notion further, claiming that in mythical expression there is a fundamental energy and inspiration of the human mind at work, which is undisciplined, marvelous, fantastic, colorful, figurative, and pictorial. This assumption was the cornerstone of the method of symbolic, aesthetic, and metaphorical interpretation of myth, and down to the present-day is shared by many philosophers, ethnologists, philologists, and linguists.

This approach seems plausible to Krader, who is interested in the sociology of knowledge and the history of ideas; he would not have had as great an objection to the romantic ideas regarding myth if the scholars of that time had not twinned their belief in myth with another conception: Myth was understood as an important aspect of the renewal of religion. Jean Paul, for example, raved about the fact that turning away from the earthly present towards the heavenly future was the real myth of his time and the source of all romantic poetry. The romantic poets poetized reality to escape from their immanent existence into a kind of mythical counter-world (often found in nature). For most Romantics, however, who were longing for the undisguised truth behind appearances, for which Novalis' *Apprentices at Saïs* stood prototypically, myths were veiled, mysterious ciphers or codes that originated in a pictorial (and not conceptual) thinking of the prehistoric age. Myth was taken as proof that there was a primordial religion, consciousness, poetry, and community; the study of myth was considered as a possible way of gaining access to the Ur-Religion. The poetization of myth prompted the Romantic movement between 1800 and 1840 to search for the origin of the world's mythologies or a supposed primordial myth: Friedrich Schlegel interpreted Indian mythology (he believed that Sanskrit was the original language of the humankind) as the expression of a primordial religion protected by priests, which could only be communicated to outsiders in a symbolic way and which had been preserved in the myths of the Greeks.

This notion of an esoteric wisdom in the expression of myth, shared by a secret cult of priests, prompted scholars to draw different conclusions; for instance, Johann Heinrich Voss made it his mission to unmask esoteric expression as scandalous; according to him, "the original rude, and illusory notions of the world were made into cultivated, sublime expressions by Homer." (37)

In Friedrich Schelling's view, man is no longer the creator of the myths, but its creature. Both Johann H. Voss and Schelling understood poetics as a "new mythology" and as the aesthetic teacher of humanity. Schelling attributed to myth the task of revising the concept of rationality. According to him, reason can only be suitably determined if it is possible to map the creative moment of subjectivity parallel to the reflective one. This presupposes imagination as autonomous and no longer subordinated to reason as in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, but rather interacting with reason, working out the creative moment of subjectivity parallel to the reflective one. Schelling proposed the concept of a poetically composed reason, in which myth and religion and their decipherment play an important role.

Christian G. Heyne, Herder, Schlegel and Schelling shared an admiration of and appreciation for myth and considered mythology a worthwhile topic for philosophers and philologists to discover their own cultural and mental heritage in the form of a self-reflection on primordial forms of our consciousness; The later Hegel neither shared their notions nor their sentiment. He regarded myth as a confused form of thinking, just as he considered religion to be inferior to philosophy; religion thought in pictures, philosophy in concepts. Assuming that myth had imagination and phantasy as its organ, he held them for playful fancies without general truths contained in them.

Whereas Hegel detected different stages of the development of human thinking, leading to the most sublime stage of philosophical thinking, the Hegelians on the left dwelled on the connection that Hegel made between myth and religion and discussed myth in connection with a demythologizing practice. Karl Marx, for instance, described myth to be of the same category as speculation, religious doctrine, or nationalistic sentiments.

Myth was not always considered to contain a veiled divine truth in need of deciphering. There were more down-to-earth approaches, which eventually became a milestone for ethno-psychology [*Völkerpsychologie*] and later for research into collective mentalities: Ludwig Uhland as well as the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, for instance, published accounts of myths of the Germanic peoples, seeking to explain the mythic significance of (peasant) customs and oral tales, later known as the collection of traditional fairy tales. For the Slavic cultures, this program was also carried out. Theodor Waitz, Edward B. Tylor, Daniel G. Brinton and Adolf Bastian thought that myths with the same or similar content, were found in widely separated parts of the world, and this provided evidence for them of the psychic unity of the humankind. This led Giambattista Vico to assume that "uniform ideas born among peoples unknown to one another must have a common motive or basis of truth" (Vico 1744, paragraph 144).

As we have seen, romantic and idealist scholars shared their tendency to treat myths as esoteric, veiled codes or ciphers, possibly of primordial shape or divine wisdom, sometimes assuming that myth was formerly accessible only to the initiated, such as priests.

Historians of religion and art, together with philosophers, psychologists and ethnologists in the 19th and 20th centuries proceeded to the empirical study of myth. Their great service was the re-discovery of myth, applying it to the present and extending the study of myth to all parts of the world. Their efforts paved the way for an approach that related myths and mythology to the study of society, with Emile Durkheim as a pioneer. With his concept of collective representations, he exercised a strong influence on the theory of myth, which was further developed in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. According to Durkheim, the unity of the social group is derived from its collective sentiment; Lévi-Strauss contradicted him, claiming that the sentiment is not the cause of the aggregation of people but rather the result of their congregating.

Krader rejects the absolute distinction between esoteric and exoteric myths and the proposal that myths are mysteriously encoded truths or messages from primeval times. For the question then arises who encoded the myth and whether the encoding was intentional or not? Furthermore, it is clear that the people doing the decoding are hermeneuts, specialists who differ from the putative encoders. And in any event, not all myths are written in code; hence, to view all myth as encoded or to attribute to all myth a common structure is false. According to Krader myths conserve the traditions and imaginations of a people, but not in a (wholly) systematic or logical way. He refers to the work of Bogoraz and Jochelson, who noticed that Chukchi and Yukagir myths have both rational and irrational elements, lack a certain logical consistency, and appeal to emotions and not to reason. "The chief difficulty in establishing myth as a kind of code is the presence in codes of their systematic treatment of information, and the absence of any system in many important bodies of myth, particularly those coming from cultures which Lévi-Strauss calls cold." (188).

The reason why the notion of the secret code veiled in myths was and still is convincing for some lies in the historicity of myths: Biblical texts, ancient scriptures and indigenous myths were all composed in historical, cultural, or social contexts different from our own; therefore, they may seem to contemporary readers secretive or encrypted. Moreover, Western scholars have been accustomed to scientific reasoning; myths, however, are resistant to treatment by discursive-logical reason alone; they are rather dramatic, immediate, contradictory, inconsistent and pictorial than prudently distanced, mediated, linear, consistent and

discursive-conceptual. Myths have more of a dream-like quality or might resemble a surreal world. Just as logicians would reach the limits of their efficacy if they were to attempt to explain dreams or surrealist masterpieces (without falling back on a theory of the unconscious which Krader argues is “speculative”), it remains a vain hope to explain myths purely rationally and logically. Krader was a philosopher, anthropologist, and ethnographer who attempted to harmonize these different methods and approaches. Interpreting myths as encoded religious, secretive, esoteric messages that could be decoded by hermeneutic efforts, prophetic divination, or other means of penetrating the incommensurate, means stripping them of their actual substance and thus interpreting them by means of a foreign standard imposed from without.

Krader furthermore criticizes a variety of famous schools and traditions in various disciplines which attempted to discover and to describe a unifying feature of all myth, whether in terms of substance, content, function, or form. For Krader, this was an oversimplification of a complex, contradictory, and multifaceted phenomenon that cannot be reduced to one common denominator:

At this point we will consider a procedural matter. We cannot develop a theory of myth by referring to its form, as prose or poetry, or as a tale of one kind or another. The consideration of myth as a tale covers a part of myth, but omits another part, both parts being important to the study of myth. The traditional element in myth, the sacred, and the supernatural are important parts of myth but that is not all there is to it. To restrict the study of myth to these matters alone would be an oversimplification of our subject, eliminating without good reason another body of literature of myth and about myth which is as significant as the sacred, traditional, and supernatural. The forms and themes of myth are too various to provide a sure guide to the understanding of myth by themselves. The myths, moreover, display a great diversity of functions. Some explain the origin of the world, of things, of customs and rites; some depict the end of the world; some represent a drastic foreboding of things to come, others a joyous and hopeful shape thereof; they bind a group together by a common belief in them if they are sacred, or by a commitment to them by other means if they are secular. They have other functions, emotional and intellectual, beside these, some of which have been mentioned in this work. (259–260)

Krader and Cassirer

For several reasons it seems worthwhile to take a closer look at Krader’s reception of Ernst Cassirer’s (1874–1945) concept of myth. The thinking of this neo-Kantian German philosopher stood in some ways very close to that of Krader but in other

ways it was subjected to Krader's significant criticism. Next to the structuralist mythology of Claude Lévi-Strauss and his successors, Cassirer's work is one of the most significant and detailed attempts in the twentieth century to understanding myth; it moves us beyond indefensible claims of myth as a supposedly inferior way of thinking that has been overcome by science. Cassirer is a highly respected and heavily cited author by Krader, both in *Myth and Ideology* and in *Noetics*. In Krader's personal library there are heavily annotated copies of Cassirer's three-volume *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* and his *Essay on Man*. It is beyond doubt that Krader found much of interest in Cassirer, in spite of his heavy criticism of him. Even though Krader is critical of Cassirer's concept of myth and points out its shortcomings, it is to be noted that a comparative study of both reveals many similarities: Both combine masterful knowledge in the history of ideas with the sociology of knowledge, anthropology and the philosophy of culture. Both demonstrate enormous erudition combined with sharp analytical thinking. Both acknowledge myth as a powerful source of human knowledge and as an important expression of human imaginations, hopes, fears, and wishes. Both emphasize the emotional quality of myth and the commitment of the group to it. Both also astutely noted the close connection of myth and political worldviews, leading them to the study of myth in conjunction with ideology. And finally, one discovers striking similarities in their intellectual biographies: Cassirer and Krader both had a background in classical philosophy, logic and epistemology, turning later in their careers toward the study of language and linguistics, given expression in an anthropological and/or ethnological twist in their writings. We believe that a comparative perspective helps to gain a better understanding of the myth concept of both scholars, and helps to elucidate and amplify their conclusions, their similarities and their differences.

Cassirer was born in the German city of Breslau on July 28, 1874 (now Wrocław, Poland). Upon graduation from the University of Berlin, where he studied philosophy, linguistics, and ethno-psychology [*Völkerpsychologie*], he continued his studies in philosophy at the University of Marburg, where he came under the influence of Hermann Cohen, who became Cassirer's most important academic teacher. Legend has it that Cassirer, who had attended Georg Simmel's lectures on Kant in Berlin in 1894, had relentlessly questioned him about Kant, until Simmel directed him to the master Kant-interpreter of the day, Hermann Cohen. From 1896 to 1899 Cassirer completed his doctoral work under Cohen's supervision with a dissertation on Descartes' analysis of mathematical and natural scientific knowledge. Today, Cohen and Cassirer are considered the most important scholars of the Marburg School of Neo-Kantianism. This strong influence of

Kant on Cassirer certainly distinguishes him from Krader, who was influenced by Hegel and Marx, although with significant reservations with regard to both. [See the references to both Hegel and Marx in this book and in Krader's other works—eds.].

Before Cassirer was forced to flee Germany with the Nazi rise to power, he taught at the universities of Berlin and Hamburg, and was appointed rector at the latter institution. In 1932 he accepted an appointment at the University of Oxford and in 1942 he moved to the United States, where he taught at Yale until 1944. The last year of his life was spent as a Visiting Professor at Columbia University. Cassirer died unexpectedly of a heart attack on April 13, 1945.

His early writings were in the field of epistemology. By 1904, he had completed two volumes of his monumental four-volume series *The Problem of Knowledge*, which, by the way, is worthy of study by way of comparison with Krader's *opus magnum*, *Noetics*. The final volume of Cassirer's *The Problem of Knowledge* was in the process of translation at the time of his death, and Krader's *Noetics*, on which he began to work already as a student at the City College of New York in 1936, was published posthumously in 2010. For both scholars, the main scope of research was the question of the origin, development, distribution, and modification of human knowledge as part of cultural and social interactions. Their study of myth is situated in this broader context and can only be properly understood when considering the more general aspects of their research scope as a sociology of knowledge.

After the First World War, Cassirer began working on his most important and well-known study, the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, his major contribution to twentieth century philosophy, published between 1923 and 1929. In U.S. exile, and in fruitful exchange with Susanne K. Langer, whom he had met and befriended in New York, and who translated his study *Sprache und Mythos* (1925) into English (*Language and Myth*, 1953), Cassirer turned to anthropological questions. Although Krader kept up his reading in philosophy and logic, he devoted more time to anthropology and linguistics after his service in the U. S. Merchant Marine in World War II.⁹ It seems that in both cases, after critical experiences of exile and war, the purely idealistic, analytical and rarefied realm of thought was no longer sufficient, and a study of anthropological questions came to the fore. The epistemological question "what can we know?" changed to the philosophical-anthropological inquiry "what is man? what is human being?"

For our comparative approach three of Cassirer's books are important: His early study *Language and Myth* in which he discusses myth in conjunction with language and human expression. Second, Cassirer dealt in length and in great

detail with myth and religion in the second volume of his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1925), in which he considers myth as a first awakening of religious feeling and thinking in the humankind. Finally, we turn to his *Essay on Man*, published in 1942, where he repeats the main aspects of his myth concept with a greater anthropological twist. In his last book in 1946, the posthumously published *Myth of the State*, he takes another approach and discusses myth in conjunction with contemporary political developments in Germany.

Before comparing Krader and Cassirer directly, it is necessary to introduce the reader to Cassirer's concept of myth. *Language and Myth* was written during his research on his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. It is an offshoot of the latter work, and together with his *Essay on Man*, provides the English reader with a first-hand account of Cassirer's philosophy in relatively non-technical terms. Cassirer (1953, 6) begins with a critique of theories which aim to explain myths in terms of error, and specifically that kind of error which is based on the deficiencies of language, such as ambiguity. He traces misconceptions of this kind back to naïve realism, to the notion that nature confronts the mind "as something directly and unequivocally given." To obtain an accurate understanding of the nature of myth, and indeed of any other expression of the human mind, we must acknowledge "in all seriousness what Kant calls his 'Copernican Revolution'" (op. cit., 8). In Cassirer, this Kantian Copernican Revolution is given a nominalist turn, as the forms which bind together thinking are no longer Kant's fixed schematized categories but are conceived of instead as essentially bound up with the symbolism that expresses them: "The special symbolic forms are not imitations, but organs for reality, since it is solely by their agency that anything real becomes an object for intellectual apprehension, and as such it is visible to us." (ibid.)

This leads Cassirer to question how the various symbolic forms evolved. Taking the special case of language, Cassirer (op. cit. 23–31) finds that the question regarding its genesis has proved a "veritable monkey puzzle." It seems obvious that the genesis of language cannot begin with the symbolic form characteristic of theoretical cognition, for that would be a case of *petitio principii*, begging the question, or assuming what is to be proved. Even the most rudimentary distinction between name and class terms requires a genetic account. But on the other hand, the explanations proffered have been rooted in a naïve realism, which assumes that structure and classification and features of the world only need to be noticed and then reflected in language. From a critical standpoint, these explanations wither away. Following in the anthropological footsteps of Herder and Heymann Steinthal, but moving beyond them, Cassirer (op. cit., 34) finds the clue to understanding the genesis of language in the conception of

myth as the original symbolic form: “It is in the intuitive creative form of myth, and not in the formation of our discursive theoretical concepts, that we must look for the key that may unlock the secrets of the original conceptions of language.” The study of myth serves the purpose of explaining the old riddle of the genesis of language, as it throws light on “that emancipation whereby a sound is transformed from an emotional utterance into a denotative one” (op. cit, 35). A huge portion of Cassirer’s concept of myth is occupied with the anthropological evidence relating to the evolution of religious myths, from the level of a felt “drama of life” to the anticipated sheer contrast between the “sacred” and the “profane” to the sophisticated formulations of the monotheistic religions. However, Cassirer not only attempts to explain the origin of language; here, we witness a law that holds true for other symbolic forms, including those of language, art, religion and even science. According to Cassirer (44), all of them were first emancipated from the common matrix of myth. Even science, which seems distant from the symbolic form of myth, has mythic elements in it; for instance, chemistry began with alchemy before emancipating itself. For Cassirer (28), it is the process of name-giving that transforms the world of pure sense impressions that animals also feel into a mental world, a “world of ideas and meaning” in which we not only receive passively or react to instinctively but rather cognitively and affectively process and respond to these stimuli on that basis.

Krader agrees with the assumption that myth is not alien to science, and he dedicates a chapter of this book to myths in or of science. Cassirer started out with a concept of myth in conjunction with questions revolving around the genesis of language, and with that he opened an important field of research. This being said, it is also clear that in the absence of a psychological theory of the nature of linguistic phenomena and their relation to thinking, learning and knowing in humans and animals, his claims concerning the origin of language remain a metaphor, but one that points to the necessity of anthropological approaches to the study of myth.¹⁰

In later works Cassirer described myth in conjunction with religion, and he treated myth as a symbolic form distinct from other forms. Man cannot perceive anything without a mediating attribution of meaning interposing itself between him and reality. Cassirer thus described man as an *animal symbolicum*. He is neither exclusively rational nor purely intuitive but expresses himself symbolically. He has no access to a supposedly objective reality but experiences his world only through the mediating filter of specific symbolic forms.¹¹ What meaning

is ascribed to an experience, how this experience is processed and interpreted, depends on the respective symbolic form through which man understands the world. A thunderstorm, for example, can be interpreted mythically as the wrath of the gods, artistically as a sublime experience of the beauty or threat of nature, and scientifically as a natural event with material/physical causes. One and the same phenomenon has now acquired many different layers of meaning. According to Cassirer, the totality of our experiences is underpinned by such meaningful interpretations. Animals react immediately to stimuli from their environment—their sphere of action is limited to perceptions and subsequent reactions. But in humans, this biological circle is infinitely extended. By virtue of what Herder calls *Besonnenheit* (“level-headedness” or “prudence”) humans can distance themselves from the immediate impact of such stimuli from their environment and respond to them through interpretative symbolic forms. It is the path from animal reaction to human response.¹² Of course, one can distinguish between symbolic forms that are more rational-discursive, such as language or science, and those that are more emotional and representational, such as myth, art, ritual, dance, or music. Following Cassirer, the philosopher Susanne K. Langer, (see above), took this path in *Philosophy in a New Key*. According to Cassirer, myth is a first step in a process by which man emancipates himself from his dramatic surrender to nature or fate and takes his life into his own hands through his interpretations. Now man is no longer simply seized by the world (in astonishment), but actively seizes the world itself in his actions. Yet myth remains on the level of an emotional or dramatic state of world experience. In accordance with Krader, Cassirer (1944, 97) makes a point about myth not being accessible to rational thinking alone. Myth often appears to logical thinking to be without rhyme or reason:

Of all the phenomena of human culture myth and religion are most refractory to a merely logical analysis. Myth appears at first sight to be a mere chaos—a shapeless mass of incoherent ideas. To seek after the “reasons” of these ideas seems to be vain and futile. If there is anything that is characteristic about myth it is without rhyme and reason.

For Cassirer, the logic of myth is incommensurate with our empirical or scientific truths. But philosophy did not want to admit this and thought to derive meaning hidden under symbols and images that could be unmasked. Once again, we see the great similarities between Cassirer and Krader, who was also critical of attempts to discover supposedly deciphered truths in myths.

Commonalities between the Concepts of Myth in Krader and Cassirer

The Perceptual Structure of Myth

Cassirer describes myth as two-faced, as having both a perceptual and a conceptual structure. In opposition to those scholars who considered myth as immature, childish or a confused sort of thinking, Cassirer emphasizes that myth is not merely a mass of confused and unorganized ideas; but neither is it a clearly understood concept. It is not deciphered wisdom or truth that needs to be decoded. It depends rather on a definite mode of perception, and it is the task of the philosopher to return to this deeper stratum. The reason why myth seems like an amorphous mass of ideas stems from the fact that myth does not distinguish between what is substantial and what is accidental. This distinction requires an analytic process that runs counter to mythical thought. The real substratum of myth is not thought, but feeling, and hence all attempts to interpret myth as a secret code in pictorial ways of thinking must fail. If there is any law by which myth is governed it is the law of metamorphosis.

Dramatic Experience of the Outer World

The world of myth is a dramatic world, a world of actions, forces, whimsical experiences, and conflicting powers. Furthermore, myth often deals with experiences and attempts to process and interpret them. Whatever is seen or felt is circumscribed by a special emotional atmosphere—grief or joy, awe or anger, exultation or depression, light or dark, good or evil, associated or outcast, sacred or profane. It is never the ordinary or simple that is expressed in myth. Therefore, mythical thought is deeply impregnated with emotional qualities (Cassirer, 1944, 102). Here, we cannot speak of factual matters or objective things; everything is friendly or inimical, familiar or uncanny.¹³ It is a dramatic perception of all the things in the world (Cassirer, 1944, 103). This is also the reason why many myths are concerned with the question of the nature of death. In the mythical way of thinking death is not simply the necessary end of life but is caused by someone or something with some power and malevolent intent (Cassirer, 1944, 110). It is the work of sorcery, fate, or revenge. At the same time, mythical thought also holds fast to the indestructible unity of life.

Myth Has Its Own Right of Expression

Because myth clings to this affective way of experience, it cannot simply be explained and analyzed scientifically. We cannot proceed as logicians and analysts

in understanding myth in its expressive quality; at best, the artist's view or religious musicality is an appropriate way to approach the subject. We must take the qualities of mythical experience in their immediacy of being. Therefore, Cassirer proposes to develop an interpretation of mythical life instead of a theory of myth. We are asked to study the whole expression to gain awareness of the structure of myth and "primitive" stages of religion. According to Cassirer, it was Emile Durkheim and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, not Claude Lévi-Strauss, who reduced myth to its structure (without content), who had the best grasp of this problem. The reason why Cassirer praises Durkheim is related to the latter's approach to myth in conjunction with his theory of the social and of collective representations. And society, not nature, is the source and model for myth, even when myth deals with "natural" phenomena in the material order of nature:

As long as we seek the sources of myth in nature or in the physical world, we cannot give account of it. Not nature but society is the model of myth, even if it talks about natural phenomenon like light and dark or warmth and cold, or earth, ocean, and air. All of myths fundamental motifs are projections of man's social life. It reflects its organization, architecture, divisions and subdivisions, as we can see it in the work of Lévy-Bruhl (Cassirer 1944, 106).

Affirmation of Life and Self-Empowerment

For Cassirer, mythical and religious thought are closely intertwined, with myth as the precursor of religion. Both originate in the fundamental phenomena of human life and death. From an entirely passive attitude no energy can be derived; therefore, the "drama of life" or even faith in magic is one of the earliest and strongest awakenings of human self-confidence. Therefore, myth, magic and religion are a first step toward the self-empowerment of the human being. Man began to play his own part. Long before the appearance of a personal, monotheistic god, we had in mythological thought functional gods—best known in the occidental world as the gods and half-gods in Greek mythology who were responsible for the weather, the arts, history etc. But of course, myth and religion are not the same. These functional mythological gods were then replaced by another form of the divine in the monotheistic religions, in which they are the offspring of moral forces (Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, 130). For Cassirer, myth is the result of dramatic perceptions of the world, and a product of the aesthetic imagination as well; religion however, even if religious writings are received as artistic expressions, is first and foremost the expression of an ethical force and moral will (Cassirer, 1944, 131).

Cassirer goes so far as to say that in myth (and magic) the world is approached from an emotional aspect, in religion from a moral and rational one—here we see the great influence of his academic teacher Hermann Cohen and the arguments in his famous book *Religion of Reason, Out of the Sources of Judaism* (1919). But Cassirer also states—here in opposition to Cohen—that religion is neither derived from instinct nor from reason alone. The first step of religion in becoming an ethical and moral force was the development of taboo (134). Taboo knows only how to forbid, to prohibit and proscribe, not how to direct, and it rules by fear and not by self-empowerment; as a result, it could become the cornerstone of the development of social order.

Political Misuse of the Affective Quality of Myth

The late Cassirer, who followed and reflected on political developments in Germany with concern from his American exile, regarded National Socialism as the culmination of mythical energies and interpretations of the world that abandoned the core of the rational entirely in favor of irrationality. In doing this, he turned away from his earlier epistemological description of myth. In his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, he elected to take myth seriously as a special way of understanding the world, and in some respects to put it on par with science. But now he saw the overwhelming manipulative power of the emotional-existential-dramatic side of the mythical understanding of the world gaining the upper hand and in it he saw a surrender of humanity. Other thinkers in Germany in the twentieth century, a few decades after Cassirer, rehabilitated myth: Arnold Gehlen and Hans Blumenberg, for example, understood myth as a powerful symbolic form of expression that helps people to deal with and overcome existential crises and the inevitable blows of fate.

Krader's Points of Criticism

Although we have been able to uncover many similarities in the concepts of myth in Cassirer and Krader, Krader raises clear objections to Cassirer's understanding of myth. These critical aspects can be categorized as follows.

Critique of the Notion of Universals

Krader notices that many thinkers including Schelling, Henri Bergson, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Cassirer himself, proposed that myths, in all their variety, also refer back to and are in fact derivatives of universals. As for Cassirer, the universalistic aspect of myth is found in the mythical perception that underpins

symbolic expression. Therefore, he considered myth to be emanating from a unitary energy of the mind. Krader criticizes this concept, according to which the reality of the symbolic forms lies beyond the world of sense experience, in a realm of ideality, as all symbolic forms stem from “the world of the psyche, which . . . is not an empirical entity or datum.” Krader objects to this *reductio ad rationem* and emphasizes that myth is not solely located in the ideal world but integrates the sensory and super-sensory worlds.

Cassirer thought that myth is a unitary energy of the mind. These symbolic forms are real, but their reality is beyond the world of sense experience existing in ideality. The symbolic form of myth exists independently of other forms; they are all of the world of psyche, which itself is an existent in the ideal world, and is not an empirical entity or datum. (162)

Cassirer considered myth globally among the categories of the symbolic forms, constituting together with other forms an ideality of the human spirit; myth was not considered by him as an empirical category, nor was the psyche an empirical category in his philosophy. (162–163)

Krader reads Cassirer only as a Neo-Kantian, emphasizing the idealistic side of Cassirer's thought. But Cassirer was so much more than that: The ethnopsychology of Moritz Lazarus and Heymann Steinthal was an empirical project, and one of the most important influences on Cassirer reflected in his work. (Even the early Hermann Cohen published articles in the *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*, the most important organ of this new approach that searched for universals in the empirical-particular.) Krader criticized Cassirer, who, instead of proceeding from the empirical data to a general—not universal—position, (Krader rejects the notion of a universal in the human order of nature), began with a universal that he then read into all his empirical data—from ancient Greek mythology to myths of indigenous populations. His model was based on an abstract concept of mind (and the symbolic forms thereof), from which he abducted a theoretical construct of myth in relation to the symbolic forms and to the mind. For Krader there is no way of moving from the empirical to the ideal-universal or vice-versa:

The construct is then supposed to fit the empirical data of the myths. To proceed in this way is just as untenable as the opposed procedure, for the empirical world is not constructed of universals, and universals are neither constructed out of the empirical data nor overthrown thereby. (164)

Critique of Myth as an Autonomous Configuration

Another point of Krader's criticism of Cassirer has to do with his separation of the various symbolic forms clearly and distinctly from one other and his treatment of myth as a specific symbolic form and an autonomous configuration:

First, myth as an autonomous configuration of the human spirit would then be an independent configuration or *gestalt*, and law unto itself. Yet myth appears to be guided by other human processes and thus is not subject to a law of its own. The activities in myth are also found in poetry, in dream, in fable or legend, in speculation, and in imaginative expression, these having much in common with myth, but are yet distinct from it. The aetiological and symbolic functions are found in science, in poetry, in painting and sculpture. Thus far no *differentia specifica* has been imputed to myth. (163)

The myth does not exist in a world which is not seen or heard. The myth has its existence only in that it is accessible to our sense, in that we hear or read it. The world of myth is not the same as the world of our senses, but is often a confabulation of that world, or a speculation upon it, which does not stray far from the latter; or else, in another confabulating process, the parts of the myth form a wondrous rearrangement of the elements of the sensible world. Therefore, there is no reason to consider myth a law unto itself, or a tautegorical world, for we make fantastic rearrangements of the data of our sense in other ways than myth as well, and we engage in speculations not only in myth but in our non-mythic philosophies. (165)

Cassirer separated the symbolic form of myth so clearly from other symbolic forms with the intention of creating ideal types in the sense of Max Weber, as a model for the scrutiny and systematic characterization of a concrete phenomenon, and not to claim that myths are completely different from other forms. He himself, as we have seen, emphasizes the proximity of language and myth, and later the connection between myth and religion. Like Krader, he mentions that science is by no means free of myths. What distinguishes Cassirer from Krader is the claim of an ideal-typical universal form, which creates unity across the multiplicity of myths, and this unity is formal, whereas the only connecting element of all myth for Krader is social—for he says that their common ground lies in the commitment of the people who share the myth. This strong emphasis on the social moment remains comparatively underexposed in Cassirer's work, although Cassirer also praises Emile Durkheim as an important contributor to the study of myth. However, for Krader, with his background in empirical fieldwork, it did

not seem appropriate to treat myth as an idealistic universal, and he brought to bear his logical objection to deriving the universal from the empirical or seeing the empirical through the eyes of the universal. In any case, Cassirer's emphasis on the ideal and his relative lack of an empirical grounding with regard to myth, upon which this universal ideality was superimposed, was the basis of Krader's decisive criticism of a theory which otherwise had much in common with his own.

To sum up: Cassirer plays a prominent role in Krader's myth book. Both combine the history of ideas with the sociology of knowledge and an anthropological interest. Both display an unrivalled scholarship in the history of philosophy and epistemology. Both combine theoretical insights along with empirical observations—in Krader's case partly derived from his own fieldwork. Both display a valorization of myth as an important form of human knowledge and both are critical of concepts that claim that scientific thinking is *prima facie* superior to mythological thought. Another commonality is their joint emphasis on the emotional or affective quality of myth; and both discuss myth in conjunction with political worldviews or ideologies and in conjunction with religion. They both stress the dialectic of form and content and the aesthetic and poetic quality of myth. Both regard myth as a collective form that catalyzes social order—for Cassirer this is derived from the fact that, on the one hand, myth and language are closely interwoven and, on the other, that myth and religion are often intertwined—and that in the latter, taboo plays an important role. For Krader, myths are a collective phenomenon due to the commitment of the group who hold it. Both remind us that myth cannot be understood by means of scientific analysis alone, but that it has components that require a grasp of feeling, emotion, affect and subjectivity. Krader demonstrates this by including a number of myths from different peoples by way of illustration.

Antithetical Words, Concepts, Myths and Their Relation to Ideology

Freud and Durkheim

In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* Durkheim points out that the act of congregating at scheduled intervals is necessary for the renewal of group solidarity and that sanctioned excesses at the corroboree, for example, give vent to the

excitement and joy on such prescribed renewals of intense social life. But he also points out that sad occasions, periods of mourning, plagues and illnesses are also reasons for the coming together of the group in the rituals of the piacular cult to strengthen the bond which has diminished or threatens to diminish the group by misfortune and loss.

In *Myth and Ideology* Krader points to the antithetical expressions of the sacred in ancient Greek and Latin as part of a consideration of the sacred and the profane, one of Durkheim's necessary divisions of the world and part of his definition of religion. Durkheim referred to the ambiguity of the sacred. Krader uses Durkheim's term of piacular sacrifice in his portrayal of what he calls the "polarity of the field of the sacred." Krader writes:

"... we notice that ancient Greek ἅγιος, *hagios* meant sacred or holy, and also accursed. Ancient Greek *hagos* had the opposed meanings of reverence and of pollution and guilt; it had to do with piacular, sacrifice, a thing or person accursed, or any act requiring expiation. Sacred, execration and consecration have a common derivation; Latin *sacer* meant at once holy, venerated and impious, execrated; the guilty were held to be *sacer*, consecrated to the infernal gods . . . In sum, the histories of Greek *hagios*, *hagos* and Latin *sacer* are not simple but complex, having combined at one time opposite meanings . . .

In ancient Hebrew, שֶׁקֶט, *kadosh*, sacred, holy was opposed to the profane; it denoted places, persons and objects withdrawn or separate from everyday life; they were either ceremonially purified, or were the pure, such as the Ark of the Covenant, by which others were cleansed, purified.

The extent and kinds of denotations of what we call the sacred are exceedingly complex. Thus, in certain modern European languages of the Romance family, sacred is said of certain mental or nervous ailments which were once attributed to a supernatural source, and whose cure was sought by exorcism, consider that, moreover, sacred (*sacré*, *sagrado*, etc.) intends a blasphemy in curses, insults, and the like, whereby the standard usage is inverted. (240)

Here, too, one detects the influence of Durkheim and the ambiguity of the sacred, but there is yet another source which Krader does not reference in this connection, and that source is Sigmund Freud. Compare Krader's discussion of the polarity of the sacred with Freud's explanation of antithetical words, examples of which are exactly those which Krader uses to discuss the polarity of the sacred. In *Totem and Taboo* Freud (S.E. XII, 18) wrote:

'Taboo' is a Polynesian word. It is difficult for us to find a translation for it, since the concept connoted by it is one which we no longer possess. It was still current among the ancient Romans, whose 'sacer' was the same as the Polynesian 'taboo'. So, too, the 'ἄγος' of the Greeks and the 'kadesh' of the Hebrews must have had the same meaning as is expressed in 'taboo' by the Polynesians and in analogous terms by many other races in America, Africa (Madagascar) and North and Central Asia.

The meaning of 'taboo', as we see it, diverges in two contrary directions. To us it means, on the one hand, 'sacred', 'consecrated', and on the other 'uncanny', 'dangerous', 'forbidden', 'unclean'. The converse of 'taboo' in Polynesian is 'noa', which means 'common' or 'generally accessible'. Thus 'taboo' has about it a sense of something unapproachable, and it is principally expressed in prohibitions and restrictions. Our collocation 'holy dread' would often coincide in meaning with 'taboo'.

Freud is mentioned by Krader in passing in *Myth and Ideology* and this is consistent with similar such references to him in *Noetics*. Krader does indeed recognize and include the unconscious as an aspect of the human order of nature, but there is no attempt to take up the significance of the unconscious and attempts by others to do so have been labelled by Krader as "speculative" and are not further taken up.¹⁴

If Krader stays away from probing Freud and the unconscious, he embraces Durkheim's work in some detail, not only in *Myth and Ideology* but in *Noetics* and in his unpublished writings as well. With regard to this discussion of ambivalence or ambiguity of the sacred in this book on myth, Krader (63–64) calls attention to Durkheim at length in this context in the following:

The relation of the religious myth to the cult suffices in a number of cases to distinguish it from the others. In particular he drew attention to the rites of sadness, in which some great calamity is recalled and deplored; these rites evoke an expiation on the part of the participants in them, and these were termed therefore piacular by Durkheim, being connected with bodings of evil and sentiments of anxiety and fear. He mentioned as an example a natural calamity of a great drought conducting to the failure of the crop and ensuing famine; a man-made disaster, such as the defeat in war, the crucifixion of Jesus to the Christians, and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem to the Jews, fall under this heading. Durkheim emphasized the cognitive or intellectual aspect of the myth which is associated with the piacular rite. To this the affective aspect stands in complement not extern but

intern, for the myths of drought, of the crucifixion, the fall of Jerusalem, and like myths of many other parts of the world are both explanatory and deeply emotional. They are often associated with the most profound feelings of dread of the end of the world and of the last judgment, or of blissful anticipation of a utopian state, either in this world or another, by the return to the liberated holy city. Durkheim wrote: “All the myths, even those we find to be most senseless, have been the objects of faith. Man has believed in them no less than his own sensations; he has regulated his conduct according to them.¹⁵ Here we interpolate that myth, faith and sensations are all facts, or things investigated by the sciences. Myth is a collective phenomenon, and is of a different kind from our sensations, which are individual. Faith is real; it is a social fact; sensations are real, being a physiological fact; both facts are real, but are real in different contexts.

Krader is right in calling Durkheim to task for counter-posing sensation and feeling to the intellect and cognition. This follows from Durkheim’s theory of the *homo duplex*, of the human being compartmentalized into the individual, biological, individual psychological, physiological on the one side, and the social from which everything higher in man comes, on the other. This can be palpably seen in Durkheim’s example of an individual mourning the loss of a loved one. In Durkheim’s view the individual may or may not be truly sad or genuinely mournful over the loss but the act of mourning is socially prescribed and may not be in harmony with individual feelings and sentiments. Durkheim’s distinction between individual and collective representations follows from his theory of the human being as a double.

But, perhaps, one ought not to push the metaphor of the double too far. Freud, on his part, for example, suggested that we ought not to personify the three elements of his structural theory—the id, ego and super-ego; these are analytical categories and not independent entities. In a similar way, as readers of Durkheim, we might want to see the relation between feelings and sensations not as externally but as internally related, as Krader suggests.

Another way that Krader approaches the same matter in Durkheim has to do with the latter’s doctrine of social realism, the foundation of Durkheim’s justification of sociology as a legitimate science in its own right independent of biology, history and psychology. Krader suggests that even though Durkheim seems to support an extreme version of social realism in some of his statements, to wit, that it is not the individual who thinks but rather the collectivity that thinks through a group mind. But according to Krader, there is another way to understand Durkheim’s social realism that does not hypostatize the group mind:

The group does not think apart from the individuals who make it up, but the individuals do not think save through their membership in the group, in which a characteristic way of thought and expression of the emotions, of communication and representation is generated. The Law is not the group, but the expression of the law is peculiar to the given group of people in its traditional mode. The individuals act in their group, the group acts through and not apart from the individualities. The relations of the individuals constitute the group, the social relations of the group generate the human being in us. One suspects that the attribution of an extreme social realism to Durkheim was in part motivated by the positions adopted by some of his disciples, cohorts and allies. (69)

Durkheim's influence on Krader's theory of myth can best be seen in the notion that myth is held by collectivities as a matter of uncritical belief which implies a commitment to the myth and the community which holds it. As a corollary of this is the notion that myth is internalized by the members of the community in a process of the construction of self-identity and a projection of this self-identity onto the collectivity which strengthens the bonds of the group.

Myth and Ideology: Hope and Fear, Power and Action

Krader recognizes that in recent times the discussion of ideology has been centered in the sociology of knowledge, although Krader refers obliquely to its origins at the hands of Destutt de Tracy who conceived of ideology early in the nineteenth century as a science of ideas. The negative connotation of the term was popularized by Marx and Engels in their manuscript *Die Deutsche Ideologie* that was not published until 1932. Krader examines the relationship between myth and ideology, a distinction which only became manifest over the course of time. In an early chapter of *Myth and Ideology* Krader takes up the work of Georges Sorel, Vilfredo Pareto, Karl Mannheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber suggesting that these thinkers limited their concern with myth to matters related only to their own times, to questions of political elites, political parties, to the labor movements around the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth centuries. Krader writes:

These sociologists have applied the category of myth to the critique of modern problems of class ideology, political movements and the objectification of the study of society with particular reference to their own times. They tended, if not absolutely then in general, to eschew an interest in the deep antiquity of myth;

questions of the relation of myth to past history, to language and to mind were of relatively little interest to them. The category of myth was useful in their theories of the elites, which were applied by Sorel and Pareto to the labor movements, the trade unions and the political parties associated with them at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries; Weber applied the category of myth to the intellectualist word view in general, and to Rousseau and the Narodniki in particular; Mannheim applied that category to the analysis of the ideology of Mussolini's doctrine. (93)

In that same chapter, Krader made reference to utopia, but not in the sense that Mannheim gave it in his foundational book in the sociology of knowledge, *Ideology and Utopia*, according to which ideological thinking was defined in terms of its support of the status quo and utopia was directed toward a different future opposed to the existing relations of power and privilege. In a reference to Sorel, Krader portrays utopia as a secular ideology which "borrows its strength from the apocalyptic, soteriological, and eschatological myths of the religious realm; but the history of its sources is quite apart from its impact in the present . . ." (94)

Later in the text Krader takes up the question of political ideology (and most of his references to this point in the text concern modern political ideology) in relation to the control of a party or a country by means of a central commission which determines the interpretation of secular myth and its dissemination among the population. Without referring specifically to the writings of Robert Michels, Krader is recapitulating the argument made by Michels in his famous work *Political Parties* (1912) in which he had shown the control of the administration of the German Social Democratic Party in the period of the Kaiser was not democratic but oligarchic, that is controlled by a clique of bureaucrats employed by the party.

Krader then reviews the ideological statements by Hobbes and Hegel with regard to the secular cult of the state, referring back to the development of the sacred cult of the state in ancient China, and considering the relations of ideology and myth, the sacred and the profane among the Mongols under Chingis Khan. It appears that when myth has been identified as a declaration of an ideal, a goal or a program, it becomes the foundation of a political or state ideology, or of a utopia which Krader considers secular acts of myth. Ideology is sacred when it has a religious expression in support of state power and a secular one when the political establishment supports the religious order. Again, it is the programmatic aspect of myth which evokes and expresses our social desire and will, our hope and fear that distinguish the ideological character of myth. Krader takes up the

question of ideology in relation to myth in a more systematic way only near the conclusion of the book.

In Chapter 9 Krader defines ideology as a positive or negative social expression which indicates to the members of a community what they eschew and hate, what they seek and desire, and it provides a clearer focus in relation to these emotional forces. Ideology can only be disentangled from myth in civil society to some degree, while in communal groups such as villages and clans it is hardly ever differentiated from it. The outside observer may be able to parcel out the hidden ideology of the communal group, to interpret how the clan or sib views the world or the nature of its ideals in relation to the world. But this formulation is that of the outsider that “gives a form to something which may or may not have a form, or may endow it with a form which is other than the form of its own.” (309–310) And here Krader refers to the content of indigenous myths that would not do well in the current climate in many departments of anthropology today, insofar as, in Krader’s words:

All is not peaceful in this world of communal groups; their myths tell of wars with other peoples, enslavement, devastating winter storms, cold and famine. The ideological expressions one derives from these myths are the hope of mildness and order in society and in nature, the fear of defeat, capture or death in war, the wish for ample resources of food, clothing, and shelter, and the desire for good friends and companions. (310)

In the civil condition of humanity, ideology is given expression mediately as myth (sacred or secular) and as “non-mythic statements of programs, political, juridical, religious, educational, moral, or various combinations of these.” (ibid.) Ideologies in civil society are thus “public expressions of the ways the representatives of the groups, classes, and collectivities see themselves, or wish others to see them, how they see the world, their future and past.” (ibid.) In political society the ideological increasingly diverges from the mythical in that it tends to focus on questions of power of all kinds, political, military, legal, etc., with its loss or gain, with “its sale, purchase, perversion and corruption: of resentment on the part of those without power against those having such power.” (ibid.)

Krader criticizes a theory of ideology widely held in his day that detaches ideology from myth or, as Krader writes, “what is worse, it proposes a trichotomy between ideology, myth, and life.” (311) To this, Krader counterposes the view “that myth and ideology are aspects of one another at present as they were in the past.” (ibid.) There is

“... an ideological tenor or burden of myth ... and a mythic burden of ideology ... Ideology in its extreme expression is a program of political battle.” For Gramsci, both ideology and myth are related to social action, “... (t)he substance of the myth and the ideology is the feeling of a wrong in either case.” (312)

The inner connection between myth and ideology is so strongly linked that it is difficult for the reader to develop a clearly articulated difference between the two. Krader tries to help the reader understand the nuanced difference when he writes:

Ideology is taken up chiefly, although not always, as a programmatic expression, whether mediately or immediately, generally or particularly, for civil, political, juridical, or other social action. The ideology of such programs is at present explicit, but this was not always the case in the past. As a rule, we must dig out the ideological expression in past statements of myths, and their representations in stories or in the law. (316)

Furthermore, myth as ideology is often understood as a kind of sociodicy or justification of the ways of society to its members. Weber, in his studies on religion, borrowing a concept from Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, referred to one of the functions of religion as a theodicy or the justification of the ways of God to human beings. Sociodicy, according to Krader (304), would be its corresponding counterpart which either explains away injustice in the form of exploitation and oppression or perhaps justifies these inhuman practices as the only alternative.

Another distinction that Krader draws between myth and ideology is somewhat parallel to Weber’s distinction between church and sect. One is born into a church, but one chooses to enter into or to participate in a sect. One may choose from among offerings of different ideologies, but one cannot choose the myth of the society. Furthermore, Krader writes that “(m)ythical expressions are traditional, concrete in their representations, and ... in their relation of their contents” but in addition ideological expressions “... are besides, innovative and non-traditional, abstract as well as concrete, with some elements of social criticism.” (318)

Like Durkheim, who saw the significance and centrality of collective representations in terms of participation in festivals of joy, celebration and exuberance, as well as in times of misfortune, calamity and peril, Krader points to the same two sides in relation to myth. He writes: “... the utopian glory which will arise from our present action is one side of the ideological myth, the other side of which is a gloomy prophecy of what is to come.” (319) Krader also suggests that the complications of myth and ideology lie on the subjective side in relation to social action but that the objective side “... leads away from the realm of ideology

and myth.” (460) In other words, the possibility of science as an objective undertaking is real and actual in spite of the myths of science as outlined by Krader. There is no purity of myth or anti-myth. There are roads that lead away from myth in the direction of anti-myth and Krader suggests that the human struggle against the unexamined life is ongoing and that we must continually challenge ourselves to become aware of our ethnocentric prejudices and pre-judgments and even though our science will have its myths, the attempt to overcome these uncritical elements of our thinking puts us on the right path. As Sigmund Freud (1927, 55) put it in the very last line of *The Future of an Illusion*, “No, our science is no illusion. But an illusion it would be to suppose that what science cannot give us we can get elsewhere.”

Notes

- 1 Numbers enclosed in brackets indicate page numbers to which the text or citation refers—eds.
- 2 For the debt that Durkheim believed logical thought owed to religion, see the conclusion to *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, pp. 437–438.
- 3 The form of this citation is reminiscent of the following passage in Pareto’s magnum opus *Mind and Society* (1935, 897), in which the author explains his theory of residues and derivations: “A Chinese, a Moslem, a Calvinist, a Kantian, a Hegelian, a Materialist, all refrain from stealing but each gives a different explanation for his conduct ...”
- 4 This book was recently published in an English translation by Cyril Levitt as *The Beginnings of Capitalism in Central Europe*. New York 2020.
- 5 E. Nagel. *Teleology Revisited*. New York 1979. Ch. 12, on goal-directed processes in biology.
- 6 F. Engels. *Anti Dühring*. 3rd ed. Stuttgart 1894. Three chapters of this work appeared with the title, *The Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science*.
- 7 See Freud’s (1919) analysis of *Der Sandmann* in his short work, *Das Unheimliche*. *Gesammtliche Werke*: XII, 229–268; Sigmund Freud (1919). The ‘Uncanny’. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XVII (1917–1919): *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, pp. 217–256.
- 8 For an interesting and detailed study of early German Romanticism which attempts to narrow the gap between the early Romantics, Schlegel, Novalis, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and Hölderlin and the Enlightenment see Frederick Beiser: *The Romantic Imperative*. Cambridge MA and London (2003).
- 9 In a private communication with Cyril Levitt, Krader suggested that he kept up his interest in philosophy and that he worked on drafts of *Noetics* on and off, since his student days at CCNY.

- 10 There is a parallel here with Durkheim who saw the categories as collective representations such that our concepts of time, space, number, etc. are socially derived and variable. Durkheim believed that in developing this sociological theory of knowledge, that he was able to put to rest the debate between the rationalist and empiricist school in epistemology. See Durkheim's discussion in both the introduction and conclusion of *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.
- 11 Krader would suggest that we have no immediate connection to thingly reality but both mediately and immediately to objective reality in the human order or nature.
- 12 There is a parallel here to the work of George Herbert Mead in his evolutionist approach to the development of symbolic human society arising out of the bio-social level of animal existence. See his posthumously published *Mind, Self and Society*.
- 13 For Freud, the uncanny itself results from the repression and unconscious and thus 'known' as that which is 'unknown' but which struggles against the repression.
- 14 An unpublished paper on Freud and psychoanalysis on file at The Lawrence Krader Archive at the Mills Library at McMaster University shows a broad knowledge of psychoanalysis and has great praise for Freud in the history of ideas. There, Krader refers to Freud as the greatest of all speculative thinkers in history, greater than even Plato and Aristotle. But the fact that his work has been labelled as speculative keeps his work from being given any kind of extensive treatment. But is Freud's theory of ambivalence and projection in his explanation as to why mourners in many cultures fear the return of the ghost of the dearly departed and take measures against the harm with which they fear that the ghost threatens them in any way more speculative than Durkheim's explanation of the same practices in terms of the ambiguity of the sacred in relation to the loss to the group of the departed? And is speculation not a possible spur to further scientific work as both Darwin and Freud acknowledged? For a comparison of Freud's *Totem and Taboo* with Durkheim's *Elementary Forms*, see Cyril Levitt: Freud und Durkheim über Totem und Tabu, in Eberhard Haas (ed.): *100 Jahre Totem und Tabu*. Gießen 2012, pp. 243–272.
- 15 Emile Durkheim. *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*. 3rd ed. Paris 1937. Bk. 1, ch. 3, § 2. In this section he argued against a theory of F. Max Müller, who had proposed the distinction between religion and myth. This distinction, Durkheim thought, is arbitrary. No doubt there is an element in mythology, wrote Durkheim, which is of interest to aesthetics, but, he added, it does not cease to be one of the essential elements of religion.

Preface

This book is about myth and the study of myth, a vast and complex subject on which thousands of books have been written. It has been studied for thousands of years, in all parts of the world, and in many languages. But that is not all there is to its complexity, for it has been studied from many points of view, by religious scholars, philosophers, students of the ancient civilizations, ethnologists and folklorists, by sociologists and students of political ideology, by psychologists, historians of art and literature, by the cultural critics of our society, by poets, essayists and novelists. At times, a writer coming to the subject from one field, looks about and adds the knowledge and perspectives of another. For example, sociologists in France early in the twentieth century studied the ethnological literature on myth, and classical scholars in England, who were their contemporaries, studied the findings of the French school; they brought out a notable theory of myth. The philosophers and historians in Germany during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries studied the myths of ancient Greece, whereby they developed theories of their own. Another powerful theory of myth was brought out by European historical schools which studied the myths of their own peasants. Certain ethnologists at the present time have studied psychology, others have studied linguistics, yet others have studied the myths of classical antiquity and Biblical history in

bringing forth new theories of their own; psychologists have studied ethnology or literature to the same end.

In view of the great amount of time, thought, words, ink and paper [and more recently—digital memory—eds.] which have been expended on the subject of myth, and in view of the number of talents who have already written about this subject, why, the reader will ask, one more book on it? The answer to this question lies in the very complexity of the field. Specialists in ethnology, folklore, history, literature, philosophy, psychology or sociology take a just pride in their mastery of their respective fields; they then take on the no less difficult task of reading what one another of the neighboring fields has to say, then add the problems of studying the myths of ancient times to those of the ethnographic present. The technical problems alone are daunting. As a result, each of these specialists has brought out a theory of myth from the vantage point of a given field of study, or in some cases from the standpoint of one field which has been cross fertilized with another. The resulting perspective is shaped by the orientation to the subject in the given field, by the data taken up, and by the discussions carried on with the specialists in another. Myth has long been studied by many scientific fields whose different perspectives are vital to our grasp of its subject.

A comprehensive theory of myth will be set forth in this work from a new point of view. Myth is so complex, ever increasing in its variety, that no integral theory of myth can cover or arise from its many forms and changing substance. The only unifying features of myth lie in our relations to it, which will be set forth in these pages.

Of necessity, as this is a short book, there are omissions and imbalances. One might well have begun with what Coleridge or Thomas Mann, or the psychologists, Freud or Jung, had to say about myth. To cover all the possible fields would have required a work far longer than this. My ambitus is broad, which, I contend, is the only way to study myth. I leave it to others to extend or deepen it; indeed, this is to be welcomed. For if you touch only the elephant's leg without seeing the other parts of the beast, you may well take it to be a tree. In keeping with this principle, I intend to gather together not a great collection of myths, but a small number of many different kinds.

I propose that for the comprehension of myth a number of oppositions are to be drawn; of the great many which are thinkable, the following are the chief axes of oppositions:

- Myth in time and myth in space
- Myth as truth and as error

- Sacred and secular myth
- Myth as rational and irrational expression
- Myth in thought and myth in feeling; or the cognitive and affective elements in myth
- Myth and ideology; the myth in action, in political, economic, and religious spheres of social life.

To these chief axes, around which our work is structured, there are numerous polar opposites to be added; among these are the fantastic and prosaic myths, esoteric and exoteric myths, well-ordered and chaotic myths: myth in relation to traditional and in relation to current and novel concerns; myth as the subject of belief or of doubt; myth by its presence or absence, as the evidence of our progress or decline. Myth is a social and not an individual phenomenon.

Myth is an expression of human conditions whose terms of reference are variable. The expression may be oral or written; if oral, it may be spoken, sung, or chanted; it is not always put into words, but may be painted, carved, molded, engraved or sculpted. Myth, we will see, may take any of several forms.

To state plainly the negative and positive of what will be set forth in this work, there is no single myth, whether the myth of the Grand Wheel of the Sky, or of the Tree of Life, or of the Astrobiological Zodiac, or the ancient wisdom. All of these have been put forth as candidates for the Great Myth from which all others descend, or of which all others are variants. Myth is not the abode of another logic than the logic of everyday. It is not the dwelling place of symbol. On the other hand, it is on occasion any and all of these. It is the expression of the arrogance of an assault on the godhead in the quest for immortality; or it is the challenge of the humankind which wrests fire from the gods; or it is the challenges of the human being who speaks with god as I and Thou; or the inspiration which moves, spurs and leads us to our utopian goal.

Myth may give the impression of disorder and colorful chaos. The way to find order out of the chaos and disorder in the field of myth is shown in this work. Some myths are tales, some are laws, some sacred and some profane; some myths are the expressions of our woes, fears and anxieties, of our wishes and hopes; some myths are serious, and some are expressions of mischief and trickery. There are more kinds of myths than these; some of those mentioned will be recounted in our work. Some of those who have written on the subject make much of it, love, admire and honor it, while others belittle it. Some, as we shall see, hold that myth contains the great ancient wisdom, that it is verity, even that science is in some sense a myth, or that the world is in another sense a myth; but others hold

that myth expresses what is obscene and scurrilous in life, or that it is a mistake. Some hold that myth is the great abode of time, others that it is quintessentially space; some hold that it is serious, others trivial; some hold that it is the realm of darkness, others that it is the realm of light, some that it is inchoate, others that it is in the form of a cipher or code. All these opinions regarding myth will be set forth, by adumbration or in detail. While there are other views than these, at a given point a line was drawn. Out of the diversity of the myths themselves, and out of the variety of perspectives towards them, a definite theory of myth is set forth, and to a certain degree elaborated; but the myths and their discussion by the ancient and modern specialists in the subject serve as its gist. To multiply the number of types of myth and the number of views which might bear on them would perhaps introduce a factor of noise into our work beyond the level of usable information.

If myth is narrative as well as imperative, believed as true and denounced as false, a cry of despair and a guide for our hopes, then there is a need to weigh and judge these opposing claims and treatments. This can only be done by reading the myths themselves.

Myth is poetic and prosaic, inventive, novel and traditional, fabulous and every day, exciting our wonder and expressing our forebodings or fears. Myth is figurative, deictic, symbolic, or metaphoric; it may represent a vision of the past and depict the origin of all things, or it may be a vision of the future, as the final outcome, judgment, or battle of the humankind; it may bear on local or general themes; it may be a law or commandment, a tenet of principle or of faith. What is common to all these forms of myth is that they are held by the members of a social group, which is itself variable in form, as a community, a religious sect, a political party, or a people as a whole, some of whose myths are of deepest antiquity, and others of recent origin. The myth has a popular appeal, is widely held, and may be of anonymous provenience, or else it may be ascribed, rightly or wrongly, to a particular individual. What makes a myth into a myth is its hold on the people who received it, have taken it up and passed it on. A myth is an expression to which a profound commitment by the people who utter it and hear it is attached. The commitment by the people to the myth is itself variable. Myths originally were, and often are still, sacred matters, which are believed, the commitment to the myth being in this case an act of faith. Other myths are secular, and the commitment to them is social in another way. The group holding the myth holds it uncritically.

The Romans who believed that they were descended from Romulus, and that he was the founder of their city, made and held to this myth of their origins.

The Secret History of the Mongols traced the ancestry of their emperor, Chingis Khan, from the mating of a wolf and a doe, which is another myth of origination. The Bible begins with the account of the creation of all, which is a cosmogenic myth; the Ten Commandments of Moses are law in mythic form. The visions of utopias of all kinds, whether they are held by a local community for themselves, or by a group which projects its hopes for the future of all the peoples of the earth in this way, are political myths, small and great. A modern myth runs that by hard work and clean living we will grow healthy, wealthy, and wise; Benjamin Franklin published a variant of this myth in *Poor Richard Improved*, his almanac for 1758.

The social group holding the myth does not call it into question, for once it doubts its myth, the myth ceases to be a myth, and is changed into something else. Myths being uncritical, popular expressions, often strike the outsider as bizarre or inchoate. They are uttered and followed by their adherents as an internal matter which only the initiates or votaries will comprehend. We learn something from all their advocates and following, as well as from the myths they present. Conversely, sometimes the students of myth put themselves in the place of its adherents, votaries and believers, finding deep truth in myth, maintaining that it is a great and pure realization of our original mind and consciousness, coming down to us from a time before we were spoiled, and our minds distorted by life in our present circumstances.

A myth is an element in a body of mythic materials; it is never isolated but is in conjunction with other human expressions of like kind. These bodies of mythic materials are in part but not always a chaotic mass, as astounding as they are colorful and striking. Another body of mythic materials is part of a schema which is internally harmonious and highly organized at the hands of skilled hermeneuts. There is no absolute cleft between the one part of myth and the other. Myths give expression to a worldview of a people.

The myth does not organize itself or any other thing but is an expression in words or pictorial symbols. The myth is not the only way in which worldviews are brought forth, for they are also found in literary works and other works of art, in scientific hypothesis, historical writings, philosophical systems, codes of law, political declarations and other products of our reason or fancy, whether in an explicit or an implicit way.

Myth is not primitive science, primitive philosophy, primitive morality, primitive law, or primitive faith. It is an expression of our conviction to which we hold, and which maintains its hold on us. The element of commitment or belief removes the myth from the purely cognitive domain; it is not an emotional or

affective matter alone, however, nor an intellectual orientation to or in the world alone, but all of these. Myth is a matter of knowing and feeling in common, shared experience by the members of a social group; hence it is a social phenomenon. The more profound the feeling, the greater the commitment to its myth by the group, and the more lasting and deep its effect.

Since this work has for its central theme the idea that myth is an expression of a social group, which its members share, and to which they commit themselves uncritically, some notion of commitment needs to be given. It has social, religious, ideological and affective aspects. In religious terms, commitment is expressed as the belief in some object, idea, symbol or vision, whether fantastic or real. In the terms of social action, commitment is the preparedness for sacrifice by the members of the group of their selves, their liberty, their lives, their time, or whatever they hold dear. In ideological terms, commitment is the adoption, assimilation, and internalization of the idea, goal, standard, symbol, vision, or whatever we have committed ourselves to. Our commitment arises from our feelings, and our feelings relate in turn to our commitment to the myth. The commitment is a social phenomenon which is shared by the individuals making up the group; with regard to the myth of the group, the commitment to it is uncritical. Commitment is the projection outward of the self into the myth, its theme and figures, and the projection inward of the myth into the self.

We have said that the more profound the feeling toward the myth, its object or ikon, the greater the commitment to it; the greater the commitment to the myth, and the more intense the belief in it, its sentiment, vision, representation or ikon, the more lasting and profound is our emotional response to it. But there are also fleeting myths, occasional commitments and beliefs.

The purpose of this book is twofold, first to write a short book on a rich, complex, and fantastic field, and therein to confront a number of viewpoints to one another, which are not usually brought under one heading. The second is to advance a theory which arches over the several viewpoints of the anthropologists, the Biblical and classical scholars, folklorists, the cultural critics of modern society, historians, philosophers, students of political ideology, psychologists, and sociologists. As certain philosophers, ethnologists and historians look into sacred myths and set others aside, whereas the students of political ideology, together with other schools of philosophy and sociology, look only into secular myth of modern society, a division of labor is to be noted. Here we bring these various schools and divisions of thought together. By confronting them to one another, a broad theory of myth is here brought out which bears on the work of several fields mentioned. The data of myth are taken both from modern societies and

those of a traditional kind. Among the myths I have drawn on are those which have been taken down from the peoples of north-eastern Asia a century ago, which I have worked through, having traveled through the region and published extensively about the peoples over many years. We will see if a concept of a myth is applicable to our own society and to peoples who live in simple communities and bands. This concept should be able to embrace the thoughts about myth of writers as diverse as Aristotle, Giambattista Vico, Hegel, Benedetto Croce and Emile Durkheim, Franz Boas, Vladimir G. Bogoraz and Paul Radin, Georges Sorel and Max Weber, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Barrington Moore.

The subject of myth is important not merely because of the enormous amount of attention it has attracted, the variety of viewpoints which have been devoted to it, or emerge from its study, and not only because of the number of illustrious authors, from Plato and Aristotle down to the present, who have taken it up. Above all by its exploration we learn something of ourselves, and indeed the more deeply we probe into the study of myth, the more profound and telling will be our understanding of how we think, how we feel, how we see the world, and how we relate to one another in these human processes.

The work begins with an overview from ancient times, and proceeds to a survey of writings of the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. The last part of the book is devoted to the exposition of the theory of myth, which has been just expressed in brief. I refrain from loading the book with footnotes but provide references to those on whom I have drawn for some of my ideas, or those opposed to them. One may learn about myth from the philosophers, from the historians and philologists, past and present, from the ethnologists, sociologists, psychologists and political scientists. This work is critical, not polemical, and is not eclectic but integral. If an author has touched only a part of the materials here introduced, it does not mean that he or she is deemed to be wrong. In science there is no such thing as the final word. One group of students of myth tends to cluster around the idea of myth as a tale of some kind, whether sacred or traditional or supernatural, another around the profane myths of the political visions; and a third around the myths of our Angst, despair and hopes in a symbolic form. All these mythic concerns are valid.

Some of the writers we will mention have thought of myth as the living past, others as the living present. We will see that myth encompasses the past, the present and the future within itself, and both the living and the dead; myth is ever a meaningful phenomenon in society. The myth makes sense to those who cherish, believe and love it, or are convinced by it. The sense of the myth is not a childish matter, but is important to all those, adults and children alike, whose myth it is.

Through myth we organize our social world. We divide that world into the insiders and the outside world, those who hold to the myth and those who do not. Thus, myth has a decisive place in the organization of the social world.

Myth has a place in language. Our vocabulary is a compendium of myths which are a vital if implicit part of our lives. In the Germanic word for *world* a myth of the age of man is hidden; for the word for world is made up of two parts, *wer* (man) and old, *eld* (age): *wer-eld*—world. We anthropomorphize and personify our world of the human age, our world of good luck, fortune and the state of happiness, projecting onto them our wishes and desires.

Kronos is the demiurge who devours his children; the ancient Greeks conflated Kronos the Titan and Chronos, Time; the Romans thought that the god eats his offspring as time devours us, for we are the children of time.

We look into myths which enter our vocabulary, for they tell us something about ourselves, how we project our wishes onto our world, organize it and orient ourselves in it and to it, divide it and piece it together. There is no right way and no wrong way in these etymologies; they are all good and all valid, as part of our myths. Pharmacos, as we shall see, was once a poisoner, but has since been converted into a good pill roller and dispenser of medicinal herbs. Myths and mythic words and word myths color and shape our experience by converting into their opposite. We are the offspring of time, an ancestral myth providing time and ourselves with a genealogy. Francis Bacon conceived that Truth is the Daughter of Time, but also conceived that time itself has an ancestor; thus, he thought of the masculine birth of time.

Without seeking for complete coverage, I have related the myths to the peoples who recounted them, and in some cases to those who collected them. We will look into the ways the Chukchis of Siberia, the Pawnees of the western prairies and the Winnebagos classified and analyzed their myths, and how the Aranda of central Australia analyzed their dreamtime; we will see that their ways of thinking and feeling differ not too greatly from our own; we will learn something about them, thereby, and about ourselves. This is a relativist attitude in comparison, yet there are limits to it, which we will set forth. All is not absolutely relative.

I have drawn on the special knowledge of many people, old friends and some distant acquaintances. For reasons of space, only a few can be mentioned with my gratitude: Helmut Wilhelm for his knowledge of China, Nikolai N. Poppe, Ferdinand Lessing and Father Antoine Mostaert, and above all to the learned Mongol Yönsiyebü Rinchen, and the learned Buryat Garma Sanžeev, for their knowledge of the Mongols and Buryats. Likewise, my debt is great to William. F. Albright, George. E. Mendenhall and J. Alberto Soggin for their knowledge

of Biblical history and of the ancient Near East; some years ago, I reviewed a number of works by and about Johann J. Bachofen in various scholarly journals, which brought me into contact with Karl Meuli, classicist and Bachofen expert. Most of all, for the development of the ideas in this work I have been given the opportunity of an interchange to my great profit with my friends and students in Berlin and in Mexico. I have drawn on my studies of the peoples of Asia, of North America, of the Biblical lands and the culture of classical antiquity, which have been the subjects of my writings and lectures. The mythographic literature is too vast for any one student to comprehend all of it. Hence, I have not sought to cover all parts of the world. Yet there is enough variety of peoples, cultures, and types of myth to support the theory of myth and ideology which is offered here.

Introduction: Rebels as Demons in Ancient Chinese Myths

In the following pages various accounts of mythology and theories of myth are set forth and critically treated. Various kinds of myths are recounted and discussed; these are the healing myth of the Chukchis, and their creation myths, creation myths of the Pawnees, the Eskimos* and Yukagir, the Gilgamesh poem of the Babylonians, and the myth of the drunken goddess of the Egyptians in ancient times; the myth of the law, of the book of Daniel, myths of ancient Greece and China, myths of modern science, and allegorical myths of art.

The discussions of the theories of myth have been arranged in a chronological order which has been honored as much in the breach as in the observance; these theories are often as wonderful as the myths themselves. Figures prominent at a given time have been brought together and their leading ideas about myth discussed, together with the ideas of their chief antagonists and followers. The principle of selection in this case is the survey and critical treatment of the most prominent idea in the discussions of myth in recent decades. Looking backward

* Although Krader suggests that the term 'Eskimo' was not rejected by the Yupik or Yuit people in Alaska whereas it was found offensive among many Inuit in Northern Canada, in our own editorial comments in the introductory material we have used the words Inuit and Yupik in keeping with the preferred usage today.

from the perspective of these discussions, one gains two impressions. The first is that there is a high degree of concentration of the attention on certain aspects of myth by the specialists. The second impression has been that writers about myth at a given time have kept some important idea about their subject in view and have excluded others. My purpose is to advance a theory of myth, to add other perspectives to it, some of which are well known, likewise some which have been overlooked and forgotten. There is, as we shall see, a common direction extending over many centuries in the study of myth.

Myth has been examined for its own sake, as well as in relation to history, mind, religion, philosophy, science, society, and culture, and the latter have been studied in their relation to myth. Myth has been considered in relation to truth and falsehood, mistake and disease of language, to the sacred and the profane, to poetry, other arts, and to the aesthetic emotions. Studying these trends of thought, one infers that a theory of myth which is strong at one time is bound to give way to another. This inference is in part subjective; there is on the other hand a powerful undercurrent in the study of myth which does not yield to the passing fashions. Moreover, negatively considered, the inquiry into myth has made certain progressions by recognizing some blind alleys, exaggerations and errors of fact and fancy, and of the interpretation of both.

The word myth is of Greek origin and is grouped with other Greek words which denote speech, utterance, and the spoken. The ancient Greeks collected their mythic, fabulous and legendary antiquities, the Roman poets then treated both the Greek and their own Roman legends, fables and myths as their own. Myth as such is neither Greek nor Roman but is present in all parts of the world. Study of the myths of antiquity was extended by the men of the European Renaissance to include Egypt, whose hieroglyphs they sought to decipher. The precedent for their endeavor was provided by Pythagoras, Herodotus, Plato and Aristotle, who pointed to the origins of many Greek mathematical, philosophical and religious ideas in Egyptian thought. Moreover, the Greek and Roman mythographers indicated an Oriental provenience, whether Persian, Assyrian, Egyptian, or other, for their mythic figures and themes. The Bible was not studied as myth, still less as fable until late in the eighteenth century. Romanticist historians, philosophers, philologists and poets who studied myth held principally to the Greek tradition. Nearly every European country emerging out of these traditions then began the inquiry into its own myths, lore, science, and history.

In Europe from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the myths of the American Indians, Polynesians, Africans, and those of the ancient East came into the European view. Thereafter, a great flood of myth has been made available by

the ethnographers and folklorists in all parts of the world. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the myths were searched for hidden meanings, and cryptic doctrines which only the adept could decipher were sought as the miners probed the caves of distant lands for gold. Also, the myths were interpreted as allegories which, if properly understood, contained a profound moral or natural philosophy.

Late in the eighteenth century and through much of the nineteenth century, the theory of myth as a symbolic system was given great attention. Throughout the eighteenth century many writings were concerned with myth as an irrational product which was to be criticized from the standpoint of the rationalism of the enlightenment. During the nineteenth century the notion of nature-myth was elevated to the status of a theory of myth. Late in the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century, myth and ritual have been the focus of theoretical pronouncement and controversy. Many of these discussions are bound to an outlook which belongs to the past; other discussions, the viewpoints and theories on which they have been centered, are of current concern.

A goodly amount of progress in the study and comprehension of myth has taken place. There has been a vast increase in our data of myth, as to its forms and substance, and an equally impressive interrelation of the different disciplines concerned with the study of myth. On the other hand, a great amount of past accumulations of error has been cut away.

Concepts have come forth through the study of myth in relation to symbolic, narrative and legal expression, in relation to etymology, ideology, and to world-views which are of importance in history and today. But other concepts, among which are the notions of myth as a disease of language, as the expression of the childhood of man, as the utterance of a pre-logical mentality, or of a primitive mind or psychology, as the product of the collective unconscious, or as mistakes of scientific explanation are treated in this work as untenable propositions. Myth and its study have evoked both profound insights into our common humanity and also much nonsense. Many people have lived to revoke what they had previously written on myth, or have sensibly ignored it, turning a new leaf. There is no such thing as a primitive, pre-logical mind or psychology, or the childhood of humanity, they are all subjective, metaphoric expressions. Mythology has provided one of the empirical bases for the premise that living human beings have common mental and nervous systems, common psychology, cognitive and emotional powers, motivations, and reactions. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, who wrote of a pre-logical mentality, later critically treated this thought. Bronislaw Malinowski and Franz Boas, who wrote of myth in primitive psychology, and of the mind of

primitive man, wrote loosely. The peoples studied by these eminent anthropologists have a psychology and mind no different from our own, whoever we may be; the minds of the peoples they studied and our own are variations on a common theme, and Boas, to my certain knowledge, was conscious of this. The difference between their generation and our own is verbal; but the word is important.

The study of myth is encountered in ancient Greece, and among the ancient Chinese literati. The Roman poets, philosophers and historians studied their own myths as well as those of their neighbors, and, after the examples of the Hellenistic writers, who were their contemporaries, often treated them critically; this spirit also moved Flavius Josephus. Mythographers were found aplenty in the European Middle Ages, and renaissance writers, painters, sculptors, architects and decorators made abundant use of the figurative mythology of the past.

A prevailing definition of myth is that it is a sacred story; Edward B. Tylor thought that it is sacred history. Story and history are not the same. Both notions are relevant to myth, but they are, as we shall see, incomplete. Notwithstanding, out of this incompleteness, and by their complementation through others, a general theory of myth will be set forth in the later part of this work, and their implication discussed. Several other definitions of myth will be taken up and related positively or negatively to the general concept which will be here advanced.

Myth has fantastic and incredible parts to it, which have often been treated in an exuberant fashion by their interpreters. There is a great imaginative resource in myth which evokes a like response in those who hear or read it. Many have taken up the study of myth out of enthusiasm and hope; in other cases, the approach to myth is sober. Myth is, as we have said, an exceedingly complicated field, and for its study we have drawn on the disparate and often mutually antagonistic viewpoints which bear on it. Both myth and mythology have manifold disharmonious constituents, objective and scientific, subjective or irrational, which we seek to include in a common theory, even though they may appear to be, when superficially regarded, uncomfortable together.

Above we have said that there is no great original myth, such as the Wheel of the Sky or the World Tree. Myth has emotional, socially binding as well as intellectual elements in it, and those which are willfully absurd. Thus, we cannot think of myth as a fine puzzle which we may solve by rational means. Pierre Bayle and David Hume thought that by the investigation of myth and religion one could gain an understanding of human psychology, that our minds were originally unstable, frail, and that the study of myth would provide the evidence of that weakness. Hobbes had earlier thought that not only our minds, but our very lives were endangered in the primitive state, for the human mind

was originally a timorous and feeble species, bound by the marriage of covenant, and by no other. Lucretius has averred that the humankind had developed from brutish beginnings, and Giambattista Vico came to the same conclusion, which he strengthened by his research into myth. Later writers thought they could get to the psyche, which they considered as something apart from our concrete experience, through the study of myth. Others have considered these philosophers to be extravagant and have applied even stronger adjectives to their work. Strong-minded theorists have resisted the seductions of myth and have set it on firm ground; but others have produced insights into myth and its study as well, and one may read all those mentioned and gain something from them, if one takes up an objective and critical stance.

The effect of myth on art, literature, philosophy and religion has been widely and deeply studied, chiefly by considering the treatment of myth, or consciousness of the presence thereof, in the works of artists, poets, philosophers, and religious thinkers. A dominant theme in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries concerning myth made it out to be opposed to revealed religion. The skeptics of that time, deists, believers in a natural religion, the worshippers of a personal god, and materialists who were without any religion or god, gave rise to a movement which found the evidence of myth and fable also in the established religion of Europe. Out of this skepticism a new and interesting movement of thought was brought forth, which came to regard myth as the expression of the belief not only of others but also of ourselves. Myth, to be sure, was a matter of belief, as it was conceived at that time, but it was not only a matter of pagan belief; it was also a matter of belief by Europeans, who were divided into the enlightened and rational on the one side, and the unenlightened and irrational on the other; myth was then regarded as the evidence of irrationality and darkness of mind. By means of its study therefore, the consciousness of the divisions within one's own society was promulgated. Myth was, in this sense, still regarded as the belief of others, but the others are of our own kind, and are ultimately ourselves. Furthermore, there arose a movement toward religion without myth, belief without myth and toward the conception of myth apart from religion and apart from belief and the realm of the sacred.

On Terminology

Mythology is sometimes understood as a body of myth and at other times as the science of myth. Georg Friedrich Creuzer took the word *mythology* to denote the

body of lore in the possession of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and others. Otto Gruppe meant by mythology the studies of medieval or modern times which bore on the myths of classical antiquity. By mythology I mean the study of myth; at times an author is introduced who uses the word in another sense, which will be apparent from the context.

Myth usually is taken to mean the myths of some people. This is myth in its concrete sense. But myth is also taken to mean an abstraction for the purpose of definition. At times, as we shall see, myth is treated as an abstraction of yet another kind, in the meaning of an Ur-concept, a notion of the pure, primordial consciousness, or the pure community, or the original religion of the humankind. Herbert J. Rose wrote on the history of mythology, using the word to signify the study of certain products of the imagination of a people, which take the form of tales. A general theory of myth, together with a review of theories of myth was published by Karl Otfried Müller. His concern was to determine the age of a myth from the events of history and to determine when the creation of myths ceased to be prevalent. Lewis Spence, early in the twentieth century, wrote a survey of the theories of myth which were prominent in his time. Geoffrey S. Kirk has recently published a general work on myth, to which we will refer at a later point. In our work some, not all, of the ground they covered is worked over again; but also, some areas of discussion which they have not touched on are here introduced.¹

Myth and States of Mind

Freud applied myth together with fairy tales, popular sayings and jokes to the analysis of dream symbolism. Myth is in this conception a group phenomenon. However, it is ambivalent in Freud's theory, for the myth is at the same time the step by which the individual emerges from group psychology; myth is the invention of the poet who is to begin with the epic, and according to Freud, it is an individual phenomenon.² Jung considered thought to be of two kinds, one of which is myth, the other being science.³ Dreams, dream visions, fantasies and abnormal ideas are the soil of all mythology. In myths are found the symbols of the psychic life.

The psychoanalysts have raised questions of the relation of myth to dream, and of individual to group psychology. It is not our task to examine the theory of the dream. Dream is an individual, myth a social phenomenon. Our daily experiences are exceedingly numerous and only with great difficulty are they organized

in our minds and feelings, if indeed they are organized at all. Dream and myth are both subjective states of being, both having objective effects on our human world. Dream and myth both help to suppress the unnecessary, anti-organisatory and build up the experiences which are capable of being ordered by us. Thus, there is a process of unlearning, of paring down the experiences which are deemed to be superfluous or redundant, and of bringing the necessary and significant into order. Some hold dream and myth to be in this sense an aspect of forgetting. This aspect of dream and myth is the passive side, the active side is suppression, and elimination of the unnecessary, the superfluous, anti-organisatory, and redundant experiences as well as that which we feel to be chaotic.⁴

Both these active and passive states of myth are processes of mind and feeling; by these states and means connected to them we seek control of fantasy. In myth we seek a route for the fantasy by generally collective means, whether conscious or unconscious; it is a process which we undertake in all cases as members of a group. There is thus a rational process of myth, insofar as it is anti-fanciful, or anti-fantastic. This is apart from the substance of myth, which may be rational, aetiological, explanatory, or irrational, whimsical, inchoate and nonsensical. What has been said of myth may not be said of dream without reservation. The Aranda referred to their myths and mythic states as dream time. They do so without our demur. But if ethnologists, coming to them from without, take over this category and apply it indiscriminately to dream and myth, then they bring together matters which are to be kept apart.

Herbert J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology*, 1928, outlined five theories of myth: 1. the allegorical, which is ancient; 2. the symbolic, exemplified by Creuzer; 3. the rationalist, which is ancient; 4. the Euhemerist, which is ancient; 5. the modern nature-myths, dealing with personifications. He also gave five modern methods of dealing with myths: a) those giving the source and date, exemplified by Christian August Lobeck; b) those identifying the myth ethnically or geographically, e.g., Karl Otfried Müller; methods classifying myths in relation to sagas and *Märchen* [fairy tales—eds.], e.g., Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm; d) the comparative method of dealing with ancient and modern myths of those whom he called savage and peasants, e.g., Johann Wilhelm Emanuel Mannhardt and Andrew Lang; finally, he mentioned the psychological methods of Sigmund Freud and Carl G. Jung, providing a brief outline of his objections to these theories and methods. His classifications are not satisfactory, for the Euhemerist is also held by some to be a rationalist and might be put in the third class; the nature-myth theory has personifications which are identified in allegory and symbolism, and therefore might not be classed separately.

Myth and the Science of Myth

Both mythology as the science of myth and myth itself have undergone many changes in their history. Myth as a term once was considered to be an expression of a tale devised for the elucidation of an argument or as an illustration of some obscure point, as a means to make an abstraction appear concrete or otherwise comprehensible. In this usage, it has the features of invention, fantastic or matter-of-fact, which are set forth in a narrative form, or as a metaphor or symbol. The invention, narrative, metaphor or symbol may be the product of a known individual, or else taken over from the fund of popular traditions. According to an ancient usage, the work of the gods being mythic, therefore the world is myth, for it is the work of the gods.

Myth and history have been interrelated in a number of ways. Myth has been considered as a means to elucidate history; alternatively, history, archaeology and related sciences have been applied in the elucidation of myth; in a third scheme, myth has been regarded as a stage in the history of our mental development, taking part in a passage to logos, together with the passage from religion to philosophy, to science, etc. In this passage, myth and religion are taken to be an earlier stage of history, philosophy and science a later stage, which is higher, and more differentiated than the mythical period. This third scheme of development is propounded both by idealists and positivists; both have imputed a teleology to history beginning with a mythical age, a fetishistic age, or something similar, and ending with an age of universal freedom, a scientific age, etc. Alternatively, we may think that myth did not constitute a stage as such but was the product of the humankind when it had reached such a developmental stage. The myth in this conception is not a process which is active in its own right but a product of human actions and failings.

That myth as tale, thought or expression is conceived to have anything to do with stages of history, development, or evolution at all is a product of a particular era of the study of these subjects and is not a general attribute of that study.

The self-distancing and reevaluation in relation to myth, whether critical or not, were begun by the Chinese, as well as the Greeks. We will begin with an examination of the Chinese practices. Henri Maspero found among the ancient Chinese literati a distinctive method of interpreting their own traditions: these men denied that there was a Chinese myth originally, claiming that it was a later Taoist invention. Pretending to seek the historical kernel of a myth, they eliminated all elements which appeared to them to be unlikely, preserving a residue in which the sacred person of the king was transposed into a god, and made into

unnatural monsters, the rebellious princes and the ministers who opposed the imperial rule, and who were therefore led into illegal and immoral thought and behavior. The accounts given by the literati followed an order of the world which their metaphysical doctrines imposed on their history and civil government, constituting the basis for their exposition of Chinese and world history. This explanation of history and the state was a movement toward the secularization of myth, and the sacralization of government and of history. The chief burden of the world order, according to this exposition, was the account of the five elements of nature: earth, wood, metal, fire, and water; they are powers or agencies (*te*) which are arranged in a definite sequence, in accordance with the doctrine of Yin and Yang. Yin and Yang make up a Chinese cosmogonic myth of great antiquity, according to which Yin is the female principle of darkness, cold, moisture and quiet, and Yang the male principle of light, warmth, dryness and movement. The doctrine of the five elements is in another sense the cosmogonic myth of cyclical history, according to which the agencies or elements succeed one another, each overcoming its predecessor, in the order mentioned, being overcome in turn by its successor, in an endless cycle; each of the elements dominates over a given historical period. The doctrine of the five elements and that of Yin and Yang, originally separate, were brought together in a single philosophical doctrine during the former Han dynasty, about 2000 years ago.⁵

Maspero recorded, in his studies of the history and ethnography of East Asia, other mythic accounts of the origin of the world. According to one of these myths, the earth is conceived as square, heaven round; the earth supports, heaven covers. Pillars at the corners of the earth bear up heaven. The pillars upholding the sky are not pillars; originally, they were mountains disposed toward the four points of the compass, northeast, southeast, southwest and northwest. The northwest pillar, the Mount Pu Chou, was crushed by the monster Kung, and ever since that time heaven was inclined downward in the northwest sector. Maspero recorded myths of like kind among the Thai peoples (who live south of China) early in the twentieth century and compared them with accounts of the Chinese written tradition set down in the *Shu Ching*,⁶ or *Book of History*, a collection of speeches, prayers, and historical records, some of which may date from the first millennium B.C., others being later forgeries.⁷

Maspero held the traditional literate records to be legends from the temples of great families, or from religious centers, in part erudite, which then were elaborated to explain a rite; yet others were borrowed from folklore. They had to do, on being reworked by the literati, with the imperial cult.⁸ Maspero's treatment of Chinese myths of origin in relation to the imperial cult was further elaborated

by Marcel Granet,⁹ and by Otto Franke.¹⁰ Franke and Eduard Erkes added to these myths those of the Gold tribe on the Amur river (north of China), as well as others. Maspero was critical of the literati, who caused their mythic tradition to serve their purposes as the ideological expression of the loyalty they felt was due to their emperor. The Chinese scholars, bureaucrats and imperial servants were selective in regard to their own popular traditions, choosing those which they thought would serve the cult of the ruling house. Maspero called this the Euhemerist treatment of myth by the Chinese.

The ancient Greeks, Hecataeus, Euhemerus, and others distanced themselves from certain aspects of their own mythical tradition. Hecataeus of Miletus, early in the sixth century B.C., expressed doubt regarding the tale of Cerberus, brought out an account of the Trojan War as though it were history, and made note of resemblances in etymologies of names of localities and persons. Three centuries later, Euhemerus of Messenia, in a romantic story, provided a rationalistic interpretation of some myths of Homer. The fame of Euhemerus and the ascription of the method of rationalizing the myths to him was owed to the Latin poet Ennius, thereafter to Lucretius, and to certain Roman Christian writers, such as Lactantius. The method of rationalistic accounts of myths even outside the Greek, Roman and Christian traditions still bears his name, as Maspero in his treatment of Chinese mythology, and William Robertson Smith,¹¹ who studied Semitic religion, attest.¹²

Hecataeus saw that by giving the name of a person, we can get to the derivation or etymology of the place; we also associate the myth of the person to the place and the myth of the place to the person. We come to disbelieve the myth and exercise our reason instead. The ascription to a myth of a rational or historically “real” core is called rightly or wrongly Euhemerist.

Maspero’s descriptions would appear to be an extreme form of Euhemerism. Joseph Needham¹³ has gone as far as to hold that the mythic beings referred to in the Taoist texts included known rebels against the ancient kings. Kung, to whom Maspero alluded as a monster, was actually a chief of the artisans; Needham thinks he may have been a Minister of Works, who was banished or killed for an act of rebellion by Shun or Yü. Needham lists several other cases of rebellious individuals who were mythically transformed into dragons or other monsters. Following Marcel Granet in his interpretation, he believes¹⁴ that the ancient scholars Huai Nan Tzu and Wang Ch’ung developed their ideas out of myth and has thought to trace them back to those popular sources. Maspero, Marcel Granet, Otto Franke and Hellmut Wilhelm have contributed notably to the study of Chinese myths and history, each telling a part of what has been made

out of them. If the method is correct, one can understand what the ancient literati constructed out of the myths by studying them in relation to the folk practices and beliefs on the one hand and in their relation to the official ideological applications by the rulers of China and their helpers, on the other. In another sense, one myth has been piled on top of another.

Ennius, who was one of the transmitters of the Euhemerist notions regarding myth to later times, had a profound influence on the thinking and poetry of Lucretius; the poetry of Ennius has survived in some fragments; the poem of Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, *The Nature of Things*, survives, a masterpiece. Ennius was influential in a more general way in the transformation of prophecy into poetry in the Latin tradition, and of the poet from vates,¹⁵ or prophet, into poeta, or maker of poetry. Poetry was converted in Latin from a kind of myth to poetry properly so-called. Ennius was a conscious maker of myth who believed in metempsychosis, which he purportedly got from Pythagoreans; he thought that Homer's soul had passed into him.

Matvei Nikolaevich Khangelov treated the myths of his own people, the Buryats of Siberia, critically in the nineteenth century, and Chokan Chingisovich Valikhanov, who was a Kazakh of Central Asia, had done the same regarding the myths of his people. Both sought to bring their myths into the service of the consciousness of their history by their respective people. This method has been developed further by the Mongol scholar, Yönsiyebü Rinchen, in the twentieth century.¹⁶

There will be a general movement from the past to the present in the discussion of the theories and thoughts about myth in the present work, but the movement sometimes goes back and forth, and is historical. There is a kind of history, called annals, which goes only forward, year by year, or by summers and winters. While Thucydides, Tacitus and Josephus were all great historical annalists, we will avoid the history arranged according to the annalist principle.¹⁷

We will lay out some of our further propositions, beginning with the idea that there is a world of myth; what various people call myth has a common quality, which is the uncritical commitment, belief and devotion the speakers and hearers maintain to the mythic expressions and pronouncements of the different kinds. Next, myth is greatly variable in form and substance. At times, the imagination is uplifted and soars in myth, the fantasy is excited, and this uplift and excitation then work, not always but often, on the student of myth, who then attributes great qualities to the object of the study. Myth is then made out to be the instrument for some discovery pertaining to the nature of the universe, or of the psyche, the unconscious and the consciousness. But if we eschew the

path through to the ultimate reaches of being or of mind, then another vision awakens the fervid student; that is the notion of the basis of religion in myth. Or there is the idea that there is, as we have said, one great myth, and all recorded myths are local variants of the one. We avoid all these imaginative psychologies, epistemologies and ontologies as speculations, which are myths constructed on myths or myths of myths.

Notes

- 1 Christian A. Lobeck. *Aglaophamus*. Königsberg 1829. Karl O. Müller. *Introduction to a Scientific System of Mythology*. London 1844, p. 184.
- 2 Sigmund Freud. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*. New York 1938. Idem. Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego. *Standard Edition*. Vol. XVIII. The Hogarth Press London 1955, p. 136. Idem. *Moses and Monotheism*. New York 1939.
- 3 Carl Jung. *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*. Zürich 1952.
- 4 Although Krader does not take up the dream in this book, he does refer to the suppression of that which is unnecessary, superfluous, redundant. In Freud's theory of the dream what is repressed are the latent dream thoughts which emerge in disguised form in the manifest content of the dream. This is the result of censorship in the mind of those thoughts which are forbidden access to the conscious mind, but which are active in the unconscious as wishes. One might say with justification that the dream suppresses that which has motivated the dream, its motor force. See Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *Standard Edition*, Volumes IV and V, especially chapter 7, London 1900/1971.
- 5 Fung Yu-lan. *A History of Chinese Philosophy*. Trans. D. Bodde. Vol. 1, ch. 7. Princeton 1952.
- 6 Henri Maspero. *Légendes mythologiques dans le Chou-King*. *Journal Asiatique* vol. 204, 1924, pp. 1–100.
- 7 Fung Yu-lan, op. cit., ch. 3.
- 8 Henri Maspero. *Le Taoïsme et les religions chinoises*. Paris 1971. Idem. *Etudes historiques*. II. Paris 1950.
- 9 Marcel Granet. *La pensée chinoise*. Paris 1968.
- 10 Otto Franke. *Geschichte des chinesischen Reiches*. Vol. 1. Berlin 1930.
- 11 Joseph Needham. *Science and Civilization in China*. Vol. 2, ch. 10. Cambridge 1962.
- 12 Op. cit., § 13.
- 13 W. Robertson Smith. *The Religion of the Semites* (1894). New York 1956.
- 14 See the articles by J. Geffcken, *Hastings' Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1908 ff; and by F. Jacoby, *Griechische Historiker*. 1956; cf. J. B. Bury. *Ancient Greek*

- Historians*. 1908; and Th. Gomperz. *Greek Thinkers*. Vol. 1, 1901. Hecataeus “initiated the composition of ‘modern’ history,” according to Bury.
- 15 Vates, “prophet,” “seer,” used by Ennius as an insulting term for his predecessors (*Ann. fr.* 207 Skutsch) became by the Augustan period a central term for the inspired poet with an assumed social role as ‘master of truth’ (first in Verg. *Ecl.* 7. 28, and esp. 9. 34) and generated a constant interplay between the roles of poet and prophet. Oxford Classical Dictionary. –eds.
- 16 See Lawrence Krader. *Peoples of Central Asia*, 3rd ed. Bloomington, Ind. 1971, for Valikhanov’s work and references to his writings; cf. Krader. Buryat Religion and Society. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*. Vol. 10, 1954. Reprinted in *Gods and Rituals*. J. Middleton ed., New York 1967. Krader. The Shamanist Tradition of the Buryats. *Anthropos*. Vol. 70, 1975. (Republished with some changes in: *Shamanism in Siberia*. V. Dioszegyi and M. Hoppal eds. Budapest 1978.) There, the writings of Buryat and Mongal writers, Dorji Banzarov, N. N. Agapitov, Ts. Zhamtsarano, Garma Sanzheez, together with M. N. Khangalov and Rinchen are taken up.
- 17 On the contrast between these methods, cf. G. A. Williamson and E. M. Smallwood. *Josephus*. Harmondsworth 1981.

Part I

Myth in Classical Antiquity

Plato and Aristotle and the Myth of the Ancient Wisdom. Cicero, Sallustius, The World as a Myth

Plato had recourse to myth in the exposition of his philosophy. His myths were in part derived from popular traditions of ancient Greece but were revised for his own purposes. The traditional religious myths of Greece had been recorded in Homer and Hesiod in earlier centuries. But doubt about a literal belief in the gods of Homer was expressed by Herodius and others; the popular religious practices and beliefs in Orphic, Dionysiac and Pythagorean cults, the cult of Pan, and the politico-religious cults of the Amphictyonic and other Leagues went in several directions, having a partial contact with the Homeric tradition. It is doubtful, therefore, whether out of the gods of Homer and Hesiod there had been fashioned the “accepted religion” of all the ancient Greeks in Plato’s time, or even the accepted religion of all the Athenians, as Ludwig Edelstein thought. But he is surely right in contending that Plato and certain other philosophers and poets, Euripides in particular, were dubious about the Homeric pantheon and that to Plato even the myths about them were impious and erroneous. Mythology was not to be discarded but criticized and refashioned. Plato’s theology began with the divine nature of the good and its opposition to evil, falsehood and error. His mythic creations were re-creations, recounting in stories the destiny of human life, the sources of our troubles, and their settings in nature and in human history. There is teleology of being, action and thought.

Plato added tales, inventions, and mythical accounts to his reasoned expositions, which appear to round out and embellish his positions, having apodeictic, heuristic and aesthetic functions; they speak of matters which Plato could not have otherwise brought out. His myths have a natural and a moral import, depending on the theme of the dialog; myths of the latter sort are found in the *Phaedrus*, the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, all of which are concerned with the human soul, and the conflict between the passions and reason; in the *Timaeus*, whose theme is cosmological, the cosmogonic myth, proceeding from the depiction of the natural world to the human, is set forth. He recounted the myths of the island of Atlantis, and of an “ideal” Athens in the *Critias*, and in general opposed mythos to logos, which he understood as a reasonable account of something, whether an event or an opinion. The myth in Plato is considered to be false, yet with some core of truth in it; he construed all anthropomorphic language about divinity to be mythical. Owing to our ignorance about the beginning of things, we liken the false to the true and make our discourse about these matters edifying through myths. In later centuries, it was also thought that human beings proceed to the unknown by likening it to the known. Plato said of myth that it is a fiction which is not absolutely opposed to logos but is relative to the latter in respect to the degree of falsity or truth in either. Myth is, according to his doctrine, a part of the movement of our minds, negatively in that we divest ourselves of it as we embrace the truth, and positively in that it points the way to truth, instructing and pleasing us thereby.

Perceval Frutiger himself, bearing the works of Plato in mind, held myths to be the symbolic expositions of the philosopher, or else the marginalia to “true” science, setting forth what is probable, not certain. He agreed with Julius Deuschle (*Die platonischen Mythen*) that the mythic in Plato is not limited to a few allegories but permeates the whole of the Platonic philosophy. Among the specific myths of Plato are the birth of the world (in the *Timaeus*), the decline of the ideal City (in the *Republic*), and the origin of the State (in the *Republic* and the *Laws*).¹ Pierre-Maxime Schuhl puts an entirely different construction on the Platonic myths, calling them all fabulations,² and holds that they are to be treated as works not of the popular but of the individual imagination. They are not as such matters of belief, a point which will now be developed.

Myth in Aristotle’s teachings is twofold. It is understood (in his *Poetics*) as the plot or story of tragedy. The tragic poets, he wrote, at first accepted any story that came to hand. The unskilled among them drew haphazardly on the store of myths for their plots, not knowing beforehand which were the most suitable, but as they grew more adept and learned from the experience of others and of their

own that the stories of certain houses were the best, they shaped these for their tragedies. Such was the practice of Aeschylus and Sophocles in drawing on the Homeric myths.³ The tragic actions of the house of Altreus, in which Oedipus and Antigone figure, are among the best of these.

Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics*, drew out the meaning of myth not as a plot but in another sense. The passages concerning myth in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* are so striking, and so often overlooked by classical scholars and historians of philosophy and mythology alike, that they are here given at some length: Wonder impelled the first thinkers, as others at present, to philosophical speculation. At first their wondering had to do with the difficulties which arose in their minds, then gradually they progressed to consideration of greater questions, concerning the moon, the sun, the stars, and the origin of all things. Now to perceive a matter of perplexity and to wonder at it is to recognize one's own ignorance (for this reason the lover of myth and the lover of wisdom, the philomythos and the philosophos, are in a certain sense the same, for myth is a composition of wonders). "Further," he wrote, "(a)ccording to a tradition handed down from the most ancient times and left to us in the form of a myth, the primary substances, the celestial bodies, are gods, and the divine comprises the whole of nature. The rest of this tradition has been added later on, in mythic form, in order to influence the common people, and to serve the laws and the common good. Thus, the gods are given a human or else an animal form. But if we separate these accounts, and take up only the first, which held that the ancients considered the primary substances to be gods, we think that this is a saying of divine inspiration. We next reflect that the arts and philosophy have been repeatedly developed as far as they could go, and then have declined; these doctrines of the ancients have been preserved down to our times as relics of their wisdom."⁴ The second doctrine which Aristotle had attributed to the ancients was that they considered the divine to pervade the whole of nature; but he came back only to the first, which proclaims that the celestial bodies are divine. This then is one way in which the representation of the wisdom of the ancients had been set in a myth and was then diminished and deteriorated. The second way was the deterioration of the myth at the hands of the Greeks, who made it into an anthropomorphic conception, and at the hands of the Egyptians, who treated it zoomorphically.

Aristotle, in the *Metaphysics*, took up the meaning of myth as a body of traditions of the most ancient provenience, popular in its reception, recoding a divine truth. The earliest wisdom is the most profound, which has since been misshapen and spoiled; yet its original content will be reconstituted in a cycle of knowledge. This Aristotelian notion makes a myth of another kind. Myth is a collective

product originally, not the product of a particular individual. The myth of myth is an individual or a collective expression.

The task in the study of myth, understood by Aristotle not as a plot but as a tradition having an ancient provenience, is to draw out and interpret the divine inspiration in it. He thought that this inspiration had been grasped by the ancients, whereas their wisdom has been since obscured by the intervening centuries of distortions. Aristotle here expressed certain elements of his own creed of a divinity which pervades all of nature. The primary substances, so he thought, partake of this divinity. Next, he thought that these conceptions are of divine inspiration, which came down to the first ancestors in a pristine form, the original import having been later lost. However, Aristotle was a man of hope, maintaining that human wisdom proceeds through cycles of an original pristine quality, subsequent obfuscation, and an ultimate repristination in his own doctrine. Now the notion of an original wisdom and a cyclicity of its downfall and resurgence is taken from Plato. However, the idea of an original mythic form of this wisdom was his own, for myth in his eyes was not conceived for didactic or apodeictic purposes and was not in this sense practical but wonderful. Thus, he thought that he was laying bare the ancient wisdom which had been received by the originals of our kind; further that this was a myth. He was in fact making a myth of myth.

The sense of wonder which he attributed to the ancients impelled them to seek knowledge for its own sake. However, wonder is not simple, but is of several kinds, for we wonder at the harmonious changes of the heavenly bodies and at the prestidigitators at the fair. We marvel at these processions, precessions and dexterities at first uncritically, in the way of naïve gawkers. We then leave myth behind when we advance to scientific thought, which Aristotle expounded. The myth is represented both in the expression of divinely inspired wisdom and in those who marvel at the magicians. It is also expressed in Aristotle, who shared the sense of wonder with the myth-lover.

Plato had a system of beliefs, but no strong case can be made for his having believed his myth of the cave, or of Atlantis. Aristotle, on the other hand, believed in the myth that the first substances are divine, and that this myth has been the means whereby a primordial wisdom was expressed. Plato held a critical opinion of myth in general, whereas Aristotle believed some of them, which he incorporated into his own philosophy; there, he adumbrated the distinction between the myths of the populace, which are traditional, ancient, and of anonymous origin, and myths which are individual inventions.

We divide Aristotle's writings about myth into two, those which bear upon tragedy, and those which bear upon popular traditions. Further, we divide his writings into two, the first of which is part of his speculative philosophy and propounds the notion that there was once an ancient wisdom, which was of divine inspiration, and that the first substances are divine. Another part of this part is the basis of the science of myth. The speculative notions of the great philosopher belong, according to the theory expressed here, to the myth of a personal kind.

The common line in the study of myth down to the present is shown in part by Aristotle, whose work is a convenient starting point; for he, and his work on myth, are known. The several meanings of myth in Aristotle may have an inner connection; thus, myths of the Greek tradition of olden times were recorded in Homer, Hesiod, Pindar and other poets, coming to be their themes of epic, tragic didactic, and other poetry whose stories or plots frequently dealt with supernatural occurrences; these are also a commonly encountered theme of the myths of other peoples. Aristotle further attributed a profound wisdom to these mythic accounts of the origin of the world and of our knowledge of it. He thought that the ancients, relative to whom he was a "modern," had a deeper understanding of these matters than we, and that this has deteriorated in subsequent times. He noticed that the bodies of Greek and Egyptian myths attributed certain physical traits to the gods which reasonable people would reject. Setting aside his notion of the original superior and deeper wisdom of the ancients and its resurgence, we call attention to his general idea that myths in their form are ancient, popular, traditional and anonymous; they are accounts of the world, how it came to be, and accounts of the humankind, its custom and beliefs, and how they came to be; these mythic accounts are narrations which vary from one people to another, and from one era in the history of a given people to another. We have selected certain thoughts from Aristotle's general notion about myth and rejected others; the latter are parts of his philosophy leading in a direction which we do not follow. There is no evidence of a superior ancient wisdom which has since degenerated into the Egyptian myths of dog-faced gods with human bodies, or the Greek myths of man-faced demiurges with equine torsos. There is yet another tradition about myth, which is of an individual, known origin. Plato made up such myths, which are not popular or therefore anonymous; Aristotle had a myth, pertaining to the wisdom of the ancients, its superior quality, and subsequent courses of upsurge and retreat. The myths of Plato were applied to illustrate some point, to depict as poetry, or to entertain. The myths of Plato are not myths in our sense, for they were not matters of belief, his or ours.

The myth of Aristotle is a myth in his sense and ours and is wholly different from the Platonic “myth,” for it was and is a matter of belief or commitment for those who adhere to the doctrine of Aristotle. Aristotle thought that there were primary beings or essences, which were gods. He then added to this myth, saying that our knowledge of the world begins with wonder, *thauma*, and this knowledge was expressed in the ancient wisdom, which fell into decline, and then was revived by the same original motive. This we take to be a myth of the birth of thought, its fall and recrudescence. It is speculative, uncritical, and naïve. For wonder is only a part of our motivation to think about the world and about ourselves, to investigate and know them. We cannot say that the ancients knew either their outer or inner elements better than we, but since Aristotle we have certainly come to know the outer world better than he. Wonder leads both to knowledge and science, but it also leads away from them. By wonder we are also led to speculate, to talk of marvels and fantasies which exist nowhere save in our imagination. Thought and science begin out of practical considerations, which we may also wonder about. Myths have all of these elements in them, which leads us to conclude that Aristotle thought about them as traditional and current matters which he believed in; these include their contradictory aspects, which lead to and away from their critical consideration.

We separate the form from the substance of Aristotle’s thought about myth. The form of the myth is the account of the ancient wisdom and cycles of falling and rising, its origin in divine inspiration and human wonder. This myth is appealing or convincing to those who find Aristotle’s doctrine appealing or convincing. The substantive side of Aristotle’s ideas about myth pertain to their popular origin, ancient or anonymous, and their currency. This aspect of his approach to myth covers a good deal of its ground; there are other parts of myth which we add to these. The main point is that a myth becomes a myth by virtue of how we think or feel about it, and this to us is a substantive matter. The substantive side is objective, and provides a foundation for the study of myth, to which the formal side, as it is here understood, is related.

Cicero⁵ wrote that according to the custom of human life, we make those who have brought benefits to mankind into gods. Hence Hercules, Aesculapius and others were deified out of gratitude by those who profited from their works. He likewise referred to the aetiological factor in the construction of myths concerning natural processes, for example, in the deification of Saturn or Kronos, who devoured his children, just as time eats up the passing years, being fed but

never satiated. Cicero thought that the ideas of the gods are formed, 1. from premonitions of future events; 2. from our feelings of terror of storms and other natural disturbances; 3. from our ideas of the usefulness and abundance of the goods which we enjoy; 4. from our thoughts of the harmony of nature and the order of the stars. Clearly, in Cicero the question as to whether the gods exist or not is not the same as the question as to the belief in their existence by a number of people. He referred the construction of the myths of Hercules, Aesculapius, Saturn, that is, myths dealing with human and with natural processes, to the psychological motives of reverence, gratitude, premonition, and terror, and to our perceptions of utility, abundance and harmony. Motives of this kind arise in the human relations to the human and natural worlds, leading to the creation of myths, and to belief in them. We notice that Cicero attributed various motivations, both affective and cognitive, to the formulation of the myths.

Sallustius wrote, in the fourth century A.D., *On the Gods and the World*, that in myth the gods and their goodness are represented. He distinguished between the exoteric and the esoteric factors in myth, or between that which is clear and common to all on the one side, and that which is hidden and mysterious on the other. The gods, he argued, are not the products of our deification of men, but exist as such, bestowing the bounties of sense on all mankind. But they bestow the bounties of intellect only on the wise. Now the myths are not human but divine inventions; they too are gifts of the gods. The exoteric doctrine of myth, what anyone can understand, deals with adultery and theft by the gods, which, as a doctrine, is absurd. Just as the gods grant the bounties of sense to all, but only wisdom to some, they make the absurdities of myth available to all, but hide its truth behind a veil. By means of the patent and visible absurdity of myth, the soul may feel that the words are veils, and believe the truth to be a mystery. The irrational in myth is that which is evident and common, the truth is intellectual, hidden, and esoteric. The deeds of the gods are admirable but are cloaked by foolish behaviors and unworthy motives. He thought that the myths really and truly represent the activities of the gods, for one may call the world a myth, in which bodies and things are visible, but souls and minds hidden. Further he held that myths are of five species: the theological, physical, psychic, and material; the fifth is a mixture of the last two. We shall see that much speculation about the esoteric nature of myth, which has a covert message and is accessible only to the wise, and is opposed to its overt meaning, which is full of absurdities, was carried on in later ages, whether in conscious imitation of Sallustius or not. His quintuple classification of myth found few followers.⁶

Notes

- 1 Perceval Frutiger. *Les mythes de Platon*. Paris 1930. The first of the two definitions collected by Frutiger emphasize the importance of the supernatural element, or the irrational, or the transformation in myth of natural into human personifications; Frutiger referred to the work of Kirchner-Michaelis and Bréhier, both of whom mentioned the infantile character of mythic thought.
- 2 Pierre–Maxime Schuhl. *La fabulation platonicienne*. Paris 1968.
- 3 Aristotle. *Poetics*. D. W. Lucas Commentary. Oxford 1978.
- 4 Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. Hugh Tredennick ed. Loeb Library, 1935. J. Tricot. Aristotle. *La Métaphysique*. Paris 1974. W. D. Ross. Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. Vol. 1. Oxford 1924. See the Commentary by Ross, *op. cit.*, and Ernest Barker. *The Politics of Aristotle*. Oxford 1948, at the end.
 The sciences of man and society are deeply in Aristotle's debt. He distinguished between human and animal societies. Bees and gregarious animas are social, but their society does not develop; the human society develops from the household (*oikos*) and community (*koinon*) to the State (*polis*, city-state). He distinguished between the State and society, and held that man does not live as a human being outside society. Aristotle's grasp of these matters was later ignored or disputed. Thomas Hobbes, in his *Leviathan*, thought that man in his original state was isolated from his fellows in a war of each against all. Immanuel Kant, *Idea of a Universal History*, 1784, held that man has a social penchant, but also a great inclination to isolate himself, from which we infer that we have a free choice and will in the matter. Neither of these thinkers understood that we are not human apart from society. Aristotle's tenets respecting the humankind and society are related to his theory of myth, which, we have seen, he held to be traditional and anonymous in origin, as the expression of our life and beliefs in common.
- 5 Cicero. *The Nature of the Gods*, Book II. Trans. H. Rackham. Cambridge 1933.
- 6 Gilbert Murray. *Four Stages of Greek Religion*. New York 1912. (On Sallustius.)

Myth in the Renaissance and Enlightenment

The Deciphering of Myth

While the study of myth and mythographers was pursued in the European Middle Ages, new directions and perspectives were given to this subject by the increase in knowledge coming from voyages to Africa, Asia and the Americas, together with the great increase in classical learning, notably Greek, Latin and Hebrew, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Samuel Bochart published a book on *Sacred Geography* in 1646 which asserted that the Greek myths arose chiefly out of misunderstanding of words having one meaning in an earlier generation and another in a later. He considered the Greek myth of Japetos, whom he equated with the Biblical Japheth, Noah's son, but did not regard the Biblical account as myth. He proposed by his etymological, not mythological argument, that Prometheus, Japetos' son, whose body was dismembered, was to be equated with Magog, the son of Japheth, on the grounds that Hebrew Mig is the root of Magog, having to do with the story of one whose heart is torn from his body. Just as the Church fathers before him, Bochart detected a direct act of the devil, the "ape of god" in the formation of pagan beliefs, in addition to the purely historical events. The Greek gods were originally Canaanite or Jewish figures brought to the Greeks by the Phoenicians. The method of Bochart is also that of Sallustius, for both thought that behind the overt message in the myth there is a hidden meaning. He has been followed

by later writers about myth who seek therein a veiled truth, a cipher, or a coded message. Bochart also regarded myth as a mistaken explanation of the phenomena in our lives, and this view reappeared in the writings of James G. Frazer as well as others in the twentieth century.¹

The discussion during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries concerned the myths of Egypt, which were to be understood through the decipherment of the hieroglyphics. The hieroglyphs are a kind of writing, with a formalized relation between the script and sound. In the decipherment of the Egyptian hieroglyphs, a number of steps were taken in recording of the modern spoken language of Egypt and the translation of polyglot texts, some of known and some of unknown languages. Marius d'Assigni published *A Short Collection of the Famous Mysteries of the Egyptians named Hieroglyphics* in 1671. He held that the Egyptian priests had put the mysteries of god and nature into hieroglyphics which they discovered only unto their auditors, their greatest secrets being comprehended in these ingenious characters, which they feared would be profaned by the acquaintance of the people. Such a profanation he held to be abhorrent, and cited for this reason Alexander the Great, who was displeased at his Master Aristotle for publishing treatises of nature in the common tongue. D'Assigni himself thought that too much knowledge is dangerous to those who have not the wisdom to make the right use of it, and praised the wise priests of Egypt for their practice of secrecy, veiling their knowledge of god and nature by their hieroglyphics; these are of two kinds, natural and human, the natural hieroglyphics being the impressions on our senses made in the great Book of Nature, which is written by God. The Egyptian hieroglyphics were a consciously devised design to bring wisdom to men, by the use of certain significant universal characters representing the shapes of things which are known to all nations and tongues. These characters were engraved by the Egyptians on their obelisks, in order to bring to men more easily the discovery of all God's Works in the world. Each hieroglyph was a perfect emblem representing some figure of thought. The emblems were conceived to be a concrete, visible and tangible manifestation of some divine conception. These matters were developed in various expressions by Marius d'Assigni's contemporaries, Bochart, already mentioned, and Athanasius Kircher, to whom we now turn. We note in passing the composition by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz of his system of *Universal Characters* on which his deserved fame partly rests, but which falls outside the scope of our work; his universal characters have only a terminological coincidence with d'Assigni's. An elitism with regard to the popular as opposed to the mysterious, or the exoteric as opposed to the esoteric doctrine of myth is found to run from Sallustius in ancient times down to the Renaissance and Enlightenment.

Mythology was developed as a field of historical, linguistic, and religious speculations and investigations by A. Kircher, Antonius (Anton) van Dale, and Bernard Fontenelle; those coming after Kircher were among the many who added the criticism of religion to their speculations about myth. Kircher, a Jesuit, investigated the Egyptian religion in his work, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, or *Oedipus of Egypt* (Rome, 1652–1664), seeking to understand the mysteries of the Egyptian religion through the decipherment of their hieroglyphics. (Cf. vol. 2, Pt. I. *Sphinx mystagoga*). His method was based on his application of the reading of modern Coptic to the task of decipherment. His effort failed, but not because his idea about Coptic was bad; rather it was because he had no Rosetta stone at his disposal, or any comparable body of polyglot materials, whose discovery and translation lay still in the future; the eventual mastery of the Egyptian hieroglyphic writing we now know to have required the reading of the Coptic tongue and the translation of the polyglot inscriptions. His contribution to the reading of the hieroglyphs was a necessary step, but in itself insufficient, in a long, arduous process.²

There was at that time a situation, not wholly improved since then, of some looseness in the meanings of the terms of myth, fable, and mythology. Bernard Fontenelle, *On the Origin of Fables*, 1724, wrote of fable, but covered the same ground as others who wrote of myth. The fables were in his estimation absurd, false and ridiculous, the products of ignorance and unreason, crude philosophy, imaginary deities, chimeras and dreams. He made reference to the Homeric poems, the Roman pantheon, and the modern tales of the Arabs; the fables were invented with the intention of giving pleasure, by striking our fancy and satisfying our curiosity. To these particular principles of the art of the fable Fontenelle added a more general one: the invention of explanations of the unknown by analogy to the known, a point which was stressed by Ernst Topitsch in our time. Thus, for example, a god, whose motives are unknown, has an affair with a woman. Lust and love are familiar to us, we feel we know somewhat of the god's psyche, and invoked a blind respect for antiquity. Fontenelle wrote as easily of the Incas of Peru as of the ancient Greeks, working out his own view of myth while editing and translating into French the book by Antonius Van Dale, *de Oraculis Ethnicorum*, *On the Oracles of the Pagans*, 1683; Fontenelle rendered this into French in 1687, altering it by his edition, organizing and making it more digestible. It was understood but not explicitly stated, that not only the beliefs of the pagans came under consideration. Van Dale, a Dutch physician, argued that belief in oracles, magic and superstition did not come to an end with the preachings of Jesus Christ. Fontenelle and Pierre Bayle wrote of the superstitions

of Christians. If you write of the superstitions of others and mean those of your own people then you are writing in a way comparable to Sebastian Brant, who wrote *The Ship of Fools*, or Erasmus, who wrote *In Praise of Folly*.

A second, no less deep division concerned the thinking of the European enlightenment with regard to the history, theory, and meaning of myth. This division arose out of their reflections on the peoples newly discovered by the European conquerors, governors, merchants and priests, and therefore a novelty to the European writers in the eighteenth century. Jean-Jacques Rousseau peopled his imaginary forests of tropical America with noble savages whose selfless spirit and unsullied natural morality were such that all men ought to be taught to emulate them. These ideals provided him with a model for his theory of education of the young, who were as yet unspoiled by civilization. But Charles de Brosses³, following Bochart and Fontenelle, attributed a narrow and false vision to that same spirit whose generous dimensions had been prized by Rousseau. As a proof of the mental darkness and closed temperament which he thought to find among the unlettered peoples, de Brosses pointed to the cult of fetishes practiced by the inhabitants of Nigritia. It would be better, he argued, if they gave up their irrational devotions and adopted the critical judgments of reason to which the enlightened Europeans had attained. For the latter had come to regard myth as the product of ignorance and superstition, holding back the intellectual progress of its believers.

Thus, there was a profound conflict in the eighteenth century between those who celebrated the purity of the life of savages and those who attributed to them a benighted and irrational state of mind, which was expressed in their myths.

Alexander Pope, in his *Essay on Man*, 1733–1734, more moderate in his criticism of extra-European religion, and very dubious about the advantages to the savage of any contact with European civilization, considered

“the poor Indian! whose untutor’d mind
Sees God in clouds, or hears Him in the wind.”

He granted that the Indian, however pitiable his spiritual estate might be, had achieved the notion of the singular deity. That same Indian, now in bondage, will gain his freedom hereafter from slavery and from the Christians’ thirst for gold. Plato and even Aristotle were excluded from Dante’s Paradise, yet the Indian thinks of an equal sky, which is open, and accessible to all. The criticism of the European religion, made through the reference to that Indian, was directed not to the system of inward beliefs but to the external, inhuman practices by the Europeans.

Myth, as it was conceived in later centuries, had reference to being as such. The mythic consciousness is not promulgated by its expression; it does not state but is. Pope adumbrated this concept in the line, "To Be, contents his natural desire."

Pope's savage had neither the extreme of nobility of Rousseau's mythic savage, nor the extreme of darkness of Charles de Brosses' imaginary fetishist, his moderation representing a progression beyond the castigation of fetishist beliefs. The Indian had his monotheistic creed, which he upholds, his equality, and his expectation of a reward in heaven for his earthly sufferings. Pope placed the Indian in some ways on a lower, in other ways on an equal, and in yet other ways on a higher plane than the European.

In the eighteenth century, mythology was widely treated as the science of a body of traditional data which had been enciphered or otherwise concealed in the distant past by means forgotten or obscured, and which the mythologist undertook to reveal. Abbé Antoine Banier, who published *Mythology and Fables Explained by History* in 1738, understood by mythology the knowledge of fable, mysteries and ceremonies in the worship of the false divinities in the pagan religions. The sources of fable in his work were the poets, Homer, Hesiod, Ovid, and the prose writers of antiquity. Fables are capable of various interpretations, and Banier likened them to so many veils, the lifting of which was intended to reveal the truth. Thus, natural philosophers thought that the fables contain mysteries of nature in a concealed form, moral philosophers that they hid a truth bearing on their science, and so on. Banier proposed that fable and myth in fact conceal a truth which is to be explained by history; that truth is neither natural nor moral, but historical. By the science of mythology, we will find out what really happened in history. The Bible is not myth, but its stories are made into myth by others. Thus, Banier held the story of Noah and the Flood to be true, whereas, on the dispersion of Noah's sons to Egypt, and beyond, these truths were put into the form of myths and fables through the mysteries of the Egyptian religion. As the people of his time had an inadequate command of the Egyptian sacred writings, he considered all attempts at solution of their mystery to be dubious. An attempt at the solution of religious mystery by the interpretation of fable was precarious, moreover, for the latter was not particularly an Egyptian product.

Thomas Blackwell, *Letters Concerning Mythology*, 1748, undertook "to decipher these obscure remains, and trace this lost stream of ancient wisdom back to its real source." He held that the decipherment is a complex task, for whereas the fable of the death of Adonis proceeds on a mistake, that of the birth of Saturn

rests on truth. Blackwell did not hold that fables as we now understand them convey their original knowledge, but thought that nevertheless, fable was “the first form in which religion, law and philosophy (united originally) appeared in the world.”

Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, 1744, devoted his science to the common nature of the nations, holding that the first people were the Hebrews, whose ancestor was Adam, who was created by God at the beginning of the world. “From this it follows that the first science is mythology, which is the interpretation of fables. For all the histories of the gentile nations had their beginnings in fable; and it follows that the first histories of the gentile nations were the fables.” Mythology as a way to scientific truth was opposed by Vico to revealed truth; Biblical history lay thus outside mythology and scientific history.

Vico resolved myth into a kind of order by putting it into four classes: First, nature is conceived as divine and at once human, without distinction between them, which is seen in the ancient Roman myths. This is also the most ancient period, in which Jove and Heaven are conceived to be the same. There is a correlation in this way between the classes of myth and the successive periods, and Lucretius wrote in the same general way, although he and Vico differed in detail. In the next class of myth, Vico conceived that the humankind began the subjugation and control of fire, the cultivation of the soil, voyages across the sea, and the chopping down of the forests, undertakings represented by the figures of Vesta, Venus, Neptune, and other goddesses and gods. In a third class are the gods of the city, and of civil life; the struggles between the plebeians and the nobility are expressed in this class of myth. In the fourth class are the Homeric myths, in which the gods appear entirely in human forms.

Vico’s classification schema has been discussed by many writers, and little will be added here to this particular concept or that. The likeness of Vico’s to the Lucretian conception has been noticed, and the broad correlation between the classes of myth and the historical periods as well. For evidently the mastery of fire, of agriculture and of urban life succeed one another in the visions of both writers. Both treated myth sceptically, for Lucretius had long ago doubted that Chimaeras breathed fire from their throats, and that Centaurs, on account of their incompatible limbs, ever existed; in this respect Vico argued no differently. But whereas the first three classes and the corresponding periods of myth and of history fit together, the Homeric myths belong in a separate schema, for they relate to fire, sea voyages, cultivation of the soil, to urban and political life; Vico had reference to the elaboration of an idea by means of a myth, in which the gods first appear as abstractions, such as heaven, then as partly human and partly

bestial, etc., and finally as human in their entirety, with human motives and behavior, and a human form.

Vico considered that the great fragments of antiquity, which are understood to be the prehistoric moments, the myths, oral traditions, usages and customs of the earlier ages, hitherto useless to science, because they have remained obscure, truncated and dislocated, will be elucidated, grasped integrally, and placed in their context by the principles of mythology. These principles were, according to Vico, to be placed in the service of the peoples for the elucidation of their civil history, Antoine Banier and Thomas Blackwell sought likewise to elucidate and decipher myth by history, and history by myth. To Vico, the Hebrews were the first people, and their truth the primary truth, which comes by revelation; but this has no bearing on the sciences of mythology and history; the most primitive period to which these sciences relate is that in which Jove was revered and was conceived to be coterminous with heaven.

Louis de Jaucourt brought together in his article, *Mythology*, in the *Encyclopaedia* of Diderot and d'Alembert (1750–1765), the fabulous history of the gods and heroes of antiquity, together with the pagan religions, mysteries and dogmas, oracles and symbols of idolatry of the Greeks and Romans. His background in learning was appropriate for this task; he proposed by criticism to sift the facts from the marvels, and thus bring to light the essence of the myth out of the details; he drew on the work of Banier for his purpose. Some see in the Bible, de Jaucourt cautiously asserted, certain myths which are the vestiges of an ancient hero worship; but immediately subjoined to this thought his comment that he envisaged thereby only the alleged misuse of the Books of Moses by poets, who drew parallels between heroes of myth and those of Holy Writ. Voltaire, *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, 1765, referred in the article, *Fables*, in a straightforward way, to the allegories of the *Book of Judges* and of the poems of Hesiod.

Adam Ferguson, *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, 1767, attributed fictions, fables, and mythology to the rude nations of antiquity, and found in the myths of the south European nations the evidence of poetic allusion and the materials of fancy. This representative of the Scottish Enlightenment was circumspect in his utterance about myth and was in this regard more comparable to de Jaucourt than to Voltaire.

Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideas about the Philosophy of History of Humanity*, 1784 [published in English as *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*. London 1803], affirmed that mythology is a human invention, but denied that it is invented by particular peoples, each for itself. He declared, "They have not invented, but *inherited it*."⁴ Mythology is here understood as the body of myth,

and it is implied that the inheritance thereof is made out of the common fund of the humankind. He then undertook the analysis of tales and sagas in the local mythologies of the peoples, including those of the Bible, of Peru, of India, etc.

Herder considered myth in general to have the three attributes of being popular, poetic, and religious; each implies the other, bound closely or loosely to the other. Myth has the form of poetry, expressing the natural and historical occurrences, and universal truths in a transfigured, symbolic language which also contains the free constructions of fantasy. The myth in the service of history points to a derivation of Greek religious thought and practice from an earlier Semitic or other Oriental source. Myth is the expression of opposed moments of history, which is open, popular on the one hand, and closed, mysterious and symbolic on the other. The myths are determined not in general but in particular by the local geographic conditions of the peoples whose religions they express. The Egyptians and Arabs brought out their mythology from their sandy wastes, the Greeks from their maritime colonies.⁵

Herder, in *The Oldest Document of the Human Race*, 1774⁶, considered this document to be myth. There he took up myth in the historical as opposed to the poetic and aesthetic sense and proposed that myth is the unsealing of all there is in the human world. He touched on myth as symbol, history, truth, as overt and covert, on the migration of myth, and its geographic determination, or nearly all the themes of mythology of his and the following century.⁷

The method of decipherment of myth was encouraged if not instigated by the great successes of the philological study of languages, both modern tongues which are spoken, and ancient which have fallen into disuse. Joseph J. Scaliger, Guillaume Budé, Jean Bodin, Justus Lipsius, and Erasmus von Rotterdam were alive to the relations of modern Romance languages and ancient Latin. Athanasius Kircher extended this linguistic consciousness to a relation between modern Coptic and ancient Egyptian; Samuel Bochart, Giambattista Vico, Thomas Blackwell, Antoine-Joseph Pernety thought that the method of decipherment of ancient texts through philology could be applied to myth as well.⁸

The enlightened among the students of mythology in the eighteenth century included the Scripture in their research, the unenlightened regarded them as revealed truth, not as myths. But the unenlightened and the enlightened alike concerned themselves with the unveiling of mysteries of myth, or conversely, the decipherment of the historical obscurities of signposts and emblematical figures, appearing in the ancient cults and stories. They did not write on myth for its own sake, but some granted that it had a function to amuse and entertain, and others that it had an aesthetic function, which is related to this capacity to entertain us.

Banier attributed one or another of these qualities to the ancient myths, whereas Voltaire thought they were to be found rather in their modern, in his opinion, degenerated forms. These writers excluded the fables of Aesop from their investigations, just as, in a later epoch, the *Jatakas* of India were kept apart from the study of myth by the learned mythologists, who likewise turned away from the popular fables of Marie de France, of Jean de La Fontaine and Ivan Krylov. Myth was kept not narrowly to tales of cosmogonic mystery and divinity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but was stretched to include the stories of great men who by virtue of their glorious deeds were elevated to the divinity.

In classical antiquity, the study of myth went even further than this, for at that time it was held that not only were the deeds of great men and women, who were the benefactors of their people or of all the humankind, divine, but also that the most profound wisdom was divine.

The services of Bochart, d'Assigni, Kircher, Anton van Dale, Bernard Fontenelle, Vico, Banier and Herder in the study of myth were undoubted. Their writings were sometimes regarded as risible in later centuries, and their etymologies, or historical identifications of events and personages are indeed often questionable. The virtues are not to be seen in the details but in their vast learning, as shown in their mastery of the ancient Hebrew, Greek, Latin, modern Arabic, Coptic and other tongues, their contributions to the development of philology, geography, history and mythology as sciences, their rising of the general interest in their fields, and their awakening of the minds to the subsequent solutions of particular problems, such as the decipherment of the Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Notes

- 1 On Bochart cf. Otto Gruppe. *Geschichte der klassischen Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte während des Mittelalters im Abendland und während der Neuzeit*. Leipzig 1921.
- 2 The literature on Athanasius Kircher is as rich as the writings of this seventeenth century thinker; often called a polymath or polyhistor, his studies covered mechanical inventions pertaining to the measurement of time by sundials and calendars, astronomical observations, and magnetism, ancient and medieval, and above all, Egyptian religion, history and philosophy and Roman archeology; he contributed to the study of comparative religion, and was one of the first to found a museum; he wrote on museology and on musicology. He wrote along the lines of Raymond Lull, the thirteenth century Catalan philosopher, an *Ars magna luci et umbrae*, or Great Art of Light and Shade; this contained Kircher's *Ars Combinatoria*, the combinatory

art, or logic. This combinatory art from Lull to Kircher and Leibniz was conceived as a mechanical invention which reduced all thought to a few notions, which could then generate all our ideas. Myth in Kircher's approach was a hermeneutic art. In his mythological studies, which bore chiefly on the Bible and on (his imagination of) Egyptian sources, Kircher divided myth into two kinds, neither of which envisaged a literal interpretation: 1. myths of a superficial and popular kind, bringing out simple morals by tales, allegories, and the like; 2. myths having a profound meaning which is hidden from all but a few who alone will understand it. His scheme of myth is reminiscent of Sallustius. Kircher, much as Samuel Bochart and Antonius van Dale, encompassed a vast amount of data on sundry tropics together with a wholly different sense of organization from the most modern ones. Unlike van Dale, Kircher had no Fontenelle.

3 Charles de Brosse. *Du culte des dieux fétiches*. Paris 1780.

4 Johann G. Herder. *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*. London 1803, p. 354.

5 Herder. *Ideas*, op. cit. Idem. *Journal of my Travels in the Year 1769*. *Journal meiner Reise im Jahr 1769*.

6 See J. G. Herder in Maria Bunge (ed.). *Against Pure Reason: Writings on Religion, Language, and History*. Eugene, Ore. 2005.

7 Many were heedless of Banier's attacks against the attempts to decipher the Egyptian hieroglyphics. For example, Dom A. Pernety published *Les Fables égyptiennes et grecques dévoilées et réduites au même principe, avec une explication des hiéroglyphes et de la guerre de Troye* (*The fables of Egypt and Greece unveiled, and reduced to the same principle, with an explanation of the hieroglyphics and the Trojan war*) in 1758.

8 Ulrich v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf. *Geschichte der Philologie*. 3rd ed. Leipzig 1959. This is philology whose field is ancient Greek and Latin studies.

Myth in the Nineteenth Century

The writers in the European Enlightenment and their forerunners, from Pierre Bayle and Fontenelle to Charles de Brosses, Voltaire and Paul-Henri Thiry (Baron) d'Holbach held fable and myth to be the product of an irrational, narrow, dark and superstitious mind. In J. G. Herder and Ch. G. Heyne an opposed view of myth began to be developed, and those who followed them in this line sought the pure form of consciousness, of religion, and of the original divine spark in myth. But also, the beginnings of an objective, empirical and critical study of myth were set forth in the nineteenth century. Those who investigated it in this way did not believe in the myth they studied, but some of them believed a myth of one kind or another, which was the myth of myth.

Friedrich Schlegel in 1800 thought of myth as the work of art, but also held that this mythic art is the work of nature, not of man, and that the Almighty is depicted already in myth in a foreshadowed way, for what otherwise is seen by the mind through the senses, but evades the consciousness, is found in myth. It is the beginning of all poetry, returning us to the beautiful confusion of fantasy and the original chaos of human nature. Schlegel knew of no more lovely symbol of this chaos than the display in myth of the colorful disorder of the ancient gods. This effusion was put into the semblance of ordered thought about the myths of the Greeks and the peoples of India by Schlegel in his *Philosophy of*

History (1828). In the fourth lecture of that work, he contrasted the thought of the Jews, the Greeks and the Indians. He contemplated the genius of the great men who were the mighty prophets, and the noble natures of Moses and Elijah, but found no evidence of myth in thought or expression in the Bible. As to the Greeks he attributed the many-colored world of fables, the beautiful effusion of poetry, and the playful creation of fancy to their myths, but he found them to be without moral import, and without higher ideas of the Infinite Mind and Supreme Intelligence. He thus divided the Greek thought in the popular religion from the philosophical doctrines of the Greeks. The former had merely the vague presentiments of matters which were brought out by the latter in a superior and severer manner. This dichotomy of popular religion and philosophy is not found in India; there, Schlegel wrote, one encounters “amid a sensual idolatry of nature more passionate and enthusiastic still than that of the Greeks, amid the gigantic pagan fictions, all the truths of natural theology, in a mixture of sincerity, dignity and error. In this mythology one meets the most rigidly scientific and metaphysical notions of the Supreme Being, combining wild fantasy, boundless enthusiasm for nature, deep mystical import, and profound philosophical sense.”¹ We leave this gifted writer, who thought of myths relative to particular peoples, and turn to another mythological tradition which investigated myth in a more general way, and indeed sought out the universal and absolute laws of human life in and through myth.

The relations of myths and symbols, and of myths and truth will be discussed with respect to Friedrich Creuzer, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, Johann Jakob Bachofen, Ernst Cassirer, and certain others in the following pages. The notion of a symbol had long been applied both to the statement of a religious creed or doctrine in general and to the statement of a particular article of faith within it. Myths were frequently interpreted either as representations of a religious cult such as that of the Homeric, Egyptian, Babylonian or other gods, or as symbolic representations of one element or another in such a cult. Therefore, many students of myths in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries investigated them as symbols, or as a body of beliefs constituted of symbols.

Christian Gottlob Heyne, who edited Herder’s collected works, and the *Library of Apollodorus*, wrote copiously about myth himself.² He began with the idea that myths are of obscure origin, coming to us from an age so far removed from our own that they cannot be immediately understood, and therefore, they must be interpreted for us. They are of two kinds, historical, in which case they relate to an event, and philosophical, in which case they relate to some concept,

thought or notion. By the interpretation of myth, we may find out which kind it belongs to, which historical event, or, as the case may be, which philosophical notion. Thereby the obscurity of the myth can be elucidated and the myth itself can be made timely. The myth is the expression of the humankind at a time when it and its language were childish. The myth was expressed in concrete, particular symbols, which were brought out in relation to our sense impressions, without abstract ideas; stormy weather is personified by Zeus holding a thunderbolt in his hand and hurling it. There is no general notion of causality, but only particular acts of bringing a thing forth. Heyne's method was best presented in his *Sermonis mythici seu symbolici*, 1807, *Dialogs of Myth or Symbol*, in which he appears to have equated these two terms.

Johann Heinrich Voss wrote his *Antisymbolik*, 1824, in which he distinguished between the mundane and religious themes of myth. Voss thought that the original rude and illusory notions of the world were made into cultivated and sublime expressions and notions by Homer. After him, the Mosaic doctrines of Genesis were transmitted by the Phoenicians to the Greeks and found their echoes in Hesiod. In this regard he followed Samuel Bochart. But further, he held that the priests of the cult of Orpheus infiltrated the false notions of the sacerdotal cults of Egypt and Phrygia into the Greek religion. The esoteric doctrines of the various priestly conglomerations changed the myths into systems of recondite symbols. The secret associations of the priests distorted the divine rays which emanated from the religion of Judaea, converting them into inventions designed to serve the immoral purposes of their cult. This contrast between the purity of religion and the impure obscenity and frivolity of myth was later developed by Andrew Lang.

Georg Friedrich Creuzer considered that in myth we have access to the purer Ur-religion, writing, "My chief point I hold fast in all its extent. It is the basis of an originally purer adoration and knowledge of *a god* to which all later ones relate as the broken, pale light rays to the full sunlight." (*Symbolik und Mythologie*, 1810.)³

Creuzer believed that the Greek symbolism and mythology were the outcome of their weak and miserable physical conditions and their no less impoverished religious conceptions. However, unlike Voss, Creuzer regarded the priests of the Orient as those who brought religious conceptions of great profundity and purity to the Greeks. The priests of the various cults in Greece and in the East expressed themselves by means of esoteric symbols and myths, and it was their appointed task to interpret them. The symbol thus took on a mystic nature, which was enfolded in the hieroglyphs, or sacred writings in the literal sense. Some myths

were related to historical events, some to philosophical ideas about nature; a third class, however, was derived from faulty expressions of the language, such as those which were brought out in the allegories of myth.

Herder thought that myth is the common heritage of the humankind, whereupon Schlegel and Creuzer developed this notion further, proposing that there is a fundamental inspiration of our minds, which is undisciplined, fantastic and colorful, and which is expressed in myth. The symbolic interpretation arose out of this proposal, but it was coupled with a further notion of an esoteric wisdom shared by a secret cult of priests; it was the task of Voss to unmask this esoteric expression as a scandal; the task of Creuzer was to restore the expression to original dignity, and to interpret it and honor it. To Creuzer, the myths and symbols of this ancient doctrine were the evidence of an Ur-religion.

Just as Schlegel, Pierre Chompré, *Short Dictionary of Fable*, [*Dictionnaire abrégé de la fable*], 1801, regarded mythology as a web of bizarre imaginings and confused masses of facts; Joseph de Maistre, *Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions*, 1809, conceived that myth, to the eye of the expert, is much truer than ancient history. Chompré thought of myth as a field in which there is some truth, if we can dig it out of its unintended, haphazard and fantastic cover, and de Maistre thought of myth as the container of truth. In this generation and in the following one, the question of truth in myth was made into a central one.

Key words appear in a given historical context. Myth was opposed to reason in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; reason overcomes myth which arises out of the forces of emotion. In the eighteenth century, myth was held to be religious, anti-intellectual, and passionate. Some thinkers, such as Claude Adrien Helvetius, thought that passions are necessary and creative forces in our mental activities; that very emotional upsurge or drive which was regarded with misgivings by René Descartes and (Baruch) Benedikt de Spinoza, as a constraint on our freedom, was later valued as a vital and welcome force in the expression of our thoughts. The matter is exceedingly complex, for there were many in both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who regarded the activities of our minds as the product of both affective and rational processes. In this context, truth as discovered in myth, whether by reason or by empirical investigation, was opposed to revealed truth which is vouchsafed by divine inspiration. They did not regard the mental processes as a social product, but they began to speculate about the history of the imaginative expressions of the mind in relation to myth.

History was not generally regarded as a driving force as such in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At that time the detailed evidence of myth

was sought out to explain a particular historical event, or else a particular figure was evoked, as a Joshua, a Theseus or a Thoth, to account for a given myth or mythic datum. This was the common method of Bochart, Kircher, Vico, Banier, Blackwell and others. Many thinkers in the nineteenth century, particularly under the impetus of Hegel, in their speculations and investigations on myth and history, made history itself into a driving force, regarding it as the judge and judgment seat of all human affairs and the determining power over our minds. This is a form of hypostasis of history which is still well attested at present time.

Myth often comes forth as speculative history and thought, while the speculative history and thought make their appearance as myth. The notion of history as a judgment seat is a mythic representation of history, and the attribution to it of a power over our minds is another. These myths have known authors, and thus are not popular or anonymous in their origin, but those very authors, such as Hegel and Marx, come to be transposed into mythic figures in a latter-day application of the Euhemerist principle, and their dicta are sometimes transposed into myth. What is at issue in these hypostases, speculations and mythologizing transpositions is the figurative representations of historical relations, social processes, relations of human beings to one another in society, and in and to nature. The human relations are combinatory and antagonistic processes in communities, societies and social classes, all of which occur over time, having their histories. The history of these relations is abstracted from those who participate in them and are endowed with a life of their own.

Emile Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, 1866, defined myth as the particularity of fable, of heroic history or of fabulous times. In particular, it is an account of times or deeds which history does not make clear, containing either a real event transformed into a religious notion, or the invention of an event with the help of an idea. Myths concerning divinities or deities are reduced to persons treated in a fantastic manner. If deities are lacking in the account, it is not myth but legend. Romulus and Remus are legend. The story of Hercules is a cycle of myths. Myth need not of necessity appear as history, although this is its most usual form. Myth in figurative or colloquial usage refers to that which has no existence in reality: in politics, justice and good faith are myths. Mythology he defined as the account of divine personages of polytheism. Reference is made to Denis Diderot, who stated that the mythology of the Greeks is a chaos of ideas, and not a system; Emile Littré regarded mythology as the knowledge and explanation of accounts of paganism; Buffon mentions that the swan song is an interesting mythology. A mythologue to Littré is one who treats of the science called mythology; François Rabelais referred to his tale of Pantagruel as a

mythology; and Voltaire, taking up the account of Lycaon and Tantalus, called them superstitious fathers who served up their own children as food for the gods, and committed parricide out of piety. Voltaire approved of those mythologists who imagined that the gods, instead of accepting the sacrifice, punished this crime. Littré considered myth to be the property of the pagan world and of polytheism, not of the monotheistic religions, and he cited Diderot and Voltaire in support of this opinion; further he regarded myth, in accordance with the figurative or colloquial usage to be an account of something that never took place; Alexandre Dumas, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, said much the same.

At that time many considered that the most ancient life and thought were wholly admirable, and that the record of those bygone conditions are contained in myth. Myth was the vital proof that there was once a primordial religion, consciousness, poetry, and community; the study of myth was therefore the means to gain access to the Ur-religion, the Ur-consciousness, the Ur-poetry, and the Ur-community.

Hegel and the Hegelians; Schelling

G. W. F. Hegel, in his *Lectures on Aesthetics (Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik)*, delivered in the 1820's, conceived that there had been a mythic period in the history of antiquity, in which heroes made their appearance in their individual independence. An example of this is to be seen in the myth of Prometheus which Plato recounted in the dialog, Protagoras. Hegel, in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy (Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie)*, also given in the 1820's, proposed that the myths proceed through several stages or forms, of which a later stage is represented by the Platonic myth. At first, Hegel wrote, the form of myth is encountered in popular religion, whose conception is imagistic, and its content is brought out in a sensuous conception. The truth is in it, in both form and content, as the *Geist*, mind or spirit, conceives itself. The myths are thus not arbitrary inventions of the priests for the deception of the people, but are the products of thought, which has the fantasy for its organ. But the myth and philosophy are not the same. The arbitrary or capricious is at home in mythology, which is the product of fantasy and as such is fantasizing reason. Myth is the first mode of appearance of religion; its contents have been treated as though they were philosophemes, but whereas myths are but playful fancies, yet there are general truths contained in them. Friedrich Creuzer had been attacked for asserting this, but Hegel rose to his defense, declaring there is no doubt that this is so.

Truth is not the business of philosophy; Hegel held that philosophy considers only thoughts in which truth is contained; he did not propose to take account of the philosophemes which are contained in myth, for in the mythological concept there is only the accidental presentation of the Idea. Thought, however, proceeds from an indeterminate shape, which is found in myth, to a determinate one, which is found in philosophy.⁴

Voss, we have seen, had thought that myth in the hands of the priests in ancient times had been an instrument for the deception of the people. Hegel opposed this notion, for he did not consider the myths to be arbitrary inventions, but whether the Platonic myths are of this kind he did not say; some of the latter were inventions, some were not. Plato himself thought that the popular myths were erroneous representations, having a core of truth. The idea of myth as a means for deception of the people was later revived by Nietzsche. Hegel's concept regarding myth remained and was further developed by many of his followers who regarded myth as a stage of the development of thought, or as a stage of the humankind generally, in a corresponding period of our history. Some of the Hegelians regarded myth as the stage of human childhood, as had C. G. Heyne; this was also a metaphor of many others in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, having earlier been expressed by Plato.

The idea of decipherment of myth in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was linked to history on the one hand, and to the systems of symbols and symbolic interpretation of myth on the other. Symbols are elements of language, the analysis of which had been proposed as the model for the analysis of myth. Myth, in turn, was conceived to be another language, albeit of a cryptic kind which was analyzed into symbols, the meaning of which was to be deciphered.

The symbol is an element into which myth can be analyzed, but only if we take a body of myth as a system having an order which is superficially obscure but is perceived to have an orderly arrangement if we examine it intimately. The arrangement, order and system can be sought in terms of an inner process of myth or else as something outside it and in another entity. Hegel, in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, thought that the natural religions are symbolic, being constituted by a rich source, these religions serving as the transposed foundation of mythologies, such as the Greek. Godhead therein is ascribed to spiritual individualities who are first held to be valid as symbols, whereat they lose their character as such. The myths and symbols in this conceptualization are acted on by factors external to them and have no internal processes. In his description of the *cultus* of ancient Egypt, Hegel in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* thought of a battle of the inwardness of natural being of the Egyptians with the spiritual consciousness

of the Greeks. Hegel had come upon a myth in which the Egyptian Sphinx was killed by a Greek. Hegel plainly loved the ancient Greeks, not the Egyptians; he thought of this myth as significant, indeed admirable, and as a puzzle, whose solution he had found, but his solution will bear conviction to those who are already inclined to be convinced by it. He regarded the myth and its symbolic constituents as a message to be deciphered by means of his philosophical system, which was external to the myth.

The Hegelians have been divided into a left wing and a right by many, most recently by Karl Löwith and Hermann Lübbe.⁵ Those of the left, such as Bruno Bauer, Karl Marx, Moses Hess, Arnold Ruge, and Søren Kierkegaard, wrote about myth in conjunction with a demythologizing practice. Bauer wrote *The Trumpet of the Last Judgment against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist*; together with Arnold Ruge, he wrote *Hegel's Doctrine of Religion and Art, judged from the Standpoint of Faith*. Bauer conceived that mythology is the art which gives the divine a human form. Sacred history is not mythological, for it is limited to the deeds of god and the bondage of man.⁶ He distinguished between pure myth and historical myth, the latter having a basis of actual fact; in this he followed the lead of David Friedrich Strauss.

D. F. Strauss began as a Hegelian, later turned to materialism, but was explicitly antisocialist. He reduced religion to a myth, which was of a new kind, not bound by a previous tradition, but free. In this myth, mankind is the incarnate god, in which sense the myth is conceived as a pure myth. In the reduction of religion to myth, he referred to another myth as well, which has a basis in fact, and is in this way not pure but historical. Myth, Strauss wrote, is not an accidental, external shell, but the basic form of religious conception. It is no mere dialectical schema; in this respect he opposed Schelling on myth. Myth, Strauss held, is the means to the historical worldview, and as such is basic to critique, for without the historical worldview there is no critique. The monotheistic conception is mythological, being in a crucial sense the historical means to understanding, to belief, and to the Ur-community. Our knowledge of the mythical origin of the Bible is not a devaluation thereof. Myth determines the bounds of religion and philosophy, it is a stage on the way to truth, and has its truth. Not the world but the human consciousness is the stage of myth and religion.⁷

Karl Marx relegated myth to the childhood of mankind, writing in the introduction to his *Grundrisse* that no social development excludes a mythological relation to nature, or calls forth an artistic fantasy which is unrelated to mythology. Further, he considered, "A man cannot become a child again, or he will become childish. But does he not enjoy the naiveté of the child, and must he not

himself seek to reproduce its truth again at a higher stage? Is there not a revival in the childhood's nature in each epoch, according to its own character, of a natural truth?" He concluded, "There are rude and precocious children. Many ancient peoples belong in the latter category. The Greeks were normal children."⁸ Myth, according to Marx, belongs to the same category of our conscious processes of speculation, religious doctrine and nationalistic sentiments. They are all manifestations of false consciousness, spilling over into poetic and painting creativity in art. In earlier epochs there was no spilling over; at that time, the mytho-poetic and artistic expressions were not separated. Marx held that myth conquers the forces of nature in the imagination but disappears when the actual control over them is achieved. Each myth is specific to a given people, the Egyptian to the Egyptians, the Greek to the Greeks; fantasy in the individual artist is the same as fantasy in myth; each relates to a people at a given epoch in its history. In myth as in religion that which is hidden in the idea is elaborated, brought into view and made into a mystery. By demythologizing life, we demythologize religion and proceed to the disenchantment of the world; both outside and within it is one world and one science thereof. Myth is the illusion of control over nature. But also, social myth is the illusion of control over society, psychological myth is the illusion of control over the psyche. But then are there not people who actually manipulate the social myths, gaining control over us, and over the society? The illusion of control is then transformed into reality, not for the manipulated but for the manipulators. The subjectivity of the illusion is converted into an objective social control, and it is the same in the various forms of manipulation of ourselves by others in our society.⁹

Ferdinand Christian Baur¹⁰, wrote in the same vein as Hegel and Creuzer on the natural religion of antiquity. A symbol, to Baur, is a view of an external object, as given by nature or by art. Symbolic meaning is visibly, externally expressed, and this expression is combined in the mind with its object. Myth, being an act in time, is distinguished by Baur from the symbol, which is in space. There is a logic of myth and a logic of language, which come together, in an accord.

F. W. J. Schelling¹¹ agreed with many of the concepts of myth and of symbol which are found in Creuzer; that myth has an inner determination of its own processes was Schelling's primary thesis, whereby he was opposed to Hegel. Schelling held that in language only abstract and formal distinctions are maintained, which mythology ever preserves in a living and concrete way. Herder, we have seen, thought that myth was a kind of language, which was poetic, fantastic, freely creative, symbolic, in which the truth appears in a transfigured and mysterious form.

Schelling held that myth has its own reason; its truth is of its own kind. The mythological process has occurred in humanity, but independently of its will. Mythology is a necessary, natural growth, which is a whole, real and true. In its content it is fantasy, fable and poetry, whereas in its form it is fluid, growing. Schelling proposed there is truth in myth as such, which arises out of the folk, but it is unanalyzed. In this respect his view was one with Herder's view of the historicity of myth and its folk origin. To Schelling the truth of myth is not empirical but philosophical. In the ninth lecture of his work on mythology, he took up the three phases of mythology in relation to the truth. In the first phase, the mythology has only poetic meaning; in this phase, if the truth is found in it, it is there by accident. There is no truth as such in it. A second aspect of this phase, which is brought out by J. H. Voss, is the declaration that myth consists only of meaningless ideas, produced by ignorance, which are later elaborated by poetry, and bound together in an artistic whole. In the second phase, truth is admitted to the domain of mythology, but only as cloaking or masking historical truth, which is the view of Euhemerus, or of a physical truth, which was the view of C. G. Heyne. This aspect is the treatment of mythology for its allegorical meaning. A second aspect of this phase is the regard of mythology as a mistake, or a misplacement either of scientific truth, essentially of an irreligious truth (Gottfried Hermann) or of a religious truth; the latter is the view of William Jones and G. F. Creuzer. In the third phase, the pinnacle is reached, and this represents the view of Schelling; in this phase it is held that there is truth in mythology as such; it is an inner moment of the mythology. To Creuzer and Schelling the myth is the autonomous *Gestalt* of the human mind or spirit; it is immediate, blind being, in which poetry and philosophy are unseparated, self-explanatory in Schelling's doctrine. He considered, moreover, that there is an Ur- or primordial consciousness, in its pure substantiality, the path to it being the mythology, not of any particular people, but of the humankind in general. He considered myth in relation to truth, as we have seen, but mythology apart from poetry and allegory has truth as such in it according to Schelling. The mythological truth is tautegorical, whereby the object and the symbol are the same; by tautegorical understanding is meant the understanding of the mythical phenomena in themselves. It is in the religious explanations of mythology that the latter has the truth as such in it. The explanatory act in relation to myth lies in a category arching over the poetical and the philosophical, combining them in itself. Schelling's doctrine of access to the pure substantiality of the Ur-consciousness through mythology parallels that of Creuzer, who proceeded to the Ur-religion by way of myth. These writers were persuaded that myth exists in a pure condition. It is not a variable in history, but is there, in itself.

Ernest Renan¹² held myth to be a stage of human history, having possessed its full significance only in those epochs in which man still believed that he lives in a divine world, without distinction between divine and human laws. But long before paganism came to an end, this naïve view had disappeared. Renan, as Hegel before him, by a theory of stages and epochs, relativized what Schelling had considered to be an absolute. But Renan, writing in the *Revue des deux mondes*, 1860, on the future of metaphysics, made an absolute of his relativism; there he considered that any phrase applied to an infinite object is a myth, for it comprises in limited and exclusive terms the unlimited.

The nineteenth century was full of controversies over the nature of myth and where it was found. Ernest Renan, *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques*, 1863, held that the Semites never had any mythology. Ignaz Goldziher, *Der Mythos bei den Hebräern*, 1876, held the opposite view, and recounted many Semitic myths such as those of the ancient Hebrews and the modern Arabs. A related conflict arose over the development of religion. Franz Lenormant thought that polytheism in Egypt developed out of an original monotheism; William Gladstone went so far as to hold that polytheism is a degenerate monotheism, G. W. F. Hegel, Auguste Comte, Emile Littré and Ignaz Goldziher all conceived that religion proceeds through an earlier polytheism to a later religion to a later and higher stage of monotheism. Goldziher conceived myth to be a constituent of human psychology in general and opposed Renan's contention that only certain peoples, at a certain stage of their development, have the capability of creating myths. The desert is monotheistic, Renan averred. For it is the original habitat of the Semites, whereby their religious thought was formed.

Renan adverted here to a geographic determination of religious thought and belief, Goldziher, on the contrary, saw no difference between the psychology, systems of thought, and belief of the Semites, ancient or modern, and those of any other people. He together with Heymann Steinthal attacked the notion of a monotheistic instinct, and opposed a racist doctrine on this head, which was implicit or incipient in the doctrines of certain of their contemporaries (cf. Goldziher, op. cit.).

Myth and Voices of Doubt. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Scheler

Arthur Schopenhauer¹³ maintained a cool and sceptical attitude toward myth, using it chiefly for the discovery of the creeds of others, such as the Indic peoples,

in which he found wisdom, or those who believed in the Bible, in which he found sex. He found no sexual theme in the myths of India. He drew from the Biblical myths and from the myths of India a narrower range of impressions than had Friedrich Schlegel, turning a deaf ear to the tones heard by the latter. The standard of his time is applied in making this judgment. His follower, Hans Vaihinger,¹⁴ held myth to belong to the world of “As If,” of make believe in general, considering myth to be the free constructive act of the humankind, as its primary expression, by virtue of the inventive faculty and the imagination.

The absolute position with regard to myth which was upheld by Schelling was turned upside down by Friedrich Nietzsche. Whereas myth to Schelling was the pure truth, to Nietzsche it was all lies.

Nietzsche, who shared a subjective and pessimistic judgment of humanity with Schopenhauer, maintained a cold and distant attitude toward myth in general; he opposed truth to myth, and the elite in society to the masses. There is no truth in myth, he held, and neither now nor ever. Myths and lies are necessary for the common folk, but only for the few free minds is the truth bearable.¹⁵

To Max Scheler,¹⁶ myth arises from the basic structure of being human, together with speech, conscience, tools, weapons, ideas of right and wrong, state, government, artistic presentation, religion, science, historicity and sociability. The creative in man, he wrote, is not spirit, nor the higher forms of consciousness but the dark, subconscious drives and forces of the soul. What shapes the fate of the individual and the group is the continuity of these forces and their symbolic correlates—just as indeed the dark myth is not the product of history but above all its determining power. Scheler assigned myth not to the outer but to the inner darkness which is fundamental and creative in us.

We date the beginnings of the “modern” era in the study of myth very approximately from the middle of the nineteenth century. Up to that time, mythology appears to have had definite ethnic locations which aroused the intellectual ardor and the passions of those who devoted themselves to it. By myth the students of antiquity, the renaissance and the enlightenment had first the myths of the Greeks in mind; this was expanded to include the Romans, then the Egyptians and other peoples of antiquity. The myths of the Arabs and the peoples of India were incorporated into the mythological field, the Bible as myth and the myths of the European peasants were studied. Finally, mythology exploded to cover all parts of the Americas, Oceania, Asia, Africa, and Polar regions. It was still regarded as an object outside the world of the learned, the cities, and the industrial life of the present. It was thought that erudition, urban and industrial conditions spoiled the mind and feelings, and that true myth was only to be found

among the literate, the humble, and those who lived in distant places. The industrial proletariat was thought not to have any myths; only late in that century were these prejudices overturned in the minds of the majority of the workers in the field and it was discovered that even science is a myth or has its myth.

Notes

- 1 Friedrich Schlegel. *The Philosophy of History, in a Course of Lectures*. London 1846, p. 153.
- 2 Valerio Verra. *Mito*. Milan 1966. Here, Herder's theory of myth as well as his relation to C. G. Heyne, who edited his works, are explored.
- 3 The editors have not been able to locate this citation from Creuzer.
- 4 G. W. F. Hegel. *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik. Werke*. Vol. 13. Frankfurt a. M. 1970. Individuelle Selbständigkeit: Heroenzeit [Individual Independence: The Time of Heroes], pp. 236–252; Die fantastische Symbolik [The Fantastic Symbolism] (India), pp. 430–448; Die eigentliche Symbolik [Actual Symbolism] (Egypt) pp. 448–466. Idem. *Sämtliche Werke*. Leipzig 1940. Vol. 15a. *Geschichte der Philosophie*, pp. 52–59 and 166–175; Verhältnis der Philosophie zur Religion [Relation of Religion to Philosophy], pp. 202–216 (The Mythological in General; Mythical Philosophizing). He took up many themes of myth (animal worship, idolatry, fetish worship) expressed in myth also in his *Philosophie der Religion* (*Werke*. Frankfurt a. M. Vol. 16. pp. 259–302) in connection with the treatment of the religion of magic.
- 5 *Die Hegelsche Linke*. K. Löwith ed. Stuttgart 1962. *Die Hegelsche Rechte*. M. Lübke ed. Stuttgart 1962.
- 6 Bruno Bauer. *Die Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts über Hegel den Atheisten und Antichristen. (The Trumpet of the Last Judgment of Hegel the Atheist and Anti-Christ. An Ultimatum*. Originally issued anonymously). Leipzig 1841. Bruno Bauer and Arnold Ruge. *Hegels Lehre von der Religion und Kunst, vom Standpunkt des Glaubens aus beurteilt*. Leipzig 1841.
- 7 David F. Strauss. *Life of Jesus*. Tübingen 1835. Trans. George Eliot. Cf. Ernst Cassirer. *Das Erkenntnisproblem*, vol. 4. Darmstadt 1973, on the problem of language and myth in Herder, Schelling, and D. F. Strauss. On D. F. Strauss, see Karl Löwith. *From Hegel to Nietzsche*. Anchor 1967, Ch. 5, The Problem of Christianity; § 2, Strauss's Reduction of Christianity to Myth.
- 8 Karl Marx. *A Critique to the Contribution of Political Economy*. London 1971, p. 217.
- 9 Karl Marx. *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, Introduction. Frankfurt a.M. 1867. Idem. *Notes to his Doctoral Dissertation*. 1839–1841. In *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, Loyd David Easton and Kurt H. Guddat eds. Indianapolis 1967, pp. 51–66. *Economic-Political Manuscripts* (1844). Mineola 2007.
- 10 Ferdinand C. Baur. *Symbolik und Mythologie*. Aalen 1824.

- 11 Friedrich W. J. Schelling. *Philosophie der Mythologie*. München 1842/1984.
- 12 Ernest Renan. *Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse*. Paris 1857.
- 13 Arthur Schopenhauer. *The World as Will and Idea*, 2nd ed. Leipzig 1844.
- 14 Hans Vaihinger. *Philosophy of 'As If'* (1911) English ed. 1924. This view of myth may be compared to the views collected by Emile Littré and expressed by Alexandre Dumas (see above, Introduction).
- 15 Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Leipzig 1885.
- 16 Max Scheler. *Man's Place in the Cosmos*. Darmstadt 1928.

Part II

Introduction to Part II. Modern Studies of Myth

Bachofen, Tylor, Müller, Frazer

In the empirical study of myth, our own belief is set aside; the myths are not our own but those of others, whether they are the objects of belief, faith and credence in our own society, or in some other. The students of myth in the Enlightenment began to regard our own myths as an object of study and of scepticism. Mythology is in this case not a body of myth but a matter of its collection and scientific analysis. Myths are studied in relation to society, history, psychology, to the human sciences generally, to the natural sciences, and to myths of our own and of others. There is no category of the myth or the mythical; myths have no original or pure form but are variable from one people to another, and from one period to another. Myths are not fantasies but expressions of what we know and do not know, in varying combinations.

Some writers in the last century began to explore myths by means of symbols. There was no general agreement on the definition of myth or symbol, yet a common method was followed. Myth was analyzed into symbols, which were its constituent elements. Symbols were also commonly regarded as a human expression in language, art, and religion. Myth and symbol were seen as both processes and products of human fantasy, imagination, intuition, and creative powers generally. Myth and symbol constitute a system with a vocabulary and grammar peculiar to them. This notion is widespread in the twentieth century, having been brought

out explicitly by those who followed Friedrich Creuzer in the last century. Others, such as Pierre Chompré and Friedrich Schlegel, expressed instead the factors of free confusion, bizarre and contradictory outpourings of myth. Creuzer, Hegel and others of his school saw in myth the evidence of a natural religion which preceded the monotheistic religion; there was, in this interpretation, a time which the humankind believed in myths of heroes and kings. These men did not reduce all myth to confabulations of the tales of heroes but regarded some of them as personifications of natural forces. Schelling went further, believing that myth is a real phenomenon, just as any other, with definite attributes and an independent role in life. It is not a stage, as the fetishistic stage of mental life, which had been conceived by Auguste Comte, but an all-pervasive feature, with an objective existence and truth, characteristic processes of thought, feeling, and expression of its own, for which he invented the tautegorical category. Psychoanalysts such as Carl Jung and philosophers as Ernst Cassirer were influenced by this way of thinking about myth. Johann Heinrich Voss, who held myths to be a jumble of meaningless ideas produced by ignorance likewise had a following in later generations, in a movement of anti-symbolism.

Johann J. Bachofen took up the relation of symbol and myth in their expression of the cult of Greek and Roman antiquity.¹ Here he commented on a myth of the Greek goddess Psyche, represented on an urn of the Roman Villa Doria Pamfili. The scene on the urn shows youth discussing the Egg mysteries, in the myth of the World as an Egg. The myth, of Egyptian origin, is the exegesis of the symbol; Bachofen held that myth unfolds in a sequence of unconnected acts that which the symbol bears in a unitary form within itself. Bachofen proposed that the symbol is not part of the myth, nor is the myth analyzed into symbols, but the symbol combines with the myth, which explicates it. The original symbol then retreats to the background, and the myth attains to uncontested dominance of religious, ethical and moral truths. The symbol was connected inseparably to a belief in the World Egg, which is of great antiquity; the myth no longer had validity as a belief by the time of the depictions of the urn of the Villa Pamfili.

Through the grave-symbolism the continuity of the egg mysteries, which are incorporated in their myth, is assured; the symbol of the World-Egg regains its significance to the devouts of the cult of Orpheus. Bachofen considered that the beginning of human development lies in the myth, which is the source of our historical knowledge. If the origins of anything are a puzzle to us, then in the myth is found the faithful picture of the oldest time. He added: either here or nowhere, for everything has to us a mythical beginning, which has the highest testimony of inner truth and natural necessity. The patriarchal law succeeds and

hides the underlying law of matriarchy. Thus, Bachofen, in his *Mother-Right*, held that the myth is the source and at once the solution to the puzzle of mother-right. The practice of mother-right is confirmed in the time before written records by the comparison of myth and history; the mythical tradition will then be recognized as genuine, as independent attestation of the beliefs and practices of the Ur-time; in myth is found the unconscious conformity to law of social life, which free conscious reflection fails to vouchsafe to us. The truth is external or internal; the myth has truth of the latter kind.² Bachofen regarded the symbol as internal being in itself in relation to the myth; the myth is external in relation to the symbol, providing the exegesis to the latter.

Bachofen was much occupied with the poetical nature of myth; he also averred that the Daedalus myth is not a poetic image, but rather a reminiscence of history, an echo of historic conditions and fates in reality and indeed coincides with life.³

Alexander N. Afanas'ev had brought out his views of the poetic nature of myth.⁴ There he wrote on the origin of myth in general, and on the Slavic myths in particular, holding that a rich, indeed the sole source of the variegated mythic representations is the living word of humanity with its metaphoric and harmonious expressions. He considered myth and fable to be the same but distinguished the period of formal development of myths from the period of formation, which preceded it, and from the period of its subsequent decline. Schlegel, as we have seen, thought of myth as poetry, as did many others in the romanticist movements of Europe in the nineteenth century.

Moriz Carrière⁵ wrote on the beginnings of culture, and myth as a participant in these beginnings. The Ur-philosophy and Ur-poetry are found in language; myth is dual in this original condition, as a part of language and of religion. Myth is the Ur-religion and is not play but ceremonial seriousness; it is not fable but truth in the garb woven by fantasy. It is the childhood of humanity; mythology is the infantile speech of the human race. The conceptions of myth are neither invented nor arbitrary; they are not accepted out of our free will or self-consciousness, but are instinctive, whereby the peoples of the world and the individuals are their instruments. Carrière relegated myth to the childhood of the humankind; he argued by analogy between primitives and children, making a myth out of myth in yet another way.

The doctrine of the veracity and viability of myth at an earlier period of human history had been expressed in the nineteenth century by Hegel, Baur, Schelling, Marx, and Carrière, albeit in various ways, as we have seen. This doctrine was denied by J. H. Voss, by F. Max Müller and James G. Frazer. Myth,

thought and language do not coincide in Müller's teachings; he proposed that language is the external form of thought. Mythology, he held, is even further removed from thought, being a dark shadow thrown on thought by language. The linguists have established the rules governing the growth and decline of words; once these rules are established, we see the mythological phraseology breaking through them. We should wonder how a language can support this condition which in truth can be called an infantile disorder. The origin of the mythological phraseology he thought to be the language in a condition of self-forgetfulness.⁶

Language, Müller considered, holds the solution to mythology, regarded as a body of myth. Mythology arises out of an ambiguity not of thought but of language. But he sought the solution to these problems in philology, particularly in the etymology of words. Samuel Bochart had argued that myths arise through the misunderstanding of the meaning of words. Müller interpreted all myths as sacred, wherein the gods are represented as the personifications of natural phenomena, the primary one of these being the sun. He belonged to the nature myth school, and within this school to the solar myth branch.

In various works on the sciences of thought and of mythology, Müller had written that language and thought are manifestations of the same energy; although they are not the same, yet they are inseparable. Mythology he called a disease of language, rather than of thought, and supported this conclusion by the study of such questions as how gender influences mythology. He chose his examples from the myths of the Indo-European language family, primarily the peoples of India in ancient times, and thereafter the Greeks.⁷ He thought that the study of words leads back to a root, which has a definite meaning, whereas myth distorts it. In comparative mythology, which Müller took up as a science, and not as a body of myth, the gods are names, nomina, and not sacred essences, or numina. For the Aryan (Indo-European) world of the Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and Germanic tongues, the root of the word was traced back to the Sanskrit form, which he took to be the most archaic, and the arbiter of all doubtful cases.⁸

Edward B. Tylor held myth to be sacred history, but in another sense, he considered myth to be a fancy which is based on experience; mythology as a science affords the evidence for studying the laws of the imagination, and the means for tracing the laws of our mental history. Myth is placed in the service of history and of the general laws of our development. This, however, is the myth considered from without. Myth considered from within the group which has expressed it is sacred history but may appear to others to be mere mythic legend. There is throughout a narrative element in myth, as in history, but myth as sacred history is a matter of belief, not of morbid delusion or poetic achievement, which are

attributes of myth when considered externally, objectively.⁹ Myth objectively and externally regarded was a means of writing history. In his article, *On the Diffusion of Mythical Beliefs as Evidence in the History of Culture*,¹⁰ the relation of myth to belief on the one side, to diffusion and therewith to history on the other, are discussed. Tylor thought of the unity of the mental types of the various peoples of the world who have invented independently very similar contrivances; this thought is opposed to the method of deducing them from a distinct, historical connection.¹¹ Tylor thought that there is a progressive movement of cultures, which led to an independent origination of myths and of material artifacts among many peoples. In myths are preserved the survivals of early periods of human history which can be reconstructed out of them. There is another approach to myths in Tylor, who found in them a strong desire to account for everything. This desire is not simple guessing but evaluation, in a quest for causes and rational explanation. In myth there is therefore the beginnings of science. Tylor considered that Max Müller's notion of the formation of myth in the terms of "a disease of language" to be but a part of the matter. The constellation myths combine the observation of natural phenomena with a name and are models of plain meaning. But also, a myth is considered a good story which is taken up and handed on, a kind of best seller.¹²

W. Robertson Smith undertook an analysis of myth in relation to religious institutions of ritual, cult, belief systems, and dogma of the ancient Semites; he observed that the oldest religions and political institutions present a close analogy, but that it would be more correct to say that they were parts of one whole of social custom. Myth infused a new meaning into the ancient forms through allegory. Ritual in Smith's view is connected originally not with dogma but with myth, mythology having the place in the ancient religions which was later occupied by dogma. Mythology, however, is not an essential part of religion, having no sacred sanction or binding force on the worshippers; it is a mere part of the apparatus of worship, in which belief was not obligatory. Obligatory were the sacred acts prescribed by the religious tradition.

Myths had a function as the explanatory factor of the ritual. Thus, according to Smith, ritual is essential to religion, whereas myth is not; moreover, myth is derived from ritual and not ritual from myth. James H. Breasted wrote in a related way of the folktales of the origin of the world, which make up the mythology of Egypt. These are myths which are older than the Pyramid texts, being related to them; the myths, which are found in old hymns, are not the same as the sacred texts, which allude to the older myths. There is an echo of this view in Henri and Henriette A. Frankfort.¹³ The Frankforts distinguished legend, saga, and the like from the "true myth," the latter alone having "compelling authority";

all myth is a form, ritual behavior being the form of the action of myth, myth the expression in words of the ritual. Myth is a part of the field of sacredness, in its oldest and deepest form. We will discuss some of the findings pertaining to ancient Egyptian myth by Henri Frankfort below.

Ludwig Uhland and Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm published accounts of myths of the Germanic peoples, seeking to explain the mythic significance of customs and the light which the study of peasant customs could shed on myth. Alexander A. Potebnja carried this program out among the Slavs. The relation of myth and custom, particularly among European peasants, was the concern of Wilhelm Mannhardt, and of many other investigators in various countries in the nineteenth century.¹⁴ This was a considerable preoccupation at that time but ceded place to myth in relation to ritual in the theory of myth in the beginning of the twentieth century.

The mind in dealing with matters beyond the senses may express them in terms transferred from those which refer to the world of the senses, such as the symbols which have a bearing on the material world. Myth, it was argued, has a real meaning which is grasped when these transfers and symbols are understood and explained. Daniel G. Brinton thought that the myths are riddles whose meanings are puzzled out with the help of linguistics and the analysis of religious rites, serving as the unconscious commentaries on religious beliefs.¹⁵ He thus summed up the theory of myth of the later nineteenth century, avoiding some of the exaggerations and mysticism which that theory had evoked.

Theodor Waitz, Edward B. Tylor, Daniel G. Brinton and Adolf Bastian thought that the myths with the same content, such as those which were found in widely separated parts of the world, provided evidence of the psychic unity of the humankind. Who may have first uttered this dictum is hotly debated. The idea of pan-human psychic unity may be evidenced in many ways, ethnologically, psychologically and historically. That the humankind is unitary in this respect is a concept which had been adumbrated by William Robertson. G. Elliot Smith and Alfred C. Haddon have defended the priority of Robertson with respect to this noble thought; and indeed, his precedence ought to be recognized. Each of these writers formulated his thought somewhat differently from the others. A. Bastian considered the elementary thoughts in their psychic primacy to be underived from any other; they are, he held (together with J. G. Herder), the hereditary goods of the humankind.

Yet there is little new under the sun. A generation before Robertson, the Neapolitan Giambattista Vico¹⁶ had written, "Uniform ideas born among the peoples unknown to one another must have a common motive or basis of truth."

Before him, Fontenelle had written that all men are alike, for no nation or people is without the folly of fable. Jean Bodin, I think, said something about our common mental processes, and other, earlier formulations of this thought will be found.

J. G. Frazer is a forerunner of the scientific study of myth. He had vast erudition and propounded many apt comparisons between myths of the ancient world and those gathered among living peoples by the ethnographers. However, he paid too little attention to the ethnic, social, and historical context from which his comparisons were drawn. He had not one but several theories about myth and did not, as far as I know, draw them into an integrated doctrine. Frazer thought of myths "as documents of human thought in the embryo," summarizing thus one aspect of his work: myths "are collected and compared no longer for the sake of idle entertainment, but for the light that they throw on the intellectual evolution of our species." Mythology was understood by him as a corpus of human expressions which he defined "as the philosophy of primitive man." He went further and proposed that "to be complete, a history of philosophy and even of science should begin with an account of mythology."¹⁷

Elsewhere he brought out a completely different theory of myth. In his edition of *Appollodorus*, Frazer made a classification of myth, legend and folktale. By myths, Frazer understood "mistaken explanations of phenomena, whether of human life or of external nature." Legends he understood to be "traditions, whether oral or written, which relate the fortunes of real people in the past, or which describe events, not necessarily human, that are said to have occurred at real places." Legends are mixtures of truth and falsehood and are contrasted with histories which are wholly true. By folktales he understood narratives invented by persons unknown, of imaginary content, making no claim on our credulity and devised for our entertainment. He swept aside any close relation between myth and ritual.¹⁸ The notion of myth as mistaken explanation does not fit well with that of myth as embryonic science or philosophy.

Andrew Lang ridiculed the theories of myth put forward by his contemporaries, making devastating attacks against F. Max Müller, J. G. Frazer, and others who had written on myth in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these attacks having been absorbed so thoroughly into the literature on myths that it is often forgotten where they came from. He pointed out defects in the theory of myth as a disease of language, and he objected to Frazer's propensity to make gods into spirits of the corn, of the harvest, or of the fertility of the soil. Lang himself regarded myth as the accompaniment of religion: the religious conception arises from the contemplative and submissive mood of the human intellect,

whereas the mythical ideas arise from the erratic and fanciful mood; the former is serious, the latter is playful and even absurd; the former is pious, the latter blasphemous, the former holy, the latter unholy.¹⁹

The historians of religion and art, together with psychologists and ethnologists proceeded in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the empirical study of myth. Ernest Renan, Edward B. Tylor, Andrew Lang, and Daniel G. Brinton, in the last century, analyzed myths without a tenet that myth is a fundamental form of consciousness, truth or mind. The evolutionary doctrine of Tylor and Frazer began with an idea that myth, thought or expression constituted a primordial stage of human development. Hegel had adumbrated an idea of this kind earlier, in another way. A close interaction was maintained throughout the nineteenth century between the historical, ethnological, linguistic, philosophical and psychological research into myth, but this interaction has been reduced as specialization and professionalization of research in the academic world have advanced.

The great concern with myth and symbol in the writings of Friedrich Creuzer, Ferdinand C. Baur, Johann J. Bachofen and other nineteenth century writers enters into the method of dealing with myth in our time. It is not apart from the modern concerns but complements the view of myth as a kind of narrative which many later writers advocated. Myth, as we shall see, is symbolic, narrative, visionary, legislative, and much else beside. The great service of the mythologists of the nineteenth century was their extension of the study of myth to all parts of the world. Further, Emile Durkheim, to whom we now turn, related mythology to the study of society.

Notes

- 1 Johann Jakob Bachofen. *Gräbersymbolik der Alten*. Basel 1859.
- 2 Bachofen. *Das Mutterrecht*. Stuttgart 1861. Idem. *Die Sage von Tanaquil*. Heidelberg 1870. Bachofen sought through the investigation of myth to detect the vestiges of Mother-Right in Greek society before the existence of their historical writings.
- 3 Bachofen. *Antiquarische Briefe*. Strassburg 1880. Letters 13 and 15. — Daedalus made wings of feathers, string and wax for himself and his son Icarus, whom he admonished not to fly too near the sun, lest it cause the wax to melt. They flew over the sea, but Icarus, ignoring his father's warning, approached the sun, lost his wings by the melting wax, fell into the sea, and drowned. Daedalus flew on alone to Italy. This myth was retold in paintings in the bankruptcy court in Amsterdam as a morality tale, according to Meyer Schapiro.

- 4 A. N. Afanas'iev. *Poetičkie Vozzrenija Slavjan na Prirodu (Poetic Views of the Slavs on Nature)*. Moscow 1865.
- 5 Moriz Carrière. *Die Kunst im Zusammenhang der Culturentwicklung*, vol. 1. Leipzig 1863. (*Art in the Context of Cultural Development*).
- 6 F. Max Müller. *Essays*, vol. 2. New York 1869. A rather negative appraisal of Müller's work and character is given in E. E. Evans-Pritchard. *A History of Anthropological Thought*. New York 1981. See also Lang (Note 18, below.) Tylor is even more negative on Vilfredo Pareto, whom we discuss elsewhere.
- 7 F. Max Müller. *Contributions to the Science of Mythology*. Vol. 1, 1897, ch. 2.
- 8 See Müller's Lecture on the Philosophy of Mythology, in: *Einleitung in die vergleichende Religionswissenschaft*, 2nd ed. Straßburg 1876.
- 9 E. B. Tylor. *Primitive Culture*, 2nd ed. (1873). New York 1958, vol. 1, ch. 8; vol. 2, ch. 19.
- 10 Tylor. 'On the Diffusion of Mythical Beliefs as Evidence in the History of Culture'. British Association, Oxford; Section H. August 9, 1894. *Brit. Ass. R*, 774. *Nature*, 50: 439. (Asiatic Influence on pre-Columbian Culture of America; Bridge of the Dead Mexican and Buddhist Journey of the Soul.)
- 11 Compare the anonymous review of Tylor's *Researches into the Early History of Mankind*, 1865, in: *Anthropological Review*, Vol. III Nr. XI, 1865, pp. 248–265.
- 12 E. B. Tylor. *Anthropology*, Vol. 2 (1881). London 1946, ch. 15.
- 13 W. Robertson Smith. *The Religion of the Semites*, 2nd ed. New York 1984. J. H. Breasted. *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*. New York 1912. H. and H. A. Frankfort. *Intellectual Adventure of Early Man (Before Philosophy)*. Chicago 1946.
- 14 A. A. Potebnja. *O mišičeskom značenii nekotoryx obrjadov i poverii*, 1865. (On the mythic significance of certain customs and superstitions. These were: birth customary practices of the Slavs; tales of Baba Yaga; and superstitions about the snake, wolf and witches.) Ludwig Uhland. *Zum Verständnis der nordischen Mythen*. Stuttgart 1836. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* Göttingen 1819, 7th ed. 1857. J. W. E. Mannhardt. *Antike Wald- und Feldkulte*. Berlin 1877. Idem., *Germanische Mythen*, Berlin 1858.
- 15 D. G. Briton. *The Myths of the New World*, 3rd ed., Philadelphia 1896. William Robertson. *History of America*. 1777, Book 4. G. Elliot Smith. *Elephants and Ethnologists*. London 1924. Tylor attributed to Th. Waitz and A. Bastian 'the discovery of the independent evolution of custom and beliefs.' Smith did not deny this but found that this discovery was previously made by Robertson. See also A. C. Haddon. Introduction to Tylor, *Anthropology*, vol. 1. London 1930. A. Bastian. *Ethnische Elementargedanken*. Berlin 1895.
- 16 G. B. Vico. *Principi di Scienza Nuova*. Ithica 1744, § 144.
- 17 J. G. Frazer. *Myths of the Origin of Fire*. London 1930. Preface.

- 18 J. G. Frazer. Op. cit. Emile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, had thought that myth, while it has an aesthetic aspect, is basically religious, but because of its aesthetic power is not identical with religion. (See the following section, note 3.) J. G. Frazer. Introduction to *The Library of Apollodorus*. London 1921.
- 19 Andrew Lang. *Myth, Ritual and Religion*. London 1887.

Durkheim and His School

Alcheringa, or Dreamtime

Emile Durkheim in his theory of collective representations exercised a strong influence on the study of myth at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; his importance in this area of study was enhanced by his concrete investigation of mythic phenomena in his work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. His influence was immediately present in the research of his collaborators. His chief ideas and those of his school, insofar as they are relevant to the study of myth, are the following: Durkheim began with the proposition that social facts are things in the same sense that the facts of physics and of physiology are things. Representations are of two kinds, individual and collective; the society has for its substratum the ensemble of individuals associated with it; the individual representations are the products of actions and reactions exchanged between the nervous elements, but are not inherent in these elements; the collective representations are the expressions of actions and reactions exchanged between the elementary forms of the society: among the chief of these are the elementary forms of the religious life.¹

He proposed the causal link between the way in which a society is organized and the categories of space and time. The categories, he has been understood to have said, originate in the social organization. Thus, if the given society has four divisions, or directions, as categories of space, it is because the society has four

divisions, such as clans or classes of people; he has been understood to have said that the categories are modes of collective thinking and not individual thinking. This latter conception has led some to regard Durkheim as the proponent of the thesis that society has a mind, and is a thinking being, which exists in reality in independence of the mind, thinking, reality and existence of the human individuals; those who have criticized Durkheim accuse him of having adopted a doctrine of social realism, which is attached to the independence of the representations of a collectivity. Those who have defended him have understood him to uphold the originality of the spiritual life; human society is not a system of organs and functions but is the hearth of moral life; this is inseparable from the spiritual; society in this sense is not to be reduced to biological or physical processes, but social facts are things as physical facts are. He is understood to have been against reductionism, and for the predominance of humanity over physicality and animality in our social life. Célestin Bouglé attributed the notion of the originality of the spiritual life to Durkheim. Henri Berr regarded this aspect of Durkheim's thought as an advocacy of the view that it is antiscientific to admit the action of the individual, and that "one must push objective explanation by social necessity as far as possible; and if one arrives at an individual residue, yet one will retain the hope and *desire* of a complete explanation by the social." The appeal to motivations of hope and desire is not a scientific undertaking but a program for such an undertaking.

The study of myth is variable, the term being understood in several ways, as we have seen. Reality and originality with respect to social facts are understood in several ways, and what is propounded by the one as a scientific undertaking is understood by another as a program for such an undertaking. Durkheim sought for human social causes of human social effects; the unity of the social group is derived from its common sentiment. The sentiment does not cause the aggregation of people in social groups, according to Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his criticism of the interpretation made by the Durkheim school of the relation between ritual and sentiment; the sentiment is that which accompanies the aggregation of people in social groups, being the result and not the cause of their aggregation.²

Durkheim considered the cosmological system of certain peoples of Australia to be an astrology; these Australians declared that a particular star is a certain ancestor of theirs. Durkheim and Mauss inferred that the astrological mythology is determined by the totemic organization. With respect to one of these peoples, the Aranda, they added that each birth was held to be the spirit of a mythical ancestor. In this system, the cycle of ancestry and descent was thought to be mediated by the stars. They considered that every mythology is a classification,

which borrows its principles from religious beliefs. According to these beliefs, there are affinities of sentiment between things, as between individuals, both the things and the human individuals being classed according to these affinities. Durkheim held that myth is an essential element of the religious life, being as necessary to the latter as the cult. The ritual, indeed, is often nothing but the myth in action. One of the fundamental propositions of his work concerns the origin of the categories of the understanding, such as the ideas of space, time, number, cause, substance, and personality, which correspond to the universal properties of things, and are as the framework of the intelligence; these ideas and categories among primitive peoples are born in and of religion and are the product of religious thought. Religious representations are collective representations; the social organization is the model for the spatial organization. The distinction between right and left is not implicit in the nature of man in general, but is very probably the product of religious representations, and is therefore collective.

Durkheim distinguished between the myths properly so-called and fables, which are not believed, or if believed, not in the same way as the myths, and thus lack the religious character. Durkheim hesitated at drawing a firm line between myths and tales and drew back from considering all myths to be tales. The relation of the religious myth to the cult suffices in a number of cases to distinguish it from the others. In particular he drew attention to the rites of sadness, in which some great calamity is recalled and deplored; these rites evoke an expiation on the part of the participants in them, and these were termed therefore *piacular* by Durkheim, being connected with bodings of evil and sentiments of anxiety and fear. He mentioned as an example a natural calamity of a great drought conducing to the failure of the crop and ensuing famine; a man-made disaster, such as the defeat in war, the crucifixion of Jesus to the Christians, and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem to the Jews fall under this heading. Durkheim emphasized the cognitive or intellectual aspect of the myth which is associated with the *piacular* rite. To this the affective aspect stands in complement not extern but intern, for the myths of drought, of the crucifixion, the fall of Jerusalem, and like myths of many other parts of the world are both explanatory and deeply emotional. They are often associated with the most profound feelings of dread of the end of the world and of the last judgment, or of blissful anticipation of a utopian state, either in this world or another, by the return to the liberated holy city. Durkheim wrote: "All the myths, even those we find to be most senseless, have been the objects of faith. Man has believed in them no less than his own sensations; he has regulated his conduct according to them."³ Here we interpolate that myth, faith and sensations are all facts, or things investigated by the sciences.

Myth is a collective phenomenon, and is of a different kind from our sensations, which are individual. Faith is real; it is a social fact; sensations are real, being a physiological fact; both facts are real, but are real in different contexts.

Many, not all, myths are objects of faith, which is of the religious world. Some myths, as we show, are matters of a secular commitment, not religious faith. Both kinds of myth are valid. We return to Durkheim. The cult rendered to a divinity depends on the physiognomy, traits and features which are attributed to it, and it is in the myth that those traits and features are fixed. The cult, the myth, and the rite are gathered up in the religious life, which is a social process. Durkheim sought the elementary forms of religious life; one of these no further reducible or elementary forms was sought in the Maori idea of *mana*, which is the notion of a supernatural power in things or people, and which can be bequeathed and inherited or otherwise transmitted from one to another.⁴ Georges Davy, in the work on ancient Egypt published jointly with Alexandre Moret, held that *mana* is anonymous, collective and impersonal; the soul is in our society individual and personal; *mana* is the society itself, whereas the soul is the individualized *mana*. Davy criticized Durkheim, who evidently tergiversated on the subject of *mana*. But Davy oversimplified in analyzing this point, for whereas Durkheim was indecisive, it was with some justification, for the relation of *mana* to pneumatology is unclear. Davy thought that there is a universal pneumatology, of which *mana* is the primary part. But the idea of the soul varies from one people to another; that *mana* might be the elementary form of the soul: a questionable point; Davy appears here to have dogmatized Durkheim's doctrine.⁵

Durkheim dealt with the ethnographic data from the Zuñi and other peoples of the Southwest of the United States, from the Australian Aranda, and their neighbors. At that time a number of terms taken from the ethnographic literature appeared in various European languages, such as *alcheringa*, meaning dream-time, *mana*, *manitou*, *potlatch*, *taboo*, and *totem*. *Alcheringa* denoted the mythical ancestors of the present-day Aranda. It was used to mean the far distant past with which the earliest traditions of the tribe dealt. The Aranda were described by Baldwin Spencer and Francis James Gillen;⁶ their ethnographic account was widely applied in the theories of Durkheim, Mauss and Davy.⁷ Spencer and Gillen wrote that every Aranda thinks of his ancestor in the *Alcheringa* as the descendant of a plant or animal, or at least as associated with the object, the name of which bears as his totemic name. In many Australian tribes, a man must not eat or injure his totem, whereas amongst the Aranda there are special occasions when the totem is eaten. The *Alcheringa* is divided into four periods: 1. the period in which men and women were first created; 2. the period in which the rite of

circumcision by a stone knife instead of a firestick was introduced; 3. the period of the rite of subincision; 4. the period of the present system of marriage and social organization. Spencer and Gillen recount many myths which account for rites, such as marriage, circumcision, subincision, and features of the landscape which are important for the rites and the location of their performance, or where incidents mentioned in the myths took place, which are reproduced in photographs taken of these places. The myth in their work is chiefly explanatory and is connected with a religious ritual, as a part of the sacred history of the people. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl believed that there are primitive peoples, that their thinking is pre-logical, and that their collective representations are brought out in accordance with the law of participation which he formulated.⁸

The mystic nature of the collective representations in the mentality of the undeveloped peoples is present in the idea of the participation which is mutual between human beings and objects. The human being in Lévy-Bruhl's conception really is the parakeet, or the aquatic animal, in the collective representation; there is a mystic connection between the one and the other which is not real to us but is real to the inferior societies. Lévy-Bruhl did not act as an ethnologist, but took up the facts collected by ethnologists, analyzed them with the aid of the notion of collective representation, which he had derived from Durkheim, but in an altered sense, from which the latter had distanced himself; Lévy-Bruhl asserted his own theory of the pre-logical mentality and the law of mystic participation, which he derived from Durkheim's idea of affinity.

Lévy-Bruhl distinguished the Platonic Ideas from the myths in that the former owe their existence to a process of dissociation, whereby they emerge from their class, as the daemon or king emerged from the social group to be the depository of the collective consciousness. Myths are not subjected to their dissociative process. In communities of the lowest type the participations are felt, not perceived. The societies transform into a higher type, the feelings give way to the higher mental processes of perception and logical thought.

Myths, Lévy-Bruhl wrote, undergo their development. Where the participation of the individual in the social group is directly felt, there the mystic symbiosis of individual and group is in evidence. The myths in this stage of development are few in quantity and poor in quality. Where the mystic participation diminishes, there the myths undergo a luxuriant growth; the words, in particular those which express the group ideas, these being represented in the myths, are mystic realities to the primitive peoples. Myths are their Biblical narratives; through its myths, each social group participates in its own past. The myth, which has been developed into a mystery, to an altered mentality, is then transformed, and

brought into an accord with the new collective representations, which now predominate in the social group; as the transformations are ongoing, the reality of one stage in development is perceived as a mystery by the next.

Lévy-Bruhl repudiated certain of his earlier theories of primitive mentality and myth, such as the use of the category of pre-logical mentality and of a primitive way of thinking which differs from our own. The primitive mentality is not distinct from any other. He later thought that the mystical mentality is more easily observed among primitives than among ourselves but is present everywhere in the human mind.⁹

Henri Bergson divided society into two types, closed and open, and religion correspondingly into two kinds, static and dynamic. For the explanation of the closed society and the static religion he referred to the category of the collective mentality, which he attributed to Durkheim. That which appears to be disconcerting to the individual mind in religion is the work of the collective mind, which sees things differently from the mind of the individual since it is of another nature, for it has collective fantasmic representations which are the product of a myth-making faculty, or *fonction fabulatrice*. Primitive religions are indifferent to morality, and so is their mythology. However, an evolutionary process is under way in which unrest and myth-making work against and nullify each other. Static religion attaches man to life and hence the individual to society. But the religion which is born of the myth-making faculty is brought to an end by the evolutionary, restless processes, giving place to the open society and the dynamic religion.¹⁰

Jane Ellen Harrison¹¹ interpreted Durkheim as having held “that the ‘categories’ are modes of collective rather than individual thinking.” She reasoned that Dionysos, the ancient Greek mystery-god, “arises out of those instincts, emotions and desires which attend and express life; but these emotions, desires, instincts, insofar as they are religious, are at the outset rather of a group than of an individual consciousness.” “Among primitive peoples, religion reflects collective feeling and thinking.” Francis M. Cornford¹² took as his guide “the theorem that the key to religious representation lies in the social structure of the community which elaborates it.” He took this theorem from Durkheim whom he named as the father of this thought. Harrison’s work on Greek religion and Cornford’s on Greek philosophy had more than their debt to Durkheim in common. Harrison’s work was a study of the social origins of Greek religion, and Cornford’s a study in the origins of Western speculation. Their shared quest after origins led them to the investigation of myth. Harrison considered myth to be of more than one kind but focused her attention on myth in relation to religion. In early literature

in general and in religion in particular myth is the spoken correlate of the rite; it is the legomenon as related to the dromenon, that which is said in relation to that which is done. In the myth we give utterance with our mouths what we enact with our bodies in the rite and both of these combine with our emotions and sensations. Later in its developmental expression, the myth turns aetiological, explaining the why of things and the deeds, according to Harrison's analysis. In the analysis of the origin of speculative thought by Cornford, myth is part of a development which proceeds from verbal expression of emotion; at first, the myth is simply the statement of what is being done and willed. At a later stage, the myth becomes a description of the action which is alleged to explain it. Causality or aetiology is then brought in and is part of a process from mythos to logos, which is an intelligible representation of the world, as a development of early science.

The processes noticed by Harrison and Cornford in their treatment of myth, religion and science come to be further removed from their putative connection with a concrete social organization in the course of their development. This is a myth of scientific development which is supposed to account for the way things have come to be what they are. In Cornford's account, myth, after the period in which it had been the verbal counterpart of ritual action, comes to be a generalized representation of it; it then becomes an explanation. The aetiological myth is the transcript in verbal expression of the ritual. The myth proceeds through stages of development, from a primary sympathetic magic, without distinction between a positive pole (observance of custom—*moira*) and a negative pole (taboo), to a later stage in which the *nomoi*, or laws, are distinct, and natural law is distinct from human law. Harrison, in her treatment of the myths of ancient Greece, drew on the ethnological literature of her time and indeed sought to incorporate her own writings on myth into that literature. Cornford and Gilbert Murray¹³ supported her endeavors in this respect.

Cornford,¹⁴ while retaining his earlier idea of the general origin of myth in ritual, reconsidered his notion of the progress of thought from myth to science in ancient Greece. Cornford, together with Burnet, had traced the development of science back to the Ionian philosophers, such as Anaximander. John Burnet¹⁵ had thought that the early Ionian teachers had shown something new, called science, "having pointed the way which Europe has followed ever since." He held Anaximander to be a first scientist. Many people thought then that science had progressed from myth, or that the mind had proceeded from myth to reason.

Hermann Usener considered mythology to be a science as a part of the history of religion, to which the task of illuminating the becoming and growth

of the human mind falls. It traces that growth from its first beginnings up to the point at which mythical concepts are replaced by rational knowledge, and custom which is bound to religion by the free customary practices which are self-determining. Wilhelm Nestle and Bruno Snell¹⁶ said something of the same kind in their different ways. The theme of Nestle's book is the self-unfolding of Greek thought from Homer down to the Sophists and Socrates. Mythic representation and logical thinking are antithetical; the former is involuntary and imagistic, creative and formative out of the unconscious; the latter intentional and conscious, separative and connective. Homer belongs to the mythic end of the scale, Ionian philosophy, including the atomists and Anaximander to the logos. Mythic thought has causality in its sphere, but it applies the concept of cause arbitrarily and uncritically. The path from mythos to logos proceeds out of the immaturity to the maturity of the mind.

In this later writing, Cornford concluded that the Ionian natural philosophy was pre-scientific. He added that Epicurus, one of these early thinkers, was an atomist and materialist, but he was dogmatic, proceeding from a priori positions, by the use of metaphors, having inherited from his forerunners the prophetic faculty of the inspired sage. In Epicurus there is no pretence to disinterested curiosity; he left the path of physical speculation, relapsing to myth. Anaximander, at the beginning of the philosophical movement, thought much the same way about the origin of the world, by a process of rationalization combining Love and Strife in his cosmogony. Cornford, in an essay on comparative mythology, wrote that Anaximander's cosmogony reproduced Hesiod's marriage of Heaven and Earth. This concrete, metaphoric thinking is of the same kind as that which is found in myth. The Hebrew monotheistic doctrine of the Creator as the first cause is more abstract, more general, less metaphoric and in this sense less mythical. Jean-Pierre Vernant¹⁷ sides with Cornford's later thinking. He proceeds from myth to reason, as did Cornford, but considers that the process is more complex than a mere unilinear progression beginning with the ancient Ionians. Cornford and Vernant began with a category of the primordial non-separation of thought in the form of myth but held that mythic thinking is still present at a late date in Greece, in the development of the Western tradition. They proceeded to a progression from myth to science, philosophy and other branches of thought, these being later separated from one another in ways with which we are familiar. Vernant perceived a connection between the birth of philosophy and the rise of the citizen; as philosophy loosened its relation to myth, the city was constituted out of the ancient social organization. The idea of relating the process of thought to the social movements is found in Aristotle, Marx and Durkheim. The order in

which the social movement is related to the thought process according to Vernant is the reverse of that which these predecessors had proposed.

Those who gathered around Durkheim's banner in several cases carried their thought farther than their master. We have referred to Georges Davy, who considered mana to be the supernatural power, which is anonymous, collective, and impersonal; it resides in the group and not in the individual. Célestin Bouglé held that the mental or spiritual life is original in society, and is underived from the physicality of the individual, nor is it to be reduced to anything else. Henri Berr sought for the complete explanation of human action, including the mental, by the factors of society. If we have not attained to that complete explanation, yet it is not in itself excluded. When we have gotten to that ideal of science, we will then realize what is already there, namely, the mental life of the society. Harrison regarded the categories as modes of collective rather than individual thinking; the group has emotions, instincts and desires; the collectivity feels and thinks. Cornford concluded merely that the key to religious representation lies in the social structure of the community, holding back from the extreme of social realism, which proposed that society thinks, feels, and acts. This tenet was attributed to Durkheim himself, and many of his writings lead to this attribution; but he also modified the view of extreme social realism, and a case can be made out for both sorts of formulations on his part with respect to myth. The representation is made by human beings who are members of a group. The group does not think apart from the individuals who make it up, but the individuals do not think save through their membership in the group, in which a characteristic way of thought and expression of the emotions, of communication and representation, is generated. The law is not the group, but the expression of the law is peculiar to the given group of people in its traditional mode. The individuals act in their group, the group acts through and not apart from the individualities. The relations of the individuals constitute the group, the social relations of the group generate the human being in us. One suspects that the attribution of an extreme social realism to Durkheim was in part motivated by the positions adopted by some of his disciples, cohorts and allies.

Notes

- 1 Emile Durkheim. *Les règles de la méthode sociologique*. 3rd ed. Paris 1937. Ch.
2. Here he wrote that sociological facts are things, and are to be considered and treated as things. They are real in the same way that physical and physiological

things are real. This is a doctrine of social realism. His chief collaborators included M. Mauss, H. Hubert, C. Bouglé, G. Davy, and R. Hertz. More mediately his work influenced L. Lévy-Bruhl, M. Granet and A. Moret in France, and J. E. Harrison, F. M. Cornford, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and E. E. Evans-Pritchard in England. M. Bergson took up some Durkheimian problems of myth if not all the solutions.

- 2 E. Durkheim and M. Mauss. *De quelques formes primitives de classification, Contribution à l'étude des représentations collectives*. Paris 1903. Célestin Bouglé. Preface to Emile Durkheim. *Sociologie et Philosophie*. Paris 1951. Henri Berr. *Avant-propos to A. Moret, G. Davy. Des clans aux empires*. Paris 1923. Cl. Lévi-Strauss. *Le totémisme aujourd'hui*. Paris 1962.
- 3 Emile Durkheim. *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*. 3rd ed. Paris 1937. Bk. 1, ch. 3, § 2. In this section he argued against a theory of F. Max Müller, who had proposed the distinction between religion and myth. This distinction, Durkheim thought, is arbitrary. No doubt there is an element in mythology, wrote Durkheim, which is of interest to aesthetics, but, he added, it does not cease to be one of the essential elements of religion.
- 4 Durkheim. *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*. Bk. 3, ch. 5, § 2. For the distinction between myth and fable, and the discussion of myth in relation to the tale see Bk. 1, ch. 3, § 3.
- 5 Alexandre Moret, Georges Davy. *Des clans aux empires*. Paris 1923. (from Tribe to Empire. V. Gordon Childe transl.) Davy held that mana is a collective phenomenon, whereas the soul, or l'âme, is an individual one, and thought that Durkheim ought to have made this distinction. Mankind proceeds from the collective to the individual life, thus from the concept of mana to that of the soul. The concept of mana is elementary, that of the soul is derived from the elementary one. Davy, Introduction, op. cit. It is difficult to overestimate Durkheim's influence on his time and on the following decades. His program was carried into the linguistic field by Antoine Meillet. *Linguistique historique et linguistique générale*. Paris 1921, who wrote, "Language is eminently a social fact. In effect it enters into the definition proposed by Durkheim. A language exists independently of each individual who speaks it, and although it has no reality apart from the sum of these individuals, yet it is by its generality external to each of them." Maurice Halbwachs. *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*. Paris 1952, carried the thesis of Durkheim regarding the fundamentality of the social fact into the psychological field. According to this thesis, the categories of memory are social through the intermediation of language, as Meillet showed it.
- 6 Baldwin Spencer, Francis J. Gillen. *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*. London 1899.
- 7 Freud also referred to Spencer and Gillen in his *Totem and Taboo*. In fact, the sources cited in *The Elementary Forms* and *Totem and Taboo*, are largely the same. Published within a year of one another, the two books take up many of the same topics, but from very different theoretical perspectives. Freud cites an earlier work of Durkheim

- in *Totem and Taboo*. For a comparison on the two works see: C. Levitt. Freud und Durkheim über Totem und Tabu. In Eberhard Th. Haas (Hrsg.). *100 Jahre Totem und Tabu: Freud und die Fundamente der Kultur*. Gießen 2012, pp. 243–272.
- 8 Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*. Paris 1910. Idem., *La mentalité primitive*. Paris 1922.
 - 9 L. Lévy-Bruhl. *Carnets*. M. Leenhardt ed. Paris 1949.
 - 10 Henri Bergson. *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*. Paris 1932.
 - 11 J. E. Harrison. *Themis*. 2nd ed. Cambridge 1927.
 - 12 F. M. Cornford. *From Religion to Philosophy*. London 1912. Idem. *Principium Sapientiae*. Cambridge 1952.
 - 13 Gilbert Murray. *Four Stages of Greek Religion*. New York 1912.
 - 14 F. M. Cornford. *Principium Sapientiae*, op. cit.
 - 15 J. Burnet. *Early Greek Philosophy*. 3rd ed. London 1920.
 - 16 Herman Usener. *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Leipzig 1907. Wilhelm Nestle. *Vom Mythos zum Logos*, 2nd ed. Aalen 1966. Bruno Snell. *The Discovery of the Mind* [Ger.: *Die Entdeckung des Geistes*]. New York 1960.
 - 17 J. P. Vernant. *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs*. 2 vols. Paris 1971. See the chapter of vol. 2, *Du mythe à la raison*.

Myth as the Myth of Others

Biblical Myth. Myth of Gilgamesh

It is sometimes held that one's own beliefs and traditions are not the subjects of myths, which are expressions of the beliefs and traditions of others. The writers of the Enlightenment began to examine the Bible as they did other myths; Louis de Jaucourt cautiously separated his treatment of myth and fable from those who would have regarded Scripture in this light, whereas Voltaire plunged into this work, taking up a theme out of the Bible under the heading of Fable. This attempt at a probe was soon buried under the handling of myth by the romanticists, philosophical idealists and historians, Friedrich Creuzer, Friedrich Schlegel, Ferdinand G. Baur, G.W.F. Hegel and Friedrich Schelling, who took up the ancient Greek and Egyptian traditions as mythological subjects. The officials, literati, scribes and bureaucrats of ancient China treated myth as the historical and moral components of the ideology of their imperial cult; they would not allow that there were any mythical elements as such in their ideology but gave to all of it an explanation of a kind called Euhemerist (by European historians) insofar as it appeared to be mythical.

Anton van Dale, Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle, and others wrote of the myths of the pagans, not of Christian myth, but criticized the beliefs of Christianity shared with those of pagans on grounds of magical and superstitious elements in both. Voltaire, Holbach and Herder began to write of fable

and myth in the Judaeo-Christian religion. J. Alberto Soggin¹ dealt with myth, legend and history in the Bible in a more mediate way, concluding that both the Old and the New Testaments “often followed a deliberate and coherent practice of demythologizing in connection with myth.” He conceived that the Biblical writers had an outlook which was historical, although limited in its knowledge of the past, and eliminated myth from their texts as far as possible. Survivals of myth remain, ancient mythical themes having been inserted into the historical context, as simply illustrative of the text, losing their supra-historical character. He went further, declaring that the “faith of Israel laid the foundations for a separation between faith and myth.” In consequence, “the universe and nature have been secularized, robbed of any divine immanence and made accessible to scientific investigation.” We have seen that F. M. Cornford attributed to the *Book of Genesis* a doctrine of cosmogony which was more abstract and general, less metaphorical and mythical than the doctrine of the early Ionian philosophers, and that J. P. Vernant associated himself with Cornford’s general position. A similar assessment of the two cosmogonies, Hebrew and Greek, was made by Robin George Collingwood, to whom we shall turn shortly. The judgments by Cornford, J. Alberto Soggin and Collingwood have their history, and likewise a bearing on an attitude toward the Bible encountered in many other modern scholars, some of whom have been mentioned. Julius Wellhausen considered all of the early parts of the Old Testament, not only from Adam to Noah, but also the patriarchal period, as mythic. But as part of this record bears on the third and second millennia, about which the historical, archaeological, linguistic and ethnological data are much fuller at present than they were in the nineteenth century, when Wellhausen wrote, this judgment is to be altered. William F. Albright, Albrecht Alt, George E. Mendenhall, Martin Noth, Parrot, Roland de Vaux, Yigael Yadin and Hamilton Wright Mabie have contributed to that fuller record. The idea of demythologizing of religion is connected to another, which is the desacralization of myth; we will return to this at a later point.

The Gilgamesh story has been cited for its own beauty and power, and for its parallels to the Old Testament. It is a long poem which has been put together from fragments written on stone tablets and in clay from the seventh century B.C. in Assyria, and from other, earlier sources. Some of these go back to 2000 B.C. in Babylonia, and undoubtedly even earlier than that, but of the last, one is not sure at present. Its themes are common to many peoples of the third, second and first millennia who lived along and about the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. Gilgamesh, the central figure, appears at the time before the poem itself as a king who reigned in the first dynasty of the Sumerians. Later he was referred

to as the king in whose reign the city wall of Uruk was built; these events of Mesopotamian history are assigned to the third millennium. Still later he was believed to be the Sumerian king of the underworld, who marks all things on earth, and makes the ultimate decisions on death. Still later Gilgamesh was assigned to the Babylonians, at the beginning of the second millennium, and it is to this tradition that the events of the Gilgamesh poem relate in the chief form in which it has come down to us. That form is not Babylonian but Assyrian; some fragments of the Babylonian versions are also known; Gilgamesh himself appears in scores of other poems and stories of the Ancient Near East. In the Assyrian version of the seventh century B.C., Gilgamesh is born to the goddess Ninsun, wife of the god Lugalbana. The father of Gilgamesh was not the god her husband, but an unnamed mortal known only as "the high priest of Kullab." Within the poem, Gilgamesh is referred to as being two-thirds divine, and one-third mortal. He is the ruler of the city, appearing to be of arrogant spirit and unbridled lust, carrying the maidens of the city off to his court, holding orgies, and forcing the young men of the city to heavy labors. The people revolt against the tyrant.

Much of the poem is a relation of our human sufferings, disease and death, and a contemplation of the theme that even Gilgamesh, partly divine and partly mortal, cannot escape death and the dark realm of the afterlife. Gilgamesh seeks mortal life by wiles and by physical prowess, but in the end must suffer death. In the course of the poem, he encounters Ishtar, goddess of love, who tries to seduce him, but he spurns her temptations. He seeks the sage Utnapishtim, who knows the secret of immortality. On the way to Utnapishtim he meets the cupbearer of the gods, Siduri, who is herself divine. She tells him that he should enjoy life and give up his search for the escape from death, which is a hopeless one for him. This is the quest for rejuvenation and not immortality; her admonition is in effect the same, in either case, for both are inaccessible to him. She relents, however, and shows him how to reach his goal. Utnapishtim tells him of the Deluge, and of the miraculous plant at the bottom of the sea which will give immortality to the one who eats it. He finds the plant, but a sea serpent snatches it from him, eats it and gains the power to slough off its skin, annually growing a new one.² This part of the poem is an aetiological myth.

Scholars have pointed to parallels of the Gilgamesh poem and the Old Testament, some of them verbal, and some narrative. The Deluge is a theme common to both, and the rite of circumcision as well. There is no central figure in the Old Testament, however, who is part god and part man, two-thirds one or the other, such as the offspring of the goddess and a mortal in the Gilgamesh poem. The coupling of deities in the Homeric epic with human beings yields mortal

children. Disparities in the Gilgamesh poem have been in part made internally harmonious.

The great sweep of Genesis, from an original chaos to the creation of the humankind, in an orderly process, has had its effect on later cosmological thought. Many thinkers in the seventeenth century have thought of the god of the Bible as the divine watchmaker, or geometer, whose works are described by great laws of celestial mechanics. Still later, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the great thought of the unilinear evolutionary process of the cosmos and of life had been brought forth, and over many centuries before and during these times, the notion of the Great Chain of Being was conceived. This was refined into the thought in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of the *scala creaturarum*, or the ladder of ascent of all creatures.³ The notion of a great ladder of ascent or descent is one of the contributing elements to the theory of biological evolution; the concept of the ladder is encountered among evolutionary theorists and other writers at present.

Bruno Snell⁴ treated myth as part of the unilinear evolution of the human mind toward rational thought, proceeding from mythos to logos. Mythical thought, he declared, is interested in questions of aetiology, the essence of myth being inquiry into origins, e.g., of the world, of man, of customs and tools. He devoted chapter ten of his work to the aetiology of scientific thought but did not regard this quest after origins as a mythography any more than had Burnet before him. W. F. Otto⁵ similarly considered that philosophy has its origin in myth; he followed J. G. Frazer in making this judgment. William K. C. Guthrie⁶ wrote that myths account for rites and customs which are practiced for some reason long forgotten; myths are in general the result of man's curiosity about the universe, the weather and the seasons; myths provide explanations of the causes of things. Eric Robertson Dodds⁷ thought that myth is the dream-thinking of the people, and dream is the myth of the individual; he attributed this thought to J. E. Harrison, and divided dream into a prescientific and a scientific stage; in the prescientific stage the dream vision is taken as an objective fact, or it is supposed to be something seen by the soul while temporarily outside the body; there has been a tendency to interpret it symbolically. Dodds held that the Homeric poets belonged to the prescientific stage in his classification, for they took dream as objective fact; the prescientific attitude toward dream and myth was progressively replaced by the scientific. It is implicit in his schema that Dodds himself belongs to the latter stage or category. Writers in many countries who have dealt with myth have taken it up in terms of an attempt at periodization of the evolution, development or history of the mind or spirit, of science or philosophy, of human

society or culture. There are so many writers of this kind that we cannot list them all, but single out only a few, beside those just mentioned, such as Henri Bergson, R. G. Collingwood, Wilhelm Nestle, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, and Marcel Mauss. These men were convinced that their thought stood on a higher plane than the thought of those whom they held to be savages, or preliterate peoples, and that they were part of a progression from mythic, and quasi-historical to scientific historical thinking.

The scepticism in regard to myth has its history. Earlier we noted that Hecataeus and Herodotus expressed their doubts not with regard to their own beliefs and myths but with regard to the older cults, beliefs and myths of Homer and Hesiod regarding Zeus and Hera. This doubt remained within the Greek tradition but bore on another time and on other Greeks toward their myths. Voltaire regarded the Church as the enemy, and its sacred history as fable; Giambattista Vico and François-Marie Banier did not touch on sacred history in dealing with myth; Arthur Schopenhauer had a pessimistic and disaffected attitude toward life, the humankind, society and history in general, and to myths of all kinds, Biblical in particular. There is a counter tendency, in which one recognizes that one's own sacred history is undoubtedly comparable to the sacred history of others, both being myths, or having mythical elements in them.

Adolph Harnack⁸ wrote of myth as the myth of others but considered as dogma the tenets of his own religion. Manichaeism⁹ derived its strength from the combination of ancient mythology with a rigid materialistic dualism, a simple spiritual cult, and a strict morality. The Semitic nature religions retained their mythologies in this process, being transformed by the Manichaeans into their doctrines. They are not really doctrines, according to Harnack; they are "doctrines" so to speak; thus, he regarded the doctrines of others. In his treatment of Philo, he took up the Neo-Platonist doctrine of Logos, the highest good, which is in part considered to be beyond reason; it is implied that that which is beyond reason is mythical. Next it is implied that that which comes to us not by tradition but by an individual act, being beyond reason, is revelation. Harnack concluded, "A place was now provided, for the first time in philosophy, for a mythology to be regarded as revelation."¹⁰ The one to whom the vision is revealed is a living individual, as Paul on the road to Damascus. He, by virtue of the revelation, which was vouchsafed to him, broke with his traditional sect and joined a new one. The opposition between that which is mediate and social in myth and that which is immediate in revelation was represented by Harnack. The contradictory moments are found not in Paul but in Harnack's interpretation; there, the elements of myth and revelation are introduced without distinction; yet the

revelation at issue is forward-looking and indeed portentous, whereas the myth in question is prospective and retrospective.

Certain historians of European thought have regarded history as a process from unreason and mystery to reason and enlightenment. Some of them have seen in myth the element of aetiology which is taken to mean the quest for casual explanation. Now this element in myth has therefore been understood to bear the germ of rational inquiry within itself, existing under conditions of unreason and ignorance. But dogma, which was Harnack's principal theme, is considered to be beyond, apart from or outside reason, and is studied as myth is studied, both becoming the objects of scientific investigation.

Those who think that there is a process of history which moves from stage to stage have considered that the irrational and mythical constitute an early stage, but the modern thinkers place themselves at the end of, or, alternatively, beyond and above this historical process: Mankind begins with myth, mystic participation, affinity, the irrational, the prescientific, and ends up with science, reason and philosophy. These scholars, all of whom periodize history, fall into one period or another of their own construction; as a rule, they end up in the last, or that toward which their progression of stages tends.

R. G. Collingwood¹¹ thought about history in this way. He posited a quasi-history of two kinds, theocratic history, and myth, the shape of which is quasi-temporal. Quasi-history in its various kinds is a stage in European thought, a later stage being history, which is a special kind of thought. History is a science, which was begun by Herodotus, as an inquiry about the actions of human beings in the past. Collingwood's own writings would fall in the latter category, following the line initiated by Herodotus, which was preceded by a quasi-historical or prescientific stage. The theocratic history is comparable to the attempts to treat myth in a concordant and harmonious way.

Those who have written on the periodization of history and have put their own writings on history into one period, which is the ultimate one, have made a myth, in the sense of a story or plot of history. The myth is not in this case the myth of the other; it is oneself who is the other, and the myth is that of the self. But writers such as John Burnet, Bruno Snell, the earlier Cornford, Nestle, Mauss, Dodds and Collingwood were not evidently conscious of their place in the history they recounted.

Samuel H. Hooke adopted a straight and simple theory of myth in relation to ritual. The ritual is the enactment of the myth; the myth tells the story of what is being enacted. The customary actions of the ritual are directed toward the end of serving the well-being of the community; the myth is the spoken part

of the action.¹² His specialty was the life in the ancient Near East; he has been criticized by the Greek specialist, Geoffrey S. Kirk, who asserts that the closeness of myth and ritual does not work for ancient Greece, where there were many myths without a close connection to ritual. That is an argument according to which one constructs a general theory of myth and history, using the people one knows best as one's model. But *your* theory does not work for the people *I* know best. The point made by Hooke is insufficiently general; the point made by Kirk is a concrete objection, but can only be validated by a general survey: How many myths of how many peoples are in a close connection with ritual, and how many are not? Hooke wrote not of myths in general in the ancient Near East but of particular myths in connection with royal coronation, of the origin of the world, of the creation of man, and of the end of the world by flood or some other way. Now the myths and rituals of coronation can scarcely be universal, for many peoples have no royalty or coronation myths. A myth of the end of the world is an eschatological myth, but is of many kinds, some with a morality of punishment, guilt, sin, shame, crime, or some teleology, whereas other myths are without such elements. These matters are to be further clarified in the classification of myth. Both Hooke and Kirk deal with traditional myths and avoid the non-traditional.

James G. Frazer, in his vast surveys of the materials of myth, and others of that time have gone far but not far enough; they did little to analyze the evidence which they amassed. Moreover, not all of these myths have been shown to have a close relation to ritual. An idea to be tested is the possibility of a close relation of myth and ritual in Sumer, Babylon, Akkadia and Egypt, but a looser relation between them in Greece. Since here there is a series of civilizations known only through written texts, we ought to know more about the personalities and interests of the scribes who preserved them. This sort of evidence was gathered for the Valley of the Kings in Ancient Egypt by Jaroslav Černý; the same ought to be done in the cases of those ethnologists, sociologists, psychologists and historians who have analyzed myths.

The relation between the coronation myth and ritual proposed by Hooke ought to be further thought through, for if the close connection between myth and ritual is indeed established in the context of kingship, but not elsewhere, then this connection between them is particular to a given event and is not general.

The common element in these treatments of myth is that myth is considered as sacred. Religion, within which the sacred act and myth take their place, is a link between the past and the present. The events of sacred myth have occurred in time past and are made out in myth to have their bearing on the present. Or else they are timeless, eternal, and are made concrete in the present. Religion in the

sense of *re-ligio*, the binding and rebinding power, is conceived to be the nexus between the past and the present, and between the timeless and the temporal processes.

There is an ethnocentric conception of myth as a process leading up to where we are today. English Whigs, so it is said, were wont to write the history of their country in this way. It is implied by a flattery of ourselves that our way is the scientific way and is an unfolding of that which is implicit in primitive myth. This development is the way things ought to be.

A General Note on the Study of Myth in the Ancient Near East

Myths of the creation of the world, society and the law of the Sumerians, Babylonians and Akkadians have been published by Ephraim Avigdor Speiser, Samuel Noah Kramer and Theophile James Meek. Some four thousand years ago the Sumerians set down a myth of the city of Dilmun, a paradise, “pure and clean and bright,” without sickness and death, as we infer, full of sweet water and fertile fields. In Dilmun there were two gods, Ninhursag, the divine mother of the land, and Enki, a male, the water deity of the Sumerians. Enki cohabited with Ninhursag who in nine days gave birth, without suffering or pain, to a daughter, Ninmu. Enki coupled with his daughter Ninmu who in nine days gave birth, without suffering, to a daughter, Ninkurra. Enki then impregnated his granddaughter Ninkurra, who, in the same time, and in the same way, bore a daughter, Uttu. He brought cucumbers, apples and grapes to Uttu, who thereupon cohabited with Enki, her great-grandfather. Ninhursag utilized Enki’s seed to bring forth a “tree”-plant, a “honey” plant, a cassia plant, a thorn plant, and others, eight plants in all. Enki consumed them, and this act caused Ninhursag to leave Dilmun, cursing Enki, who was then sick unto death. A fox brought Ninhursag back to Enki in Dilmun. Enki sat by (or in) her vulva, named his ailing organs, and was revived. Ninhursag created other gods, eight in all, four of Enki’s rehabilitated parts.

An Akkadian creation myth is known from a version recorded a millennium later. The Akkadian myth, which was recited at the New Year’s festival, takes its name from the world Enuma Elish. “When on high,” with which it begins:

When on high heaven had not been named,

Firm ground below had not been named,

There was nought but Apsu and Mummu-Tiamat,

Their waters, sweet and salt commingling.

Apsu, the male deity, was the god of the fresh waters, Tiamat the sea deity. The offspring of their commingling were the pair of gods, Lahmu and Lahamu, and Anshar and Kishar. Anshar and Kishar begot Anu, who rivaled his forebears. Anu, in his own image, begot Ea, god of the earth and water, who in turn rivaled his forefathers. They were turbulent, surging back and forth, insolent and loathsome. Apsu and his vizier were perturbed by this and went to Tiamat, who urged kindness on them. But Apsu listened only to his vizier and set out to destroy his unruly descendents. Ea then fettered and slew Apsu. Marduk, the chief god, who was created in the heart of Apsu, then avenged Apsu's death.

Hammurabi, the king of Babylon, early in the second millennium before our era, was "commissioned" to write the law code which bears his name by Shamash, the sun-god and god of justice. Several myths come together in this law code. Hammurabi invokes Enki, the god of the earth and the sweet waters, and Anum the sky-god. In this version, Marduk is the son of Enki (who appears in the Sumerian myth).

Babylonian-Akkadian, Hebrew and Arabic are part of the Semitic languages; Egyptian is a part of the Hamitic branch of the same group of languages, the Hamito-Semitic. They are bound together in historical interactions which bear on their myths for these have many common themes, such as the flood, mythic representations of the origin of law and morality, the myths of the creation of the world, of paradise, and of conflicts of farmers and shepherds. The Sumerians are a part of this general tradition, but there is some mystery about them. Marcel Cohen wrote of them, "Neither their language nor their culture appears to be related to those of any other people."¹³ This may be said of the linguistic affiliations of the Sumerians, but their myths as part of their culture are related to those of other peoples of the Ancient Near East. These peoples had a common cultural process over thousands of years. Yet the provenience of Sumerian culture is not known to us.¹⁴

The importance of the relation between the names of things and their existence is brought out by Samuel N. Kramer in the myth of the paradise of Dilmun: There, Enki names his ailing parts which are then healed by Ninhursag, who announces in each case of naming the birth of a corresponding deity. The ailing god learns that if Ninhursag returns to Dilmun, trees and fields will be planted for him. "Verily, thy name will be uttered." John A. Wilson, *Ancient*

Near Eastern Texts, op. cit., wrote of the Egyptian god Re, “. . . The name was an element of personality and of power . . . so charged with divine potency that it could not be pronounced.” In the Taoist text of China, *Tao Te Ching (The Way and the Power)*, it was written that there is an eternal name which is not uttered. The relations between the name of a thing and its existence, the non-existence of a thing without a name, the distinction between the spoken and the secret name, and between the temporal and the eternal name have been the subjects of semi-otic speculations in European thought, both ancient and modern, in the Orient, and in other parts of the world.¹⁵ Here, the relations of the Biblical myths to those of other peoples of the ancient Near East are discussed.

Milton K. Munitz¹⁶ traced the development of cosmology from myth to science through two tracks. One pertains to observations made of the heavens, and the other to the interpretation of these observations. He concludes that the observational track follows a single line of development as new facts gathered. The second or interpretational track involves shifts in meaning. Older theories die as new facts discovered by observation make the older theories appear to be inadequate. The history of cosmology given by Munitz reveals four main stages: 1. The change from the use of myth to the quest for physical and mathematical ideas in cosmology. 2. The cosmology of Aristotle which envisaged a finite universe with the earth at its center. 3. The stage of Copernicus and Newton, from the sixteenth to the early twentieth centuries. 4. The current stage, after 1920. This appears to be a single line of theoretical development, as opposed to that of observation. His main theses are that as cosmology develops from myth to science, thus there is evidence of the progress of thought; there are perhaps two lesser “single lines” which are gathered up in one “great” single line. This aspect of the work is confusing. There appear to be levels of thought, myth belonging to one level, and science to another. We progress from one level to the other, myth preceding science in a developmental scheme. In this scheme, ideas grow and die; the progress of cosmological science follows a series of stages in a single line, in opposition to the double tracks noted above. Myth, he writes, makes the world intelligible “in dramatic and anthropomorphic terms.” It “constitutes a dramatic interpretation of the world in terms borrowed from the field of familiar human experience.” He provides examples of three such familiar fields: A) Craftsmanship; B) Birth and growth of organisms developing out of eggs or seeds. The use of biological concepts in explaining the origin of the cosmos from the mating of a female and a male force or principle is expressed in ancient Egyptian cosmogonical myths of the union of Keb, the earth-God, and Nut, the Sky-Goddess. Another biological principle is expressed in the birth of the universe from the World-Egg, a

notion given prominence in the cult Orpheus, of the Greeks. C) The third form of interpretation of the world given in myth is that of royal command; this too is drawn from familiar human experience. He brings all three principles of mythic explanation together in an exposition of the creation myth of the Babylonians.

Munitz applies his three principles in a general theory of mythic explanation. Craftsmanship is shown in the carving up of the dragon's body; the zoomorphic principle of explanation is shown in the mating of the gods and begetting offspring, the relations of parents and children, and egg and organism; the principle of royal command is shown in Marduk's decree causing the sun and moon to rise and set. This theory of myth arises out of and bears on creation myths in narrative form, having supernatural elements in it. According to his theory, myth proceeds by borrowings made in one field of our experience from another; the origin myth is the projection onto the cosmos of our daily observations of life, of our physical, psychological and political experiences. Distinction between animate and inanimate world are not made in myth. In myth, man, society and the universe form an unbroken unity; the world of myth is naïve and unsophisticated. But myths, he concludes, are an effort at honest, serious explanation; moreover, the vigor and imaginativeness of myths are necessary qualities for the emergence of self-critical science.

Munitz' principle of myth explanation proceeds from the familiar to the unfamiliar; in this way we progress in a single line, which is simplification. Often, mythic thought goes in many directions, and sometimes is without direction; the explanation of the unknown by the unknown was expressed by the ancient Romans. These matters will be discussed in Part III, ch. 8 at greater length.

Munitz, whose concern is with the development of cosmology out of myth, is interested chiefly in the cognitive aspect of myth, particularly in its explanatory function. This is another simplification, for beside the intellectual, there are other aspects of myth. Some myths are expressions of anxiety about runaway technology, in which case they explain nothing, but bring out our inability to explain or otherwise cope with the cause of anxiety. The materials themselves shape the principal explanation. Cosmology is a highly rational field, and the cosmic myths appear to be coordinated, with the well-reasoned world of pictures which they have later become. This is distantly connected to what G. W. F. Hegel called the cunning of reason and is evident in the narrations of the aetiological myths of the creation. In other myths we operate with our inner world of feelings, cares and emotions; the myths of this world tend to be rather more irrational than rational. The mythic worlds in their cosmogonical aspect represent by personifications the life, atmospheric, terrestrial and celestial processes, whose effects

we observe. Cornford, Munitz and Vernant agree that myths were still active in the philosophies of Anaximander, the Pythagorean school, and the Epicurean tradition. Cornford, who was closer to the ethnological and sociological view of myth, mentioned, beside its philosophical and cognitive aspect, the collective side, which is related to the feelings of unity in the group.

The creation of myths of the spirit and of science is ongoing. Perspectives in the history of science, or of particular sciences, frequently are set forth as a development in a single line. But compare Karl Menninger, *Number Words and Number Symbols*, 1969. Paying much attention to myth, Menninger avoids a unilinear conceptual scheme. For there are many systems of numbers, such as the sexagesimal, the decimal and the vigesimal, which do not lead from one to another in a single development. These developments are not finished, for certain skilled arithmeticians have propounded in recent times the superiority of the duodecimal over the decimal system of markers.

There is in the mythic, mytho-historic and historic representation of the development of cosmology, and in the development of the number concept an unresolved opposition between unilinear and multilinear approaches to the subject. This unresolved opposition creates a tension which requires further working out by specialists in these fields.

Notes

- 1 J. A. Soggin. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. Rev. ed. London 1980, ch. 5.
- 2 Alexander Heidel. *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 2nd ed. Chicago 1949. S. N. Kramer and E. A. Speiser. Sumerian and Akkadian Myths, in: *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, J. Pritchard (ed.). Princeton 1955, 3rd ed. 1969.
- 3 The phrase *scala creaturarum* was used by Cardinal Bellarmino. See A. O. Lovejoy. *The Great Chain of Being*. Harvard 1936. Cardinal Bellarmino's book is title, *De ascensione mentis in Deum per scalas creaturarum* [On the ascent of the mind to God by the ladder of the creatures].
- 4 Bruno Snell. *Discovery of the Mind*, op. cit., ch. 9.
- 5 W. F. Otto. *Dionysus, Myth and Cult*. Indiana 1965.
- 6 W. K. C. Guthrie. *Orpheus*. 2nd ed. New York 1966.
- 7 E. R. Dodds. *The Greeks and the Irrational*. California 1963.
- 8 Ad. Harnack. *History of Dogma*. 1894 ff. [*Dogmengeschichte*. 3rd ed. 1893.]
- 9 See his Appendix to vol. 3.
- 10 Harnack, op. cit., vol. 1, ch. 2., pp. 111–112.
- 11 R. G. Collingwood. *The Idea of History*. Oxford 1946.

- 12 S. H. Hooke. *Myth and Ritual*. London 1933. Idem., *Middle Eastern Mythology*, Introduction. Harmondsworth 1963. Idem., "Myth and Ritual: Past and Present." In: *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship*. Oxford 1958.
- 13 Antoine Meillet, Marcel Cohen. *Les langues du monde*. Paris 1952.
- 14 Cf. S. N. Kramer. *Sumerian Mythology*. Ann Arbor 1947.; idem., The Law-Code of Lipit-Ishtar (of Sumer), in: *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture and Character*. Chicago 1963; E. A. Speiser. "Akkadian Myths" in: James B. Pritchard (ed.). *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Princeton 1955; T. J. Meek. The Law-Code of Hammurabi, in: J. B. Pritchard (ed.). *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*. Princeton 1955, 3rd. ed. 1969.
- 15 As a general work of reference, cf. Walter Beltz. *Gott und die Götter*. Berlin 1975.
- 16 Milton K. Munitz. *Space, Time and Creation*. 2nd ed. Dover 1981.

The Force of Myth in Our Own Time

Myth in Ideology. Sorel, Pareto, Weber, Mannheim

The writings, studies and considerations of a general sort on the subject of myth took a sharply new turn at the beginning of the twentieth century, without replacing the older treatments, which continued without interruption; each side ignored the other. The new studies treated myth neither as history nor as narrative nor as sacred nor as ancient nor as fable. Georges Sorel¹ wrote, “Myths have to be conceived as instruments for influencing the present; any discussion of means of applying them materially to history is senseless.” Sorel, one of the first to take up myth in relation to the realities of the present, saw in them a means for orienting and shaping political movements and the actions thereof.

In *Matériaux d’une théorie du prolétariat* he opposed myth and ideology, relating ideology to propaganda. Ideologies, according to Sorel, are the translation of the myths in abstract form. Myths have a motive power in society; he claimed that the Utopianists, such as Robert Owen and Charles Fourier, are unserious, for they had no myths with a power of this kind. The proletarian myth of the general strike is, on the contrary, serious. The myths act not as propaganda, but as a direct social force.² There he wrote that myths express the strongest inclinations of a people, party or class. Myths are judged as a means of acting on the present; what is important is their power over those who hold them; the knowledge of what the myths contain in detail, as part of the history of the future, is of little importance. Our anticipations of the future take the form of myths.

Georges Sorel has been called a conservative by some, and a fascist by others; as he died in 1922, the latter term has no practical significance. During his life he was in contact with Lenin and Mussolini; he was a syndicalist for a time, an interpreter of Marx and of the ancestor of anarchism, Marx's enemy, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. The active factor in Sorel's treatment of myth is his concept of the modernity of the political or secular myth and the antiquity of the sacred myth. He considered only the myths of a people, party, or class, not of a religious sect.

The myth which is here envisaged is secular myth, in no sense sacred; it is conceived as an active force in society, and not as a passive relation to it, as a narration of past events. Vilfredo Pareto took up Sorel's notion of myth, which had been put in absolute terms, and relativized it. Pareto thought that myth is not cut off from history yet is active in the present. Pareto³ regarded myth as a non-logical conduct, which reflects historical reality. But that reality, Pareto held, is concealed in myth, and is therefore to be analyzed into two components, a fact of history, and an imaginary addition to it.⁴ In another classification⁵ he opposed scientific to pseudoscientific theories, and placed myths together with metaphysical and arbitrary influences, and allegories in the latter class. Together with Sorel, he thought, that if a social doctrine is to have any influence, it has to take the form of a myth. Pareto thought that myth has a bearing on the past and the present, Sorel that it is absolutely in the present. Further, Pareto wrote⁶, the social value of a doctrine, or of its sentiment, is not to be judged by its mythic form, but by its results. The judgment as to its mythic nature is extrinsic to it, whereas the judgment as to its practical nature is an intrinsic one. The question is raised not by, but out of the works of Sorel and Pareto; why is it that a social value, whether as a doctrine or a sentiment, takes the form of a myth? Moreover, if the doctrine or the sentiment is to be influential, does it have to take the mythical form? They both had doctrines and sentiments of contemporary parties and social classes in view, and their discussions of this matter were put in the context of political ideologies. These questions will be considered below in reference to the cultural critics.

Max Weber⁷ held that myth is a convenient frame with which we indicate the extra-scientific elements in human thought, expression and cult. Myth is an element, together with magic, personification, deification of heroes of an irrational process which is overcome in history; the world is then disenchanted, the myth and magic pushed back; Weber maintained that this relation to the world is an intellectualist one and is not universal in the humankind. Mythological thought, he wrote, indicates the mode of thought which underlies the symbolistic conceptual context. In this context we eat some food with which we are magically

related; next, the food we eat stands for some other being, an animal or person with whom we are symbolically related. The sympathy is generalized in the likeness of the ingested object, its symbolic expression and religious representation are later developed in juridical thought. The origin of this analogical thinking is symbolically rationalized magic. The instance cited by Weber is the war dance, in which the anger and anxiety before the battle are expressed; this is not a symbolic but a real anxiety and anger; later it is expressed symbolically. But the symbolic act comprises the wafer and the wine of the Mass, and the juridical categories of the personality. The process of disenchantment is a later process of history which accompanies and opposes these magical and symbolistic acts, arising (ideal-) typically among intellectuals.

The intellectual, Weber wrote, seeks ways by an infinite casuistry to endow his life's conduct with integral meaning, whereby he can achieve unity with himself, with the human and with the cosmic world. The concept of the world is in this case transposed into a problem of meaning. Weber was dubious about the achievement of unity, for he treated it in terms of the quest for unity and treated the concepts world and meaning in the same way; these appear to be fictive as opposed to real unity, world and meaning. Weber held that there is an antagonism between the intellectualist and the magical worldviews; thus, the further intellectualism pushes the belief in magic back, the greater the loss of meaningful content of the magical processes, and the more the world becomes disenchanted. Two processes are then introduced: 1. The world processes merely "are" or "occur;" 2. To the intellectual, the demand that the world of human life's conduct be meaningful increases. Weber then accounted for the intellectual's flight from the world into absolute isolation or nature undisturbed by human order, in the case of Rousseau, or into the simple, untouched folk in the case of the Narodniki, or Populists of Russia. We also propose to consider that Rousseau wanted to change the real world by a system of education modelled on his view of nature and man, and that Narodnikis sought to change the world by their political and social revolutionary activities.

The concept of disenchantment is not only a matter of the intellectualist worldview. If the forests are chopped down, and swamps drained, as they were in many parts of Europe in the centuries before Weber's time, then not only is timber gained for construction, wood for the hearth, and the field opened up for ploughing, not only are bears and wolves driven off or killed, but also the forest and swamp are "demagicked," rid of evil and good spirits, demons, ogres and devils. If these phantoms are replaced by others, we proceed from the world of natural troubles, which we surround with an aura of magic, to the world of

human troubles, which we surround with an aura of another kind. In our own time we observe the *Angst*, or daggers of the mind with which many are troubled. Care and anxiety are not banished from our world merely by the conquest of the forest and swamp, but are located elsewhere in our human world, being recognized to exist in our own minds. The enchantment and disenchantment of the outside world and the same oppositions inside the mind are powerful themes in Euripides' *Medea*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*, which record this aspect of our human condition in ancient times and modern. The enchantment and disenchantment bear on the processes of poetry and history, magic and myth.

Weber considered that as intellectualism thrusts back belief in magic, the processes of the world are demagicked, lose their magical burden of meaning and thus only "are" or "occur." This thought has been turned around by others: it is certainly incomplete. If our world is peopled not by bear and wolf ogres but others which arise from our troubles within our human relations, then we have purged it of one magic only to endow it with another. These are as much the concern of intellectuals as any others. Moreover, many, including intellectuals, consider that myth and the world of myth simply "are," or "occur." The world of these intellectuals has been disenchanted; they speak of myth in a respectful voice and appear to derive meaning, if not unity for their own lives, through their concern with myth. We will return to those who have adopted a like opinion about myth at a later point.

Weber, in his *Sociology of Religion*⁸ took up myth and mythological thinking in the sense of a struggle in our minds wherein we counterpose abstract cosmic perspectives to the orientations in myth in relation to the natural event. A lay intellectualism is developed in the former, not in the latter. In his *Ancient Judaism*, Weber developed the thesis that the mode of thought which myth represents is liberated from its bond (in the Biblical tradition) to sacrality by certain substantive themes, among them the absence in Yahwism of orgiastic or the demon-mimetic cults, which, by their stimulation of the artistic and poetic imagination, is normally the origin of myths and of mythic systems. A second ground for an intellectualistic emancipation from myth, likewise negative – in the absence of eschatological nature myths found in the surroundings – was that to which the prophet Isaiah⁹ had given an ethical impetus in a positive sense.

Mythological thinking in Weber's system¹⁰ is part of a mode of thought which underlies the fully developed symbolistic conceptual sphere. The treatment of myth is more general and more varied in this work than it is in the articles on particular religions. In both he provided a Euhemerist interpretation

of myth, and the outlines of a developmental treatment of the mythic mode of thought which was then expressed in his late work, *Economy and Society*. There, he referred to the development of culture in respect of the evidence which mythological thinking provides. This development proceeds according to stages, from pre-animistic naturalism to symbolism; the transition from one stage to another is not sharp but fluid in detail. To each of the stages there is a corresponding mode of thought: thus, the mode of thought in the fully developed symbolistic conceptual sphere was called mythological thinking in Weber's classification. He directed the attention to the importance of analogy in this mode of thought, with particular reference to similitude between subjects of our thought.

The apparatus of mythology-theory was then related by Weber to the content of cultural development, and the latter was related to the categories of the modes of thought. These processes were brought together with the theory of stages of pre-animism and symbolism, such as were current in the writings about myth in Weber's time. Examples of such writings are to be found in the works of E. B. Tylor, V. G. Bogoraz, and Hermann Usener. From the general theory of stages and categories of thought corresponding to them, Weber proceeded to the particular, analyzing the soteriological myth in the religions of India and in Christianity, in which he distinguished between mythology and cosmogony; by this, it is implied that cosmogony is not only mythological, and that there are other elements in myth than the cosmogonic. Similarly, a distinction was drawn between myth and aetiological myth; thus, myths have other functions in addition to the explanatory. He did not pursue this thought, but it is evident that an aetiological myth of the causes, and that which explains how things came to be what they are, is other than a myth which foretells the end of the world, such as an eschatological myth, which takes the form of an apocalyptic vision, and which reveals what is hidden but does not explain it.

In a lecture given at the University of Munich in the winter of 1918–19, Weber adumbrated questions of the intellectualization of life and its connection to man's fate. This lecture, "Science as a Calling," (*Wissenschaft als Beruf*) ended with references full of pathos to St. Augustine and Isaiah. Weber wrote, "It is the fate of our time, with its own rationalization and intellectualization, above all: disenchantment of the world, that precisely the last and highest values have retreated from the public; they have gone over either to the other world of mystical life, or to the brotherly world of direct connections of individuals to one another."¹¹ This phrasing puts a profoundly different construction on the notion of disenchantment from that which he brought out in *Economy and Society*. In his Munich lecture, Weber attached the disenchantment to life's rationalization

and intellectualization as a problem of the student audience in Munich, and then of those who have taken up science as a vocation generally. The reference to the disenchantment of the world in his *Economy and Society* bears on the conflict of intellectualism and belief in magic, whereby intellectualism becomes a means or instrument of disenchanting, demagicking the world; in the Munich lecture, intellectualism is conceived as a symptom of a state of mind.

Wilhelm Nestle¹² thought that disenchantment meant the same as desacralization in Weber's speech in Munich, and that the latter had an awakening of logos in the sense of critical and progressive movement. Rationalism understood in this way is a necessary appearance of normal mental life. Nestle took over certain terms of reference from Weber, to which he gave another interpretation. Weber wrote in 1918–1919, that the highest values have been put into retreat on account of the disenchantment of the world, which was the most recent effect of the times in which he lived; in those times, his audience had been fated to undergo processes of rationalization and intellectualization. In the passage cited from *Economy and Society*, he attributed the intellectualistic process to Rousseau and the Russian Narodniki.

Karl Mannheim¹³ drew on the writings of Sorel, Pareto, Weber and Marx in weaving his own system of myth in relation to the history of the twentieth century. Myths in Mannheim's view are fictions, not truths. He referred to the use of fictions by the Fascists, who represented an intuitionist, antiscientific approach to politics and history, which appreciated only their ideological and mythological aspects. The myth of history, according to Mannheim, treats it as though it had coherence. Myths are collective, together with traditions, as mass-faith; myths are in some cases traditional, and in some cases new. Mythology in ancient history was a mystifying process, as the way of thinking of a dominant nobility already doomed to decline. The mythologizing process was opposed to the socially analytic process which was the habit of thought of the urban artisans, upwardly mobile from the lower social stratum. This division of thought into a mystagogic and mythographic aspect on the one side and a skeptical and analytic one on the other converged in the Sophists in ancient Greece. The convergence has been lost in modern times. Mannheim wrote that the leader knows that all the political and historical ideas in the movement he leads are myths. In Sorel and Pareto, the theory of myth was applied to their theory of the elites; the idea of a process and of structural intelligibility of history becomes a mere myth in the Fascist ideology, which is ahistorical in spirit. The utopian thought of the proletariat, deprived of political power, has ideal elements, faiths, religions, and myths which are left over from the tensions of former periods. To the intellectuals

one among a number of possible worldviews open to them out of these social and political conflicts of the proletariat, i.e. fascism, and to the elites, that of a utopian mentality; another is that of the transcendence of reality in a romanticist reconstruction, which spiritualizes the present, reviving past religious feelings, idealism, symbols and myths. Mannheim takes up the category of myth in relation to history without reference to direction of movement, without social dynamism. These are static categories to him, which are the same in ancient and modern times. His critique of the doctrine of the fascists with regard to history showed the roots of their notion of coherence; he did not consider the problem of a direction of historical movement either in the fascist doctrine or in his own. In the same way, the doubt, scepticism and analytic processes of thought in ancient times are not opposed to their homologs in modern times.

These sociologists have applied the category of myth to the critique of modern problems of class ideology, political movements and the objectification of the study of society with particular reference to their own times. They tended, if not absolutely then in general, to eschew an interest in the deep antiquity of myth; questions of the relation of myth to past history, to language and to mind were of relatively little interest to them. The category of myth was useful in their theories of the elites, which were applied by Sorel and Pareto to the labor movements, the trade unions and the political parties associated with them at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries; Weber applied the category of myth to the intellectualist worldview in general, and to Rousseau and the Narodniki in particular; Mannheim applied that category to the analysis of the ideology of Mussolini's doctrine.

Weber's references to the quest for unity and meaning and the discussions of the cases of Rousseau and the Narodniki were taken up in reference to mythological thinking in its relation to cultural development, and to symbolistic analogical mode of thought. The thinking about myth in Weber is of two kinds, one synchronic and the other diachronic. The former is connected to the writings about myth by Pareto, Sorel and Mannheim, dealing with problems of their own time; the latter is connected with a scholarly tradition which takes in a vast time depth in treating of myth. Weber connected the latter with the writings on myth of H. Usener. The synchronic treatment of myth by Sorel, Pareto, Weber and Mannheim is secular, the diachronic treatment by Hermann Usener and Weber is at bottom sacred.

Weber, in his diachronic thinking about myth, held that it was to begin with sacred, and was thereupon freed from its religious bond by the absence of the substantive themes in the Biblical tradition of the orgiastic cults and the cults of

demons which stimulate the imagination; such cultic practices and their effect of stimulation are found in the ritual origin of myth. Weber proceeded in his system of diachronic study of myth from the religious bond to the emancipation therefrom, and from cult to myth. This quest for the origins of myth was denied by others who felt that myth and cult were originally inseparable manifestations of sacrality. Jane Ellen Harrison, following Durkheim, is representative of this denial of Weber's system at that time.

The synchronic and diachronic approaches to myth are generally kept separate. There are some exceptions to this, but, as a rule, those who regard myth as a contemporary fact in social life and not a factor of the past, form a school apart from those who take up myth as a factor of the past in its bearing on the present. Weber, we have seen, adopted both approaches to myth.

Myth in religion is taken in relation to the past in its bearing on the present, whereas myth in relation to political ideology is generally taken up as a present concern to which the past is either irrelevant or else is only mediately relevant. The matter of myth and time is in fact not simple, for ideology has a diachronic element in it. The vision of utopia is an ideological expression which is oriented to the future. The diachrony is in this case a relation of the present reality to an unreal state which will come to be at some future time. The ideological vision of utopia in the secular realm borrows its strength from the apocalyptic, soteriological, and eschatological myths of the religious realm; but the history of its sources is quite apart from its impact in the present, and this was Sorel's chief point, which many have taken up today. We will return to the question of myth in its relation to ideology below.

To Weber, the limit on Biblical myth came from without; the creation of a god was inadmissible to the Biblical tradition; Yahwe is the one god who is the creator of all. Yahwism is not a cult derived from orgiastic and mimic demonology, which is the normal source, according to Weber, of all mythological systems.

Weber's account is speculative. There is no necessary connection between cult and mythic or mythological systems, thus between orgiastic and demonological cult and myth. This would make the source of other mythological systems abnormal in appearance or in reality. The source of myth is only in part traced to cult, orgy or demonology, and we observe other sources of myth. Next, we consider that the limit on myth in the Bible was an endogenous factor in its composition; failing this, we look for outside factors. More convincing is J. Alberto Soggin's cogitation on the demythologization of the Bible, which is a realization of a limitation on myth in the first millennium; this realization did not arise from nothing but arose from factors at work in the second millennium before our era,

such as the abstract monotheism, and the rational element of universal lawgiving. In Western culture, these factors contributed to a demythologized religion and desacralized myth. Negatively, the presence of orgy and demonology did not prevent the desacralization of myth in ancient Greece.¹⁴

Notes

- 1 George Sorel. *Réflexions sur la violence*. Paris 1908. Idem. *Matériaux d'une théorie du prolétariat*. 3rd ed. Paris 1929.
- 2 See his *Reflections on Violence*, ch. 4, "The Proletarian Strike."
- 3 Vilfredo Pareto. *A Treatise on General Sociology* (1916). New York 1935.
- 4 *Ibid.*, § 306.
- 5 *Ibid.*, § 635.
- 6 *Ibid.*, § 1869.
- 7 Max Weber. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* [*Economy and Society*]. Tübingen 1922.
- 8 Max Weber. *Sociology of Religion* [In: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (*Economy and Society*)], 5th ed., ch. 5.
- 9 See especially ch. 9, § 2.
- 10 See his *Economy and Society*, op. cit., § 1.
- 11 Krader's translation. Cf. Max Weber. *Essays in Sociology*. Ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press 1946, pp. 129–156, here p. 155.
- 12 W. Nestle, op. cit.
- 13 Karl Mannheim. *Ideology and Utopia*. New York 1936.
- 14 Max Weber's concept of disenchantment of the world bears witness to this notion.

The disenchantment process in the Western tradition to which he referred is a complex of changing sacred into secular myths as well as the question of myths, and thereby reducing their extent. Both the intellectuals and the non-intellectuals have replaced one myth or body of myths by another; the intellectuals have been leaders in the desacralization of myth in this connection.

This is not the same as the elimination of myth, which continues its social existence whether in a sacred or secular form.

M. Weber. *Ancient Judaism*. Free Press 1952. M. Gerth and D. Martindale transl.: "Yahwism was not a cult derived from orgiasticism and mimic demonology—which could have stimulated artistic or poetic imagination and which is the normal source of all mythological systems." (p. 226).

Myth of Another Time and Space

Buber, Otto, Cassirer, Langer, Jensen

The approach to myth as an ideal realm which is apart from the phenomena of our concrete experience, which is in a direct relation of being, which is genuine, pure, and real in itself, was expressed in ancient and modern times; this approach to myth has had its advocates in the twentieth century.

Martin Buber¹ distinguished between myth and legend. In pure myth, being is undifferentiated; the hero and the god are not in the relation of I and Thou. The god in pure myth does not call; he begets and sends forth the begotten. The god of the legend calls to him the prophet or the saint. The legend is the form of I and Thou, the caller and the called.²

Walter F. Otto considered that myth has a world of its own; this world is the world which myth tells about, and it is other than the world of myth which we write about. It is there, it is real; it is other than poetry, philosophy or history, all of which have another reality. He further developed this point in his treatment of "Language as Myth."³ Thales held that the world, which is all there is, is full of gods. Man is the speaking being; speech in its original state is thoroughly mythical, and bears witness to the truth of the words of Thales, who belongs to a primordial, prescientific state of mind and speech of the human being. Otto wrote that speech and myth are indivisible in this state. Myth is not only language, but above all, language in this primordial state is myth. Thus, there is a great Original

Myth, which W. F. Otto regarded as being in the word, in the human state, which Thales exemplified. The myth in the word is the incarnation of the divine in the human; in the myth are adoration, prayer, holy tales. Max Weber, we have seen, attributed to the intellectualist view the outlook on the world as being there, and took this outlook as evidence of the disenchantment of the world of the intellectuals. It is apparent that the opposite has taken place in Otto, Buber and others who have posited a world of myth which is there; its events simply occur. It is not disenchanted; on the contrary, they hold to the reality of the enchanted world of myth.

Ernst Cassirer has perhaps written more than anyone else in the twentieth century on the philosophy of myth. Cassirer's fundamental premise is that myth is real; it is there, a unitary energy of the mind.⁴ It is a form of interpretation of experience which is enclosed within itself, and which asserts itself in all the variety of the objective ideational material. According to this interpretation, there is a mythic consciousness, with a mythic image which is embedded in the human intuition of the world of things. This form of intuition is unitary without a division of ideal and real; myth and religion have the same content, but to our eye have different forms.

Cassirer⁵ regarded mythic thought as a form of thought, which is, by its origin and principle, traditional. It has its roots in a mythic past. Now the scientific worldview is the same as the theoretical consciousness of our own experience and represents a distinctive stratum of human development. Cassirer held as an essential insight of his system that the world is not given in a fixed and finished state but is variable, developing in us from one stratum to another, each with its own worldview. Each worldview is made possible by a specific act of objectivization, which it shares with no other, and is typical for it, taking its form out of the chaos of the human impressions which come to us. These worldviews are arranged in strata, one of which is known to us in our contemporary experience, with a logical form of thought. Another stratum has gone before this, which is the pre-logical, in which the worldview has the mythical consciousness of the object; or we may say that the worldview of the pre-logical stratum is mythical; these are two variants of one another.

In its beginnings, the mythological view posits a still undifferentiated intuition of magical efficacy, or a magical force inherent in things. Cassirer developed a general philosophy of myth which may be outlined as follows: He asserted⁶ that there are basic mythical motifs; the unitary source of myth is the unity of mind, not of nature, and implies the unity of the cultural sphere. The basic mythical forms are to be referred back to an underlying structure of mythical fantasy and

thought. This structure is that of mind itself, not of the fantasy alone, not of the cognition alone, not of affectivity or of will alone; but fantasy, cognition, affectivity and will are all parts of mind and of its underlying structures. The mythic activity is an integral and distinctive realm of all mankind, existing as a particular form of our consciousness. The mythical consciousness has various substrata, which may be perceived; one of these is the mythical consciousness in its naïve form, which is unreflecting, polytheistic.⁷ Myth in any of its forms is an expression having an immanent articulation, which is opposed to logos. Logos, as thought and word, is an expression as well, but it is centrifugal and extrinsic. Myth takes us to the center of the sphere of pure experience of expression, showing a mode of world formation which is independent of modes of mere objectivization; myth is not centrifugal, but centripetal, without a division between the real and the unreal, between reality and appearance, between the personal and the impersonal, or between the enduring and the ephemeral. The realm of truth is then open to us. Language is not the equivalent of myth but is independent of it in its formation and articulation of the theoretical world.⁸ Myth is in this view an objectification of man's social experience, not of his individual experience. In genuine myth its images are not known as images; they are not symbolic but real.⁹ The genuine myth is opposed to the individual myth, e.g., the Platonic.

The historical orientation to myth appeared to open the possibility of viewing myth not as a product of pure fantasy but as a self-contained system intelligible in itself. In support of this idea of myth Cassirer drew on Schelling's notion of the tautegorical, or the category of the autonomous *Gestalt*, which is propounded as the relation in itself of the human mind. Autonomy, the tautological and the relation in itself are indicative of the closed, inwardly supportive and self-sustaining world of myth in the philosophies of Schelling and Cassirer. From Adolf Bastian Cassirer drew the idea that the direction of myth is the same in all cases, regardless of the diversity of conditions and objects of myth. Bastian inferred from this common direction the existence of the psychic unity of man. Bastian's orientation in this investigation was empirical, functional, and, in Cassirer's estimation, psychological. However, Cassirer held that in myth we are not in the empirical domain but in the mental domain of ideality. Mythology is an integral possession of the *Geist*, mind or spirit.¹⁰ If *Geist* is rendered as psyche or mind, then Cassirer's point is verbal, a quibble. However, he is insisting on the separation of the mental world from the physical, and on allocation of empirical psychological investigation of the psychic unity, to which Bastian had contributed, to the latter. Cassirer's own field of investigation was the former, or psyche in the ideational, nonempirical sense. In his *An Essay of Man*,¹¹ Cassirer considered that mythic

thought is the negation of the phenomenon of death. Mythic thought bears the conviction of the unity and continuity of life. However, in this case he engaged in an empirical investigation of an empirical phenomenon. We can investigate myths from various peoples and affirm or deny this proposition. A proposition pertaining to the tautegorical character of myth, its in-itselfness, its centripetality, and self-enclosure is of another kind. (He made the same assertion and the same fusion of an empirical and ideational attribute of life and death in the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 3.) Life and death are properties of the biotic or life system. Continuity is empirically investigated in respect of this system. Thus, the living plants enter into the humus of the soil on death. But the humus is part of the life of the following generations of plants and other living systems.

Cassirer attributed metamorphosis to the world of myth. In this world there is a fluidity of classes; they are not fixed, and the mythic metamorphoses are not bound by the logical law of identity, according to which a thing is identical with itself, as $a = a$.¹¹ He attributed a pre-logical mentality to the myth-making genius. Mythic thinking is in the bondage of intuition and is held in by the sensible present, in immediate experience.¹² He attributed a myth-making genius or faculty to the mind. The mythico-religious attitude, in Cassirer's philosophy, is the annihilation of the connectedness of the world. This attitude is opposed to the formation of logical concepts, in which the mind breaks through the isolation of the datum, wresting it from the "here and now" relating the actual occurrence to others.¹³

Susanne K. Langer serves as a disciple of Cassirer, having summed up his philosophy of myth as follows: There is a belief in myth of all mankind, by which is meant not individuals but peoples. This belief is at times crystallized into dogmas or degraded into superstitions. It appears as divine revelation; as a product of ignorance, it appears as a miscarriage of logical explanation. Language, being the symbolization of thought, reflects myth more than it does reason. Language has two kinds of thought, discursive logic and creative imagination. The symbol is a form of conception and expression; the humankind through the symbolic forms proceeds from pre-logical conception and expression to reason and factual knowledge.

Myth and language are both in the ideational realm, which is the realm of symbols. The ideational realm is that of mind, which has several primitive autonomous forms of conception: language, myth, art and science. They are primitive and autonomous in that one of them cannot be reduced to another; but the humankind has proceeded from one to another, e.g., from mythic to scientific thinking. All of these forms are ideational and mental. By symbols we refer to

things; in mythic thinking we refer to things by means of images. By its imagistic symbol an experience can be conceived and not merely remembered physiologically. Mythology presents us with a world having structure, but which is not divided according to categories of things having properties, which is a division of the world according to the categories of reality. In savage societies, names of things are not treated as conventional appellations but as physical proxies for their bearers; they are things and properties of things. The divisions of the realm of myth do not accord therefore with the division of the world according to the categories of reality. The world of myth is a dramatic world of actions, forces and conflicts of these actions and forces. Language originates in the same intuitive process of symbolic expression which also produces dream, myth and ritual.¹⁴ Cassirer's treatment of myth has many scientific elements in it, being historical, critical and objective. His notions of the pre-logical mentality and the tautegorical category are not of this kind but are highly speculative.

Geoffrey S. Kirk¹⁵ criticized Cassirer's philosophy of myth, which is found to be "exaggerated," "conjectural," and "rather improbable;" he averred that Cassirer "knew no more about how myths are created than anyone else." Cassirer developed his philosophy of myth out of a particular tradition, which he traced back to Creuzer and Schelling explicitly. He then added the positions of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Henri Begson to that older tradition, and others such as Susanne K. Langer then attached themselves to the doctrines of Cassirer as they pertain to the symbolic forms, myth and language. Alfred E. Jensen and Walter F. Otto have been intrinsically related to that same tradition. Cassirer and the others form a body, with some elements of self-criticism, as in the case of Lévy-Bruhl. They introduced vast philosophical, evolutionary and historical perspectives, and proposed to deal with the humankind as a whole. Myth to them is a single category; Cassirer went further and thought that myth is a symbolic form with characteristics of its own, and that language and art are other forms of that same kind.

Many who have dealt with myth have begun explicitly with the stories and personae of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Others have begun with the Babylonian myths, such as Gilgamesh. Indeed, Hugo Winkler attributed to Babylonian myth a particular form and content, having a coherent system of its own, with a representation of a world of order. This picture of the world was then given a fabulous origin, in which all was explained by a mixture of astronomic, astrological, physiological and meteorological data, lore, myths and eschatology. Winkler went on to conclude that the cosmogony of the Babylonians was the basis of the worldview and mythology of all peoples. His argument was founded on the antiquity of the Babylonian record as well as its coherence and integrity.¹⁶

Those who have begun with Homer or the Babylonians have had a certain model of myth in mind which they then have imposed on others, whether with good reason or not. They have found traditions of tales about the world, the earth, and the stars, plants, animals and people; some of these traditional tales have alluded to supernatural figures or divine forces, which were matters of belief, sacrality and religious practice of peoples. The argument that traditions of this kind have had their history from the most ancient records of Babylon, Homer, etc., up to the indigenous peoples of Australia and America when contacted by Europeans has been set aside as a dubious kind of history. Another argument is that myth is the product of the common psyche of the humankind, which has produced fantastic tales accounting for the appearance of the world of our experience.

Schelling and Cassirer thought that myth has an ideal as opposed to an empirical existence of its own; each in his own way conceived myth to be a mode of thought, or a symbolic form, which is of its own kind, and a law unto itself. Cassirer's position is in part speculative or conjectural, and in part empirically founded, but he was not clear about the difference between the two parts of his thought. The myths of the peoples of the world are there, existing in empirical reality. We listen to them and understand their logic and fantasy, what they express, and what they explain; we surmise that there are things they do not express or explain, and yet other things they express poorly. The myths were conceived by Cassirer to come from the world of symbolic forms which has no empirical existence, our experience being of two kinds, only one of which is sensible. The symbolic forms are not of this kind, but include myth, language, art, and cognitive processes. How the one kind of experience is related to the other was not shown by Cassirer, nor was it taken up by the neo-Kantians. Myth is supposedly a symbolic form which is not reducible to any other, being autonomous, a law unto itself, or tautogorical. But it is part of the categories of symbolic forms, of which it is one. What is this reductive process? Specifically, how does myth, which is autonomous, relate to that which is prior, if not in time, then in the system of the symbolic forms? How does myth enter into the system of the symbolic forms, not as we generate it by cognizing, imaging and speaking it, or hearing it and passing it on, but as an element in the constitution of the symbolic forms? These questions were not answered by Cassirer.

The entire self, Cassirer wrote, is given up to a single impression, in the mythic experience, and is "possessed" by it; there is the utmost tension between the subject and its object, which is the external world; the world of external reality is not merely there to be contemplated, but overcomes the subject by its utter

immediacy, with emotions of fear, hopes, or wish fulfillment. "Then the spark jumps somehow across, the tension finds release, as the subjective excitement becomes objectified, and confronts the mind as a god or demon."¹⁷ This is beautiful, highly charged writing but does not tell how the spark works, or the tension is released. It is not the same as the electric spark or the muscular tension which jumps or is released in the world of our visible and tangible reality. In that other world, sparks jump and muscles tense and relax "somehow," that is, in a way which has no accord with the laws of physics or of physiology. The sparks are speculative sparks, the tension is of the imagination.

Myth is taken by Cassirer as emerging from the realm of the sacred. It is an objectification, in his view, of the social as opposed to the individual experience of the humankind. He regarded it as an act of the mind. In some respects, Cassirer belongs to a history of the study of myth which includes Aristotle on the one side and Durkheim on the other, who held many of these same concepts, for both of them sought the social and traditional source of myth. Further, Cassirer held that there are two worlds, ideal and the empirical, which are related. They appear to influence one another.

In his work, *The Myth of the State*, he contributed to the study of secular myth in our time. Thereby he posed a problem concerning the nature of myth which has been ignored by those ethnologists, classicists, historians and folklorists who treat of myth only in relation to sacred tales. The problem of the secular myth of the states and other processes of modern life will be taken up in the sections devoted to writings by cultural critics about myth.

Cassirer had an important place in yet another tradition of those who have held that myth and the world of myth simply "are," or "occur." Cassirer raised a problem of the psychic unity of the humankind which the ethnologists have considered in their own way, and which they have sought to answer in other terms than Cassirer's. Before we turn to this problem, we will briefly mention a representative of the field of the ethnology of religions who has the view of myth and the mythic world, but not necessarily the view of the psychic unity of humankind in common with Cassirer and others of his school.

Adolf E. Jensen¹⁸ distinguished between aetiological and genuine myths. The former are in principle explanatory, in particular cosmogonical. They are therefore intellectual in substance, are present among primitives, and are evidence that their mental life has the same cognitive elements as the mental life of other human beings. This argument appears to be concerned as much with Lévy-Bruhl's notion of the pre-logical mentality as with Weber. According to Jensen, the genuine myth is an expression of the thushness of things. The genuine

mythical consciousness bears upon the origin of the world by an act whose result is the world as it is today, but it does not explain how this came about; it is not an exercise in paleontology or prehistory, nor is it like such an exercise. It avers instead that there was at one time a great act, a singular occurrence; this is the act and time of myth, the degenerative form of which is the aetiological or explanatory myth. Jensen began by relating myth and cult as did many other ethnologist and historians of religion; his particular concern however was with the distinction between genuine and explanatory myth. Weber had noticed that the disenchanting intellectuals are preoccupied with the way things “are” or “occur.” Jensen thought that genuine myth deals with the thusness of the world, the way it is, and not with an explanation of how it came to be; myths express the consciousness of the *Gewordensein* of the world, of its having become what it is.

On the Psychic Unity of the Humankind

Many thinkers in the past century held that, because mythic themes appeared among different peoples, under diverse circumstances, and without any apparent historical connection, this appearance and reappearance must be taken as evidence of psychic unity of the humankind. Thus, for example, a myth of the stars and other celestial bodies as the embodiments of the souls, ghosts or spirits of the ancestors is found among the peoples of Australia and of Northern America in traditional times. From this it was concluded that our minds work in common way. But also, it was held by many at that time that myth is primitive history, philosophy, poetry and science. From this it follows that when we speak of the evidence of myth as to the unity of the human psyche, we have in view the mind in all its parts. This was a noble complex of thoughts, and therefore the notion that myth might be a disease of language or of anything else has evoked considerable revulsion. We have in this connection a dual concept of unity, therefore: 1. oneness of the psyche, since myth was thought to bear on all kinds of mental activities, intellectual and emotional, artistic and scientific, speculative and realistic, conscious and unconscious; 2. the oneness of the humankind has been shown by the common activities of the psyche. Further, all peoples have the capability to bring forth their own Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Bach or Einstein in their own ways, no people or race being inferior to another in these respects, and none superior. That which the nineteenth century advocates of psychic unity set out in sober prose was put in a rather sentimental poetic form by Thomas Gray a century before. Gray held that the village poets and orators whom he elegized

in the lines written in a country churchyard displayed their indubitable talents, as anyone else, and would have earned a wider fame had they but lived in another condition.

Cassirer removed the psyche from the realm of empirical research and conceived that it had its being in another realm entirely. This is a tenet of the idealist philosophy, of which the neo-Kantian thought was a prominent exemplary in Cassirer's time. Here is not the place to expound their doctrine, for the Neo-Kantians formed more than one school. We will note only that this position is representative of one of them. Cassirer is also the author of a learned work on the philosophy of G. W. Leibniz, and another on that of Kant. Leibniz thought that there is another realm of Being than the realm of our physical bodies. He included in his philosophy some discourse on the passage from one realm to another. He held that while there are many possible worlds, ours is the best of all of them. [On this point see Voltaire's critique of Leibniz. Leibniz *Theodicy*. Cf. Voltaire *Candide*.—eds.]

Now myth to Cassirer is of another world than that of our senses, and their space and time; but neither through his work on the philosophy of Leibniz nor through his work on the philosophy of Kant (which was closer to his own) nor in his own work on the philosophy of symbolic forms, in which he had proposed that there is a timeless world of which myth is a part, did he think of how we might get from that world to our sensible one.

Notes

- 1 Martin Buber. *The Legend of Baal-Shem*. Frankfurt a. M. 1907.
- 2 See Martin Buber. Autobiographical Fragments. In: *Philosophy of Martin Buber*. P. Schilpp ed. Open Court 1967. Cf. Buber. *Moses*. New York Harper 1958.
- 3 W. F. Otto. *Dionysus: Mythos und Kultus*, op. cit. Idem., *Mythos und Welt*. Stuttgart 1962. See there the chapter "Sprache als Mythos."
- 4 See Ernst Cassirer. *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. Yale 1955. Vol. 2, *Mythical Thought*, Pt. 4, Dialectic of the Mythical Consciousness.
- 5 Ernst Cassirer. *Essay on Man*. New York 1944, Part 2, ch. 12.
- 6 Idem. *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 2, ch. 1.
- 7 Ibid., p. 4.
- 8 Cassirer. *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, op. cit., vol. 3, *Phenomenology of Knowledge*. Cf. ch. 2. See also his *Essay on Man*, op. cit., Pt. 2, ch. 6.
- 9 Cassirer. *The Myth of the State*. New York 1946. Pt. I. What is Myth? Ch. 4, Function of Myth in Man's Social Life.

- 10 Cassirer. *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, op. cit., vol. 2, ch. 1.
- 11 Cassirer. *An Essay on Man*, op. cit., Pt. 2, ch. 7.
- 12 Cassirer. *Language and Myth*. New York 1946. See also his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 3, ch. 2.
- 13 Cassirer. *Language and Myth*, op. cit.
- 14 S. K. Langer, Preface to Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, op. cit. Langer, Theory of Language and Myth, In: *The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer*, P. Schilpp ed., New York 1958.
- 15 G. S. Kirk. *Myth*. Berkeley/Cambridge 1970.
- 16 H. Winkler, *Himmelsbild und Weltenbild der Babylonier*. Leipzig 1901. Idem., *Die Weltanschauung des alten Orients*. Leipzig 1905. Idem., *Die babylonische Geisteskultur* Leipzig 1907.
- 17 Cassirer. *Language and Myth*, op. cit. Cassirer's philosophical treatment of myth puts it in the category of the sacred and not the secular category. His most important pronouncement on the subject of myth was made in his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 2, *Mythical Thought*, op. cit. There he emphasized the cognitive as opposed to the affective aspect of myth, as thought, rather than feeling. The central categories of his analysis of myth lay in its triple character as a form of thought, of intuition, and a life form. Within the second of these forms, that of intuition, he proposed that there is a fundamental opposition between the sacred and the profane as it appears in the religious and the myth consciousness; he called the one miracle of the religious spirit the characteristic *transcendence* which links the contents of the mythic and the religious spirit. In their immediate existence, these contents contain a revelation, and at once retain a kind of mystery. It is this interpenetration, he wrote, this revelation which reveals and conceals, giving the mythico-religious contents their basic trait, their character of the sacred. He appealed to the work of Rudolf Otto. *Das Heilige*. Göttingen 1917. *The Holy: On the Irrational in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*. New York Oxford University Press 1923, in support of this doctrine. Cassirer. *Mythical Thought*, Pt. 2, Myth as a Form of Intuition; ch. 1, The Basic Opposition.
- 18 A. E. Jensen. *Mythos und Kult bei Naturvölkern. Religionswissenschaftliche Betrachtungen*. Wiesbaden 1951.

Myths of the North Pacific Peoples

Boas, Bogoraz, Jochelson. The Myth of Asdiwal/Asihwil. A Creation Myth of the Chukchis

The ethnological contribution to the scientific study of myth has often provided the standard in the twentieth century by which the contributions of the other disciplines, such as philosophy, psychoanalysis, and classical studies, have been measured. Not only have the raw data of the study of myth been taken from the ethnological field work; not only have the Homeric and other myth traditions of antiquity been incorporated into the ethnological field; not only have a number of terms of ethnological provenience, such as mana, taboo, and totem been taken up in other fields, but above all, the relation of myth to ritual, to custom, and to religion as a kind of social practice has been taken from the ethnological writings; theories of myth have been propounded insofar as they have made sense to ethnologists.

Wilhelm Wundt¹ opposed all those who sought a symbolic or rationalist interpretation of myth. He held that myth animates the objects as an immediately given actuality. The original creations of the mythmaking fantasy are interpreted not as merely subjective representations but as the objective content of our perceptions. The primitive dreams that the soul of someone far away appears to him, whereby he explains his dreams. The dreamer believes in the objective reality of the apparition, which is the double of the distant kin or neighbor. Myth

goes a step further, Wundt held, and does not animate the objects of our experience alone, but also personifies them.

Franz Boas collected myths, tales and other oral lore of the Kwakiutl, Tsimshian, Bella Bella, Bella Coola, Eskimo*, and others, part of which was published in the volumes of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, together with the works of James Teit, who worked with him on the American side, and Vladimir G. Bogoraz, Waldemar Jochelson and Berthold Laufer, who worked on the Asiatic side. Some of the collections made by Bogoraz and Jochelson, which I have worked through in connection with studies of shamanism, will be taken up in this section.

Franz Boas, like Wilhelm Wundt, distinguished between mythological concepts, which are abstract, and mythological tales, which are particular and concrete. Mythological concepts are fundamental views of the constitution of the world and of its origin. The tales are of two kinds, 1. relating to incidents in the lives of mythical beings, or occurring at a time before the world took the shape it has today; 2. tales relating to the world as we know it.² Boas brought out the cosmogonic element in myth; Wundt brought this element together with the normative and moral elements of social life; myth was in his view a more subjective part of communal life and speech, as opposed to the more objective part which is bound to the conditions of life, with which in turn objective social norms are bound. Both Wundt and Boas referred to the poetic or aesthetic aspect of myth; folktales are distinct from mythic tales in Boas, who classified stories as myths if they account for the origin of the world and if they refer to events in a mythical period. He related mythology both to speculative cosmogonic thought, and to artistic, poetic activity; religious motives related to cosmogony, and imagination, fantasy, and metaphor to the poetic acts. Aside from speaking in a general way about religion, he did not refer to morality or to norms of behavior in connection with myth. Further, he distinguished tales of two kinds, 1. the esoteric tales of secret societies, or of small groups of guardians of sacred rites giving form and meaning, cohesion and conscious systematization to beliefs and practices; and 2. the exoteric tales formulating fundamental knowledge of the world, such knowledge being heterogeneous, primary and popular, but not the property of a select group. The cosmogonic tales are of the second kind, the normative of the first kind.³ He did not construct one great system of tales.

* Please see the note on page 1 regarding the use of the term Eskimo.

Boas in reporting his ethnographic fieldwork eschewed interpretation and intrusion of his personality into the results, as far as possible. He began his fieldwork among the Eskimos* and continued it among the Indians of the Pacific coast of Canada during the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Two Versions of a Tsimshian Myth

The Myth of Asdiwal

This is a myth, which is part of a mythic cycle, of the Tsimshian Indians, a people living on the Pacific Coast by fishing on the rivers and high seas, and by hunting walrus, seals and other sea mammals, bears and other land animals. They dread the famine of the wintertime, and this is a dominant theme of the Asdiwal myth. During a time of winter famine, a mother and a daughter, who have been separated by their marriages, are widowed. They begin a double journey from opposite ends of the Skeena River, and meet midway along the stream. The daughter marries a mythic bird and bears a child named Asdiwal. The father gives Asdiwal a magic hat, cloak and snowshoes, a magic bow and other hunting implements. With these, Asdiwal has the gift to make himself invisible, always to find food, never to hunger. Asdiwal and his mother are alone, his father having disappeared, and her mother having died. They return to her village. From there he pursues a white bear into the sky; that bear is Evening Star, daughter of the Sun. By virtue of his father's magical equipment, he is able to marry Evening Star, and returns with her to earth. There he commits adultery and loses her. She returns to the sky, and he follows her track again, but she turns and kills him with a thunderbolt. Sun, his father-in-law, revives him, and he returns to earth. He finds his mother's village, but she had died. He then marries another woman and with his magic weapons is able to find food for the people. His wife has four brothers, whom he challenges to a hunting contest, which he wins. They return from their sea hunt with nothing, whereas he has killed four bears, and gives one to each of his brothers-in-law. The losers of the contest take their sister and reject Asdiwal, who finds another village, and again marries a woman with four brothers. By his prowess he again feeds the village and challenges the wife's brothers to a contest. This time he goes on a sea hunt, defeats his brothers-in-law, who take their sister back and leave him to die. A mouse rescues him, taking him underground to the

* Please see the note on page 1 regarding the use of the term Eskimo.

leader of the walrus he has hunted, some of which he has wounded. He cures their wounds, and the walrus chief allows him to return home with the stomach of the walrus as his craft. At home he finds his wife and with her help slaughters her four brothers. He leaves her, and returns to the Skeen River valley, which had been her birthplace, and his mother's home. There his son finds him, and he goes to hunt in the winter. But he has left his snowshoes behind, is stuck on the ground, and turns to stone.

The tale has many repeats, such as the marriages, the return home, the contests with the sets of four brothers, the magic hunts and the overcoming of the winter famine. His brothers-in-law leave him to die without food, he finds food for his mother and for the people of his wives' villages. The repeats are variations; thus, he engages in a hunting with one set of brothers, finding the bears on land, and in the other hunt, he goes after the walrus on the sea. There are inversions in the myth. Thus, he is unfaithful to Evening Star, his wife sky, who destroys him with a thunderbolt. His third wife, a human being, is led by her brothers to abandon him without food or other necessities of life, but on his return, she helps him to slay her brothers. Evening Star kills Asdiwal, whereupon her father the sun brings him back to life. He does not kill the walrus, but wounds them and cures their wounds. His father-in-law, Sun, is in fact a more potent curer, or proves himself equal to a greater challenge than Asdiwal. Sun negates the destructive deed of Evening Star; Asdiwal negates his more modest work of wounding a walrus, and then curing them. Asdiwal's father is a more potent mythic being than Asdiwal, for he endows him with the magic paraphernalia which assure plenty of food for the Tsimshian villages into which Asdiwal has married, but Asdiwal does not pass on his magic weapons and garments to his son. There is a sharp attrition and diminution of the mythic powers from the older generation to the descendants. In the end, Asdiwal goes hunting, fails in the hunt, and bequeaths his offspring nothing.

The Myth of Asihwil

Once the people of two villages were starving. The villages were at opposite ends of a river valley. Two sisters living in each of these villages have been long separated from one another. They leave their villages and begin a journey, one going up the valley, and the other down. They meet, recognize one another, sit down and cry. Since then, the place has been called "Where-The-Sisters-Met." They each carry bits of food which they share. One of the sisters is unmarried, the other married. They go to sleep. During the night a man appears, a supernatural

being whose name is Ho-uX, meaning "Good Luck." He lies with the unmarried sister. Later he finds out that they have no food, and that their villages likewise have nothing to eat. He constructs a weir and catches trout for them, then he goes hunting, and brings back first a mountain goat, then a large bear, then a bighorn sheep. The woman whom he slept with bears a son. When the son is able to walk, his father makes snowshoes for him, at first unsuccessfully, then he makes them correctly. Then the son can go over the mountains. He is named by his mother Asi-hwil, meaning "He-Goes-Across-The-Mountains." Asihwil has the snowshoes with which he can walk straight up the side of a steep cliff, magic hunting dogs, with a bag to carry them in, and a pole with a goat horn attached from his father. He goes hunting, and meets a supernatural hunter named Large-Ears. They each show the other how they hunt by magic. Asihwil recounts his encounter with the hunter Large-Ears to his father, Good-Luck, who in turn praises his son for his behavior and his success in the hunt. The father then tells Asihwil's mother that her brothers are approaching. Having given the sisters much food, he first hides, and then leaves. The sisters take the food and go back with the brothers to Asihwil's mother's village. They then give a feast for the hungry villagers. They give food to the boy's mother's brothers who then give another feast, and the mother tells them the boy's name, Asihwil. The people buy yet more meat from Asihwil and pay for it with elk skins. Asihwil then gives a potlatch with the elk skins.

A supernatural being living in the sky observes that Asihwil is a mighty hunter. Now this supernatural being has a slave whom he covers with ashes so that he will look like a white bear. The bear is seen by the village, and they try to hunt it, in vain. Asihwil, taking his snowshoes, his dogs in his bag, and his pole, pursues the bear up a cliff. These snowshoes leave tracks up the cliff, which are visible to this day. At the top of the cliff, the bear enters a house which Asihwil cannot enter, Asihwil returning home, marries a Tsimshian girl whose brothers are sealion hunters. During the winter storms, the wife's brothers can kill no sealions, but Asihwil, running up the rocks on which the sealions live, kills them. The brothers feel jealousy. They abandon Asihwil, leaving him on the rocks to drown as the tide rises. But with his magic paraphernalia, and the song which his father taught him, Asihwil survives. A female mouse calls to him from a hole in the rocks, "Grandmother invites you in." She repeats this. At the second summons, Asihwil enters, and sees an old woman, who tells him that he is in the house of the sealions. The chief of the sealions is sick, and the shamans are unable to cure him. The mouse extracts a promise from the sealions' chief that if he is cured, Asihwil will get a canoe in exchange. Asihwil then cures the chief

by extracting a bone harpoon, which is barbed, from his side. He accomplishes this by first pushing the harpoon into the flesh, then pulling it away, freeing it of the barb. The chief of the sealions, on being cured, gives Asihwil a canoe made of sealions' intestines. With this canoe, Asihwil returns to the mainland and to his wife.

Asihwil takes his revenge on his brothers-in-law by making killer whales out of two wooden logs. The first pair of logs is of red cedar, the second he made of yellow cedar; they both fail. The third pair he fashions of yew wood, which become a pair of killer whales. They swim about, blowing and snorting. He tells them, "The men who deserted me will go out sealion hunting. Go and break up their canoes." This they do. Asihwil then returns to his wife and stays with her.

This myth complements the myth of Asdiwal/Asiwal, each accounting for some aspect which the other leaves unaccounted for. Asihwil's name is given in its meaning, "Going-Across-The-Mountains," but Asdiwal's name is left unexplained. On the other hand, the Asdiwal version of the myth is more circumstantial about the relation of the white bear, Sun and Evening Star. Asihwil-Asdiwal-Asiwal are connected, their myths being variants of the same myth. Both are valid, neither being better, or truer than the other. We do not speak of an Ur-myth from which they descend.

The myth of Asihwil is of the same people as that of Asdiwal. Both versions have the same chief concern, which is that of starvation in the winter, the failure of the hunters to bring back food for the village, and the victory over their hunger in the myth. [Krader does not explicitly call attention to the quality of wishful thinking in these myths. There is a clear relation to dream life here. But compare this with his interpretation of the second Chukchi (healing) myth below—eds.]. There are the subordinate themes of the marriage of the girl with the supernatural being, the birth of a son whom the father endows with magical paraphernalia for the hunt, whereby he can feed the starving villagers. Both versions offer a hunting contest between the mythic youth and his brothers-in-law, the treachery of the latter, and the rescue of Asihwil-Asdiwal by a mouse, and by the chief of the sea mammals (walrus or sealions) on whom the Tsimshians depend for food. There are a number of repeats in the myth of Asihwil: when his father, Ho'uX (Good-Luck) makes snowshoes for the boy, he first makes a mistake, then makes a good pair, correcting his mistake. Likewise, Asihwil succeeds in making a pair of logs into killer whales on his third attempt, the first two having been failures. The mouse invites Asihwil into the house twice, and he enters on the second call. There are inversions in the myth. Asihwil follows the mythic bear up the

mountain but cannot enter his house. When the myth's location shifts from the land to the sea, Asihwil is able to enter the house of the sealions. The contests with the brothers-in-law are important elements, but Asihwil's father avoids them by leaving Asihwil's mother and returning to his home. Asihwil and his mother get on well with his mother's brothers, giving them food, and then giving them more food, so that they can feast their village. He sells still more food and gives a potlatch with the skins he gets in exchange. While Asihwil's relations to his mother's brothers are excellent, his relations to his wife's brothers are so bad that they are jealous of his hunting prowess and abandon him in the hope that he will perish. He then takes his revenge and destroys them. Asihwil's father Good-Luck avoids all this by leaving before his wife's brothers arrive, or else by hiding while they are about his house. The father is more astute than his son, avoiding trouble with his brothers-in-law. Asdiwal's father, we have seen, had more powerful magic than his son, and was more efficacious in applying it. Asihwil is partly human and partly supernatural, whereas his father is entirely supernatural; the concern in both generations, the paternal and the filial, is with the affinal kin, and the father has problems neither with his father-in-law nor with his brothers-in-law. Asihwil has a close ritual relation of gift-giving with his mother's brothers, and another close relation of murderous rivalry with his wife's brothers. Thus, both the positive matrilineal and the negative in-law (affinal) relations are ritually intense. Asihwil's relation to his patriline is non-existent; the patrilateral kin simply do not appear. The father himself disappears soon after Asihwil, or Asdiwal, is able to be productive in the economy. During the father's active relation to his son, he is helpful in a teaching capacity, for Asihwil, or Asdiwal, learns his hunting skills from his father, and from no one else. The father is moreover psychologically supportive, praising his son for learning his role in the economy well. The wife is the stable person, to whom the husband returns, just as the mother was the stable element to whom the son returns from heavenly ventures, from ventures to the underground world, or from undertakings in the mountains and the sea for meat. The social life is matricentral or uxoricentral, whereas the economic life is patricentral. Moreover, the mother and the wife introduce a specifically Tsimshian element into the myths. They *are* Tsimshians, whereas Asihwil *becomes* a Tsimshian through his mother, taking on Tsimshian ways of the gifts and the potlatch, and joins the Tsimshians by marrying a Tsimshian woman, and settling with her in a Tsimshian village. The women generally share out the food informally, the men formally and ritually. The mother gives the name to the child and announces the name to the community.

Aetiologial explanation is a minor factor in these myths, yet it is not to be overlooked. How the place where the sisters met got its name, and the face of the cliff got the snowshoe marks on it, are accounted for.

V. G. Bogoraz began his ethnographic studies of the peoples of Northeastern Siberia when he had been exiled to that part of the Russian Empire for the crime of having taken part in the activities of the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) political movement in the 1880s. On his release, he continued his ethnographic work, devoting his studies to the Chukchis and Yuits (Asiatic Eskimos*) as a member of the Sibiriakov Expeditions of the Russian Geographic Society to northeast Siberia in the 1890s; in the following decade he participated in the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, organized by Franz Boas in the program of the American Museum of Natural History, continuing his ethnographic studies of the peoples of Northeastern Siberia, their languages, customs and myths. Bogoraz divided the narratives of the Chukchis into three categories: 1. Accounts concerning the earliest times, before the world assumed the form in which we now know it; these mythic accounts are called *töt-tömwa-tagniken-pynylte*, or accounts of the time of the original creation of the world. These are cosmogonic tales and miscellaneous information concerning celestial bodies, the weather, and human and animal life. 2. Tales of shamans, evil spirits, and animal spirits. These are the *lye lumnylte*, genuine, or proper tales. Their time and place are the world with the sky, the earth, the sea and their inhabitants in their present form. 3. Tales of hostilities, *agäliletkin pynylte*. These are the accounts of wars with the Eskimos*, other maritime peoples of the north, and the Russians. The history of the world is correspondingly divided into the periods, *töt-tömwa-tagnepu*, of first creation time; *lumnyl tagnepu*, time referred to in the tales of shamans and the evil spirits (*kelet*); and *agälilet tagnepu*, or time of quarrels or wars.

The season of the year in which the Chukchis recount their myths and other tales is the time of blizzards and Arctic night, when the social life is confined, intense and bound in small groups. Social tensions are relieved by the telling of myths, and more ordinary stories; the attention is arrested and held. The Chukchis live in the distant corner of Siberia, near to the Bering Strait, which is to the east of their territory; to the north lies the Polar Sea. They were at the time of the ethnographer's account divided into two main groups, one of which lived on the shores of the sea and got its living chiefly by hunting the great sea mammals, seals

* Please see the note on page 1 regarding the use of the term Eskimo.

and walrus, by finding whales beached perchance on their shores, and by fishing; the other main group lived inland, chiefly by herding reindeer.

A Chukchi Myth of Creation, *töt-tömwa-pynyl*

Creator lived with his wife. There was nothing, no land, no mountains, only water, and above it the sky. Also, a little piece of land, just large enough for them to sleep at night. Creator said to his wife, “Certainly we feel downcast. We must create something to keep us company.”

They each took a spade and started to dig the earth and through it in all directions. They dug a ditch so big and deep that all the water flowed down into it. Only the lakes remained in deep hollows, and the rivers in clefts and ravines. The big ditch became the sky. After that they created animals and mankind. Only they forgot to create Raven. They left on their camping place a large cloak, *niglon*.

Raven came out of it in the night. He went to visit Creator, who asked, “Who are you?”

Raven replied, “I am Kúurkil (Raven), the self-created.”

Creator commented, “How strange. Self-created! I thought I had created everything, and now it appears that you are perhaps of independent origin.”

“Yes, I am Kúurkil, the self-created.”

“Well, here, bring some pieces of the fly agaric (the mushroom intoxicant which induces a state of trance.) Eat them and be full of their force.”

Raven ate the fly agaric, and in a state of induced trance cried, “I am Kúurkil. I am the son of the cloak, *niglon*. I am Kúurkil. I am the son of the *niglon*.”

“Indeed. And I thought you were self-created. But now it is evident that you are the son of the *niglon*. You are one of mine, created by me. You liar.” The end.⁴

Ambiguities are to be noticed in this cosmogonical myth. To be sure, the origin of everything, the earth, rivers, animals and human beings is accounted for; moreover, the order of their appearance is not omitted. In this myth, the personality traits of Creator and his wife are introduced: they are active, purposeful,

industrious, and desirous of companionship. They cooperate with one another in their creative tasks and avoid being downcast or depressed. They appear as an idealized human couple. Creator is capable of straightforward statements and also of doubt and irony. Their story is succinctly told. They do not live in a state of bliss, but express their dissatisfaction, and seek to improve their living condition. They are, like us, sometimes forgetful. Then Raven makes his appearance, and we observe that Creator's knowledge is imperfect; he asks Raven who he is. Raven is quite different, having the personality traits of the boaster, who vaunts his prowess, of the vain one, the prevaricator and deceiver. Yet Raven has a point to make on his side, if but a small one. Everything else that has been created was intentionally made; yet it appears that Raven was overlooked, and his creation was unintentional. While the Chukchis condemned his trickery, they seem to have left a loophole for Raven, and were not utterly uncompromising in their attitude toward him.

A further ambiguity in the cosmogonical account consists in the fact that while the physical universe is definite in its orderliness, the psychology of Creator includes some disorderly traits, forgetfulness and unclear knowledge.

The Chukchis believe that all things have their spirits, the stars, plants and animals, chamber pots and excrement; all these matters are related to the supernatural and the sacred.

Raven was said to have created some islands out of his excrement, these islands being inhabited by the ancient enemies of the Chukchis. [Akin to the theories of where babies come from in children's fantasies—mother eats something, and babies are born from the bowels. Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, *Standard Edition*, Vol. VII, p. 196—eds.]

While the Chukchis' view of the world differs from that of western civilization, the difference may be exaggerated. But differences exist, and for the purposes of this discussion we will take notice of two remarkable divergencies, one with respect to lies, dissemblance, trickery, and the other with respect to time, in both of which Raven is a central figure.

On Lies and Trickery

The Devil in the European tradition is the Father of Lies, the Dissembler, who is other than what he appears to be. He represents absolute, remorseless, unmitigated evil, whereas Chukchi Raven is by no means the quintessence of evil but is understandable and forgivable. He is after all the product of Creator's forgetfulness. The Devil is the expression of our horror of prevaricators.⁵ The Chukchis do

not appear to have polarized their world into the ranks of the righteous and the wicked. Raven is a thief, and the Chukchis condemn thievery, but modify their judgment of this act. The Chukchis make moral judgments, despising liars, yet their judgments of these acts appear to us as relative and not absolute, a ground which, to be sure, is covered by European and other Western traditions as well.

A Genuine Myth (*Iye lumnyl*) of the Chukchis. This Is a Healing Myth

A girl found a skull and hid it. In her daughter's absence, the mother came upon the skull, and saw that her daughter had become an evil spirit (*kele*). She cried, "Our only daughter has become a *kele*! An abomination, to be feared." The father calmed the mother. She returned the skull to its hiding place. The daughter returned, went to the skull, and spoke to it. Her father and mother then abandoned the girl on an isolated barren shore. The girl punished and scolded the skull. The skull remonstrated and instructed the girl: "Find me a body, make a fire, and put me in it." The girl complained that she would have no one to talk to. The skull reassured her, and said that he would be made whole, but only on the condition that she not watch. This, she did. Soon the skull called her. She looked and saw a finely dressed man with a great reindeer herd. She was now cured. The young people were wed. Her parents visited and were given a feast. The young couple then assassinated the elders. The myth ends with the words, *Plägi yoočhyn tynmgałn*. "Finished the wind. I killed it."⁶

The myth has the themes of the wish or wish dream of the girl to marry well and live happily ever after; the skull-husband is the instrument for the fulfillment of this wish. Further there are the themes of the inter-generational conflict within the family, of the girl's mental illness, and the mother's diagnosis. There are several inversions. The girl converses with the skull, and hears the skull speak in reply; she is seized by an evil spirit; the mother correctly grasps this point, and the father's attempt to calm her erroneously veils a deeper problem which leads to their slaughter. The daughter is cured, but the conflict with the parents is not resolved in that way. The curing is a central part of the myth, and of many other Chukchi mythic acts; it is a vital part of Chukchi shamanism as well.

There is sympathetic magic at work; the teller of the myth kills the wind, just as the younger couple kills the older one.

Bogoraz adds the note: on the shores inhabited by the Chukchis, wind and bad weather continue for weeks, preventing all hunting and traveling. During

these periods the people remain in the inner room of their houses, telling countless stories during their enforced leisure. The telling is a magical means of settling the wind, which has been called an illocutionary act, or speech act; it is also another wish fulfillment.

In the first category, *töt-tömwa-pynyl*, or first creation myth, there is a special sub-group of myths called *panena attoól*, even earlier than that. The cycle of Raven or Trickster myths belong to this category. The second category, or tales of shamans and evil spirits are accounts with magical content, and the third category deals primarily with tales of war. The Chukchis themselves distinguish the *pynyl*, or mythic accounts of cosmogony and the tales of wars and heroes from the *lye lumnyl*, or genuine tales, tales of shamans. The listeners to the genuine tales of the shamans actively participate in them, joining in the telling. The listeners to the cosmogonic myths and the heroic tales are more passive. The time of the first creation and Raven myths preceded that of the heroic and shaman tales; neither of the latter categories are classified as myth by the Chukchis.

The Yukagir and Koryak neighbors of the Chukchis were studied by Waldemar Jochelson. He, like Bogoraz, was exiled to northeastern Siberia because of his political activities in the People's Will movement. In the 1890s he took part in the Sibiriakov Expedition of the Russian Geographic Society, which returned him to the same parts of Siberia; at the beginning of the twentieth century, he joined the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, enabling him to study the Yukaghir and Koryak. The works of Bogoraz and Jochelson corroborate one another in a general way, and supplement each other in many details. The various categories of myth and tales are not clearcut but cross each other.

The Creation and Raven tales supplement one another in the cosmogonic cycle. Creator is a divine being who is serious, responsible, a magnified human figure. He created the sun, the earth, stars, the sea, animals and human beings. Raven is a trickster, irresponsible and perverse; he steals the Creator's cloak and flies over the sea; his excrement during his flight forms the islands of the Bering Sea. Raven inverts everything. He is a coward, and responds to Creator's questions with stupid, non-responsive answers. Raven seeks to halt the tempest, but succeeds only in prolonging it, as a creature at once creative and destructive. The Creator and Raven tales are myths having aetiological functions, with a supernatural cosmogonic content, telling how the sunrise and sunset, the sea and the land, the islands in the sea, and the weather came to be. The tales of Creator and Raven are opposites of one another, the figures of Creator and Raven are opposed to one another, and Raven is also opposed as a figure to the heroes of the warrior

tales; the tales about the latter are serious, their subjects the violent men, who free their enslaved fellow tribesmen and women by performing feats of physical strength and courage.

In the time of Bogoraz and Jochelson, many members of the peoples they studied were shamans. Thus, Bogoraz wrote that three of every four Chukchis were, at one time or another, shamans in the course of their lives, some remaining shamans throughout, others taking up the shaman's calling, quitting it, and then returning to it; the latter often took up the shaman's paraphernalia, drum and stick, deeds and words experimentally, to see if the call had come upon them. In a similar way people whom we know, young and old, try their hand at poetry, some for a time, some devoting themselves to it permanently, all with a serious intent. It is not only the individual but the discovery of the gift by the other in the one who receives and internalizes it that confirms the shaman and the poet in their calling.

Many of the Chukchis came to be shamans unwillingly, indeed struggling against the call. The shamans performed acts of divination, and of healing certain psychosomatic illnesses, performing their rites and recounting the myths. By their acts, rites and tellings, but also by the witness borne by the others to these, the Chukchis as a group discovered whether the shaman's call was genuine. They did not discover the genuineness of the call in themselves but in the response to it by the others. Thus, the shamans' tales or myths invoked the active participation of the listeners in their telling, and the more active the participation, the more genuine was the shamanistic experience felt to be. All myths, however, were alike believed to be genuine.

Bogoraz recorded the statement by a Chukchi shaman of his creed, at the end of the last century. "All that exists lives. The lamp walks, the walls of the house have their own voices. Even the chamber pot has a separate land and house. The skins sleeping in the bags talk at night. The antlers lying on the tombs arise at night and walk in procession around the mound, while the dead rise and visit the living." Further: "The small grey bird with the blue breast sings shaman-songs in the hollow of the bough, calls the spirits and practices shamanism. The woodpecker strikes his drum on the tree with his drumming nose. The tree trembles at the blow of the axe, wailing like a drum under the beating stick. All these come at my call. The small grey bird sacrifices small beetles or worms, the best of his food. But the thieving raven, alighting on the tree top listens to his songs and takes possession of them by drawing them in with his breath."⁷ There we see the trickster raven at work.

The raven and shamanistic tales are full of transpositions. Everything is seeming and may or may not be what it appears to be. Thus, eyes are eyes, or they may be berries, or else they are made of snow; the earth is not solid but has waves as those of the sea; the vulva has teeth, and the penis entwines its victim like a snake. Both the Chukchi and the Yukagir myths peopled the world at the beginning, or before the beginning, with those whom they called the Old Men, Old Women, or Old People; these were giants, cannibals, stupid, and easily fooled. They were cursed by evil spirits and driven out by human beings through incantations and conjurations, whereupon the world came to take the form in which we now know it. The evil spirits exist at present as well. Both Bogoraz and Jochelson were convinced that the myths and tales they recorded were less vivid than they had been in former times, as a faded image of their past form, and that the ethnographic details of their accounts were but a vague shadow of what had gone before. Further pursuit of this thought is idle, for there never was or there always is an ideal time for ethnographic work. The change undergone by peoples in all parts of the world since the time of European conquest and exploitation, from the sixteenth century and on, is relatively more intense and violent than in earlier times, and certainly it is more extensive. The Chukchi, Yukagir, Yuit, Inuit, and Koryak myths are, perhaps no less vivid, creative, fantastic and original now than those of ancient times; the intensity of feeling and vivacity of its expression in myth are subjective judgment, undiminished over the ages. We may think that the myths recorded by Bogoraz and Jochelson include themes of dumb insolence by Raven; this is a case in which we infer a psychological projection; the Chukchis are then presumed to have thrown their own resentment against a higher authority onto Raven, and Creator would be then the foreign conquerors; similarly, if the Old People in the Yukagir myths are made out to be stupid and dull, this may be regarded as a projection of the Yukagirs' or Chukchis' own feelings, for they were the original inhabitants of their land, who had been made to feel as dullards, and had then reacted with sullen resentment in the face of the incursive forces. But also, in another way, the Chukchis in their Raven tales mocked themselves.

The shamans in many parts of the world are healers of several kinds of sickness. Whereas in life the shamans of Siberia and America cured chiefly mental illnesses connected with fear or anxiety about hunger, cold, social neglect and isolation, the shaman curers in the myths cured "real" wounds caused by the barbs of harpoons, or else returned to the living from a fiery death and brought back others from the dead.

Bogoraz recorded a myth of the creation of the world by the Eskimos* of Siberia: Raven and his wife created the world. They made the cape of Unisak out of the nose of an elder duck; the peninsula of Alaska out of a long belt knife; and the island of Inalik, of the Biomedes archipelago, out of a button of the scabbard with which the knife is clasped about the hip. They made the reindeer out of their hair, dogs out of their nails, and sea water out of their urine. Bogoraz remarked that this myth is a fragment, which appears to be a conflation of material from two sources, one from the Raven cycle, probably of the Chukchis, and the other undoubtedly Eskimo*, taking up the creation of cape Unisak and the Alaskan peninsula as a part of the latter tradition.

According to Jochelson, the Creator in the Chukchi tradition was originally Raven, but owing to the influence of the Eskimos*, Raven lost this role, and came to play another part in the Chukchi myths. This is difficult to follow, for Raven is certainly the Creator in the Eskimo* myth just cited. Raven is firmly in place as a trickster in the Chukchi tradition, not as Creator. Both the Creator and the Trickster are widely accepted in the myths of northeastern Siberia and western America and have a profound significance among the peoples. Raven is the trickster who is also tricked. Jochelson recounted the Yukagir tale of Raven in this latter context:

In the beginning, Raven was white. Once he met Grebe who said to him, "Paint me! You are a skilled painter." Raven replied, "I shall paint you, but do not deceive me; you shall paint me too." Raven painted Grebe all over. Grebe told Raven, "I shall paint you too," adding, "Sleep. I shall return soon." Grebe then went to a deserted camp, found charcoal there, took it, and returned to his friend Raven. While Raven was still asleep, Grebe rubbed him all over with charcoal. Raven awoke, inspected himself, and said to Grebe, "You have deceived me. Instead of painting me, you have rubbed me with charcoal." Grebe fled, but Raven pursued and overtook him, striking him with a stick. Grebe fell into the water. Raven broke his tail bone. Raven told him, "Now you will never rise from the water." From that time until this day, Grebe is always on the water.

In another Yukagir tale collected by Jochelson, Raven tricks Ptarmigan. Raven boasts of having stolen hares from the traps of people for which Ptarmigan reproves him. Raven departs in anger, and returns in Ptarmigan's absence, kills her children, and steals her outer garments. Ptarmigan complains about her loss. But Raven had been seen by Duck flying overhead, cawing, and carrying a

* Please see the note on page 1 regarding the use of the term Eskimo.

burden. Eagle then sends Woodpecker, Seagull and Face-Painted Duck to whom Raven confesses his crime, and is beaten so badly that he bleeds, Raven turns black, which is his color to the day.⁸

These are aetiological tales with a cautionary message; the grebe is a diving bird; we learn how it lost its tail, and how the Raven came to be colored black. These myths bear morals; if you play tricks, steal the game from the traps of other people, or tell lies, you will be punished. The Trickster is tricked. Outer garments are matters of life and death in the Arctic. The large cloak, or niglón, must not be left to lie carelessly about.

Steller, who visited the Kamchadals in the eighteenth century, noticed that they ate the mushroom intoxicant, fly agaric, but that others drank the urine of those who ate the mushroom, which has the same intoxicating effect, albeit in milder form. Both the sea water and urine are salty, and in the tale, sea water is made of urine; for similars are wedded, also in alchemy. The tales recount how the birds, as the diving bird, really behave, and how human beings ought to comport themselves.

Likewise, in these tales, attention is paid to mutuality, tit for tat; Raven gets as much as he gives or takes. Hegel began his moral lesson for civil society with the maxim that we have as many rights as we have obligations. The Chukchis, Eskimos* and Yukagir have formulated for themselves, without the blessings of civil society, the doctrine of an eye for an eye.

Myth in the Foreign and Domestic Relations of the Chukchis

Myth is not real, but in myth we represent in a common and uncritical way how we feel about the real world. Creator in the Chukchi myth resembles a father, for he is male, adult, has a wife, and lives as adult, male, married Chukchi live; thus, he has a house, a cloak and other personal goods as his property. Further, he speaks in a human voice, in the Chukchi language, and is able to detect the difference between statements which bear a resemblance to the truth and the statements of dissemblers. Raven, the Trickster, steals Creator's cloak and when he is questioned about it, he lies, claiming that it is his own; but he is caught out in his lie. Because of the resemblance of Creator to a father, we say that the one represents the other. The resemblance is imperfect, however, for Creator is a figure

* Please see the note on page 1 regarding the use of the term Eskimo.

of the imagination, and not flesh and blood, living at a time before the earth and the sky were separated. Raven represents the dissembler and makes himself out to be what he is not. He tries his hand at Creation and tries to convince others that by this token he is the Creator but is detected in his dissemblance by the defects in his creations. Therefore, Raven is an imperfect dissembler. The Chukchis are clear about this.

There is a quantitative as well as a qualitative difference between Creator and Raven. Creator makes the sky, the land and the sea, and Raven imitates him, albeit on a lesser scale, in his creativity. Creator brings the mainland into being, Raven the smaller islands in the Bering Sea. Qualitatively, Creator's materials are the "noble" elements, earth, sky, water, whereas Raven's creative material is his own excrement. Raven in one sense is the opposite of Creator, but in another he is turned into his own opposite, becoming creative. The islands he creates are real islands. But there is more to the Chukchi creation myth than that. The Chukchis consider their tongue to be the genuine speech; they refer to themselves as the genuine people. The term Chukchi was given to them by the Russians, who learned it from the Chukchis's neighbors to the south, who spoke of them as Chukchi, rich in reindeer. The Chukchis agree to the name today; the Alaskan Eskimos* have agreed to the term Eskimo*; the Canadian Eskimos* retain the name Inuit. The Chukchis dwell in their genuine habitat, and are the genuine people, created, together with their land, by Creator. The St. Lawrence Island of the Bering Sea is inhabited by neighbors of the Chukchis, with whom they were at war in ancient times. The mythic representations are not seeming, fantastic, or mere inventions, but have a content which is overtly stated in this case. The myth of the Chukchis states that the Chukchis, their speech and land are real creations, and that the islands inhabited by their neighbors are the products of Raven, which are despicable, ignoble.

Representation in myth is an expression of popular attitudes about the real world, at home and abroad. The myth is a mixture of the known and the unknown: in the case of the known, we are sure, as they are the object of our cognitions and perceptions of the world, sea, land, and sky. There are some aspects of the world of which we are sure, for here is the land, there is the sea, and beyond is the sky. The land is firm beneath our feet, but we observe that the sea has waves, and, by analogy, put waves in the land. These land waves appear in Chukchi myths, but they are not traveled by living human beings and their

* Please see the note on page 1 regarding the use of the term Eskimo.

reindeer; instead, they are traveled by spirits of the reindeer and of the seals which the Chukchi hunt. Mythic space is other than our visible and tangible space.

The mythic time of the Chukchi is in some respects like our time, but in other respects is not. They divide the past from the present and proceed from the former to the latter; but they bring the two together in a different way from that of the evolutionists and historians of the European tradition. Raven is a figure to the Chukchis who belongs to the time of the first creation; but he does not disappear with that time, nor does he recede as the past recedes. On the contrary, Raven is ever present, and his actions are in the present, drawing out the song of the small grey bird in a thievish way. It is hardly necessary to repeat that there are European and other Western concepts of time which are comparable to this. We will examine this question in the following section.

On Myth, Time, and Mythic Time

Evolutionary doctrines in Europe and America had periodizing schemas as a prominent part of their apparatus. As a rule, such schemas presented the process of development of the humankind over the course of time as a straight line from the distant past to the present in such a way that what was once simple is now complex, and what was once small is now great. Once we lived in caves and huts, but now in houses of brick and mortar; we lived at that earlier time in small bands and communities, but now we live in great cities and nations. This developmental process was divided into epochs, in the earliest of which we lived by hunting wild beasts, collecting plants and the larvae of insects which grew by the bounty of nature, and by fishing; we later learned to domesticate the animals and plants, to master the ceramic and metallurgical crafts, the art of writing, and ultimately attained the level of civilization and of industry. Chief among the proponents of these evolutionary schemas were Herbert Spencer, Edward B. Tylor, and Lewis Henry Morgan. Boas opposed the evolutionary doctrines but sought a periodizing schema of another kind in the myths and mythic history of the Kwakiutl, Tsimshian and other peoples of the Pacific Coast; Baldwin Spencer and Francis J. Gillen sought another periodizing schema for the Aranda of Central Australia, Bogoraz pursued the same end for the Chukchis of Northeast Siberia; and in the sociological field, Durkheim and Max Weber propounded comparable schemas of periodization. The schemas of periodization, whether evolutionary or historical, were of European origin, and were generally Euro-centered, and these schemas were often imputed to the indigenous peoples whom the Europeans contacted.

By the study of myth, it was affirmed that the humankind advanced from the stage of pre-animism to the stage of animism in the religious field, according to Tylor and Weber, and from pre-logical to the logical mentality according to Lévy-Bruhl and Cassirer. The Maoris of New Zealand were found by Claude Lévi-Strauss to have expressed an evolutionary schema in their myths.

The classification of myths in periods, the earlier and the later, as an evolutionary schema is difficult to maintain. Certainly, our mechanical, industrial civilization is more complex than the arts and crafts of hunting bands; whether our life at the present time is more desirable or beautiful is another matter. It is doubtful that our myths are more complex or advanced than myths of those who lived by gathering wild plants and hunting animals. The themes and subjects of the myths change as our preoccupations with the problems of life change, but the mythic world is the same world of uncritical commitment to our beliefs, fears, hopes, cognitions, and worldviews, in the past and the present. Myths pass through periods as our lives pass through periods. Thought and study of myth also passes through periods. At one time they were studied as symbols, for they were conceived to be such. In the eighteenth century they were regarded as ciphers from which their mysteries were to be wrested, that is, by their decipherment. The mythological studies appear to pass through cycles, for myths are now taken up as codes to be decoded, as they were deciphered in the past.

It may be that the imputation of periodizing schemas of European origin to the non-European peoples is a simplification of notions of time, periods, and divisions of the world. It is most certain that, although we sometimes detect periods in myth, these periods do not coincide with other periods of time. Yet the evolution of the cosmos and of life are objective processes in time.

Evolutionary biologists have traced the appearance of species and their disappearance, having a fairly clear understanding of what comes before and what comes after in these evolutionary processes.

Classical mechanics and the technics of our world matter and the evidence of the senses are applied to a cosmos which is in a given order of nature and space-time. The cosmologists and astrophysicists have considered that this cosmos is in an evolutionary process, with a fairly clear relation of what was before and what was after, what earlier and what later. They write of what happened before, during, and after the formation of the galaxies and of our solar system. The myths evidently do not evolve in this way. Indeed, they do not evolve in any way, but related to our human situations, which we express by our myths. The objective time of the cosmos differs as far as can be from the mythic time; both are of different kinds, which, if they have a connection, is of our making. If we

judge that one myth or mythic time is more beautiful than another, that judgment is subjective.

Mythic time is unlike our time. There is a process of mythic time, but it does not precede "our" time. The two times are processes, but they are not coordinate, and proceed according to different rules. Mythic time and historical time are both "time," both having notions of then and now, before and after, earlier and later. But the mythic time is not an earlier period in a sequence according to which our time is later. It may be that a particular people will be found whose mythological concepts do indeed entail a periodization of this kind; the issue is not the veracity of a given ethnographic account in which such a periodization is found, but whether mythic time is another kind of time, which goes its own way, independently, before, during, and after our own. Mythic beings are said to have existed before the world assumed its present shape; but in many mythic traditions they are depicted as active at the present time, and as affecting the living in an immediate sense.

The Chukchi shaman believed that the lamp walked, and the walls of his room spoke to him in their own voices. These acts take place in another time, which is the time of myth and in our own time. The antlers walking in their procession have their place in another space than our own, and in our space. The account given by the shaman to Bogoraz was made in the time and space which is common to all, to the Chukchis and to us. The mythic time is not conceived to be before or after the common, real time. The processes of myth are not the same as ours yet are conceived to come into contact with ourselves. We are all human beings, whether Chukchi shamans or any other. The time, space, and action of the myth have their own interrelations; clearly to the shaman the time of myth is in the present in one sense, and the time of speaking with Bogoraz is in the present in another sense of the term. The antlers in their ghostly processional were here and now to the shaman in a subjective sense; that subjective sense was shared with many other Chukchis. Other peoples have their own subjective here and now. These subjective terms of reference are opposed to the objective space and time, or space-time. We have no notion before us that mythic time is real in the sense that the time in our concrete space-time is real. The problem concerns rather a partial conception or a misconception that the time of myth is thought, or felt, or believed to have preceded the time of our physical space-time. I think the evidence shows that the mythic time is not part of such sequence, that instead the mythic time is conceived or imagined to follow its own sequence, which is up to the shaman or a like informant to describe. Mythic time did not simply pass

away when our world came into being; it is therefore complex, and so is mythic space and its geography.

The Chukchi myths express their wonder at the processes of our world. The mushroom can be shredded effortlessly by our hands which are soft and weak when compared to a rock. But the mushroom, growing under the mighty rock, cracks and topples it. This is represented in the Chukchi myth, and refers to the processes not of some other time and place but here and now.

Thus, there is not, in their worldview, a straightforward process in time from the mythic *then* to the historically real *now*, nor a straightforward process in space from the mythic *there* to the real *here*. Two worlds are conceived by the Chukchis to be coexistent, in interacting with one another; the other world acts on our own, and we seek to ward off its desired effects. The mythic work is not supposed to cease to exist when the world as we know it assumed the shape that it has. This permeation of our world by another is both the expression of a cosmo-vision and an anthropovision. The ancestors of the mythic time are supposed also to be still existent and still active.

Two learned workers in the field of myth, Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend,⁹ have dealt with myth and the order of time in history; they distinguish myth from fable, relate myth to history, and provide several indicia of what myth is. Hamlet shows himself in the aspect of a true myth; his story, in their account, is a universal one. It is a reflection of Time, having living reality, awesome features, expressing the laws of the universe in the language of time, talking of the cosmos, which is expressed in a tale. A thought ruled by Time, they declare, can be expressed only in myth. Fable is simple, unserious; the events of myth recede into mere fable. The mythic events are told in stories so strong that they have lived on vividly and are the true myths. All myths present tales, some weird, some incoherent, some epic, some tragic. The *Arthuriad* is a myth; Thomas More's *Utopia* is another; any powerful perduring tale, whether outlandish or earthly, is a myth. Time in this conception is in its treatment twofold: it is the temporal sequence of the tale, and the temporal survival of the tale over the many generations. De Santillana and von Dechend have well understood that myth is an account of some subject which grasps us and does not let go. They have contributed an important element to our theory of myth. We can agree that a powerful, perduring tale can be a myth. It becomes a myth if we make it so, as the utopianists made the tale of Utopia into a myth; More's tale had this as a potentiality, which many who took it up have realized, by committing themselves to it. Claude Lévi-Strauss and Geoffrey S. Kirk pointed to the power of narrative

in myth to hold our attention; Lévi-Strauss has written that myth is so powerful in this respect that it survives in translation—“even the worst.”

To this we add that the law asserts an even greater hold over us than any narration, given that we are loyal to the society whose law is in question. The law as myth maintains the most profound and extensive hold of all over and within us. The hold of myth as narrative, as law, as symbol, or as vision is a lasting one, and is an important, even a central part of the social bond. The durative power of the myth in its various modes of expression in a given tradition is intensified. The long-lasting aspect of myth, which de Santillana and von Dechend have emphasized, is then exaggerated, transmogrified, and hypostasized; it is made to appear as though everlasting, which is a source of comfort and guidance in a world beset with uncertainties. No less important than the power of the law to hold us in its grasp is the power of the symbol and the vision of the future; and the grip of all of these is especially strong in their mythic expression.

True myth, de Santillana and von Dechend have written, has a power which is the reflection of time; above all, myth is a profound sentiment which lasts over time: the interrelation of time and myth in Durkheim’s program for the social sciences complements the foregoing one.

If myth is a thought which is ruled by time, it is also through myth that we achieve mastery over time. Time in myth is a twofold process by virtue of the temporal sequence of the myth and the temporal survival of the myth over the many generations. We have seen that through myth, Aristotle, Kircher, Vico, Herder, Karl Otfried Müller, Hegel, Lobeck, Creuzer and Jung sought to master time, getting back through myth to times gone by. That mastery is shown by the conversion of cosmic time into a process which is controlled in the mythic account by the human power of utterance, which is greatly developed as poetry. The myth is in this sense a kind of poetry; this is apart from the thought that there is poetry in myth, or that myth is in many cases poetic expression. Time in myth is thus a manifold process.

The mastery of time in myth proceeds in relation to the calendar, which has its expression in myth and its sources in the observation of nature, of the sun, the moon, the stars and planets, the succession of the seasons and of day and night, and the generations of plant and animal life. Professors Eduardo Matos Moctezuma (of Mexico) and Luis Lumbreras (of Peru) have gone even further. They have noticed that in the ancient history of Mexico and Peru, the plants and animals were domesticated, and that time was domesticated in the Aztec and Inca calendars. This is a development out of the mastery of time by the hunting,

gathering and fishing peoples, such as the Arandas and the Eskimos*, who had little or no domestication, but have mastery of time in their calendars; this mastery is brought to expression in their myths. There is a quantitative element in the mastery of time by the various peoples, hunters, gatherers and fishers, the agricultural, horticultural and pastoral groups, the nomadic and the settled, the villagers and the urban civilizations. We are ruled by the consciousness of time which we have mastered; we struggle with time in myth and in social life. We have already referred to the myth of Kronos, the Greek god who was conceived as time, Chronos. Kronos devoured his children as time devours us. But there is more to that myth, for Kronos also destroyed his father, Ouranos, the world, space and time. Reading this myth as an allegory, it is we who destroy the father, the world, space and time. We also conquer time by extending our span of life and improving our health within that span; yet other conquests of time are found in myth and figures of speech.

Time is in myth, and myth is in time, in all ways imaginable. Among these is the entry of time and myth into one another through the processes of history. Some aspects of history are objectively real, and historical time is real in all its aspects. Myth enters reality through time and history in various ways; thus, the concept of myth in relation to time which de Santillana and von Dechend have posed is a problem which can be solved. The most obvious and well-known way in which we enter the process of time is through mythic, historic, and mytho-historic narrative. Narrative enters time, and is in time, even if the narrative is a fiction. For the narrative moves back and forth in time. Even if the narrative is an invention it has within it events and a connection between them in such a way that one of the events is earlier and the other is later in the narrative sequence. Through fictional, even fantastic, imaginary narrative, and through narration of real and actual processes we discover what time is and what it holds over us. We discover that time is in our grasp and command.

There are other ways whereby myth enters our social reality which are perhaps less obvious but are indeed more powerful than the mythic narrative; these are the law, symbol and vision as myth which begin in our social processes, take leave of them, and re-enter our reality through historical time. If we learn what time is through narrative, this means that we learn time consciousness thereby. We learn of the conation as the effort of subjective will and desire toward our hoped-for end through mythic narrative. This narrative is our experience in myth, which is

* Please see the note on page 1 regarding the use of the term Eskimo.

shared in common, and which embraces our commitment to it; the common and shared experience is either traditional or novel, in either case a process of time and a category of time. But more than that the myth is a law, symbol or vision, which bears not only on our relation to the past but to the future. The law is a prescription of how we are to act, feel, think, and relate to one another. The vision is a relation of ourselves in the present to the future. The Decalogue is myth as law and vision in this sense.

The myth as narrative, law, symbol and vision is the expression and consciousness of our origins, our present place, and our common expectations; thus, it tells in an uncritical way, which we grasp firmly to ourselves, of our past, present and future, how these temporal processes are linked to one another and to us, and how we stand to them. The myth is a subjective expression of our will and desire which enters into our objective social reality through our acts and relations in common. The myth creates nothing but is the representation of our common life and of our consciousness of its process and direction.

The relation of myth and time has been vigorously argued by de Santillana and von Dechend; an equally cogent argument has been advanced by Claude Lévi-Strauss for the relation of myth in space, abstracted from time, as that of de Santillana and von Dechend abstracts myth from space. Georges Sorel abstracted myth from time and history; Franz Boas and Geoffrey S. Kirk have looked at myth as a process of history and of tradition. Some of these views of myth have already been stated, others will be examined later in this work. Our comprehension of myth and of mythic experience would be poorer if any of these ways of looking into our subject matter were ignored. Myths cannot be grasped as mere abstractions and we have therefore considered at many places the myths themselves.

We have mentioned the myth of myth. What we have to say about myth itself often becomes a myth. There appear to be distinctive modes of thought in the study of myth, each with a predominant problem and trend of thought, *Zeitgeist*, or spirit of the time. In the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth, there was much thought of the periodization of evolution and of history, and this thought and theory were both subjective and objective, affecting both evolutionists and anti-evolutionists alike. Those who opposed an evolutionary periodization of human affairs often introduced a periodization of myth and history, the mythic time supposedly preceding the historic time. While such periodization sometimes is apt, sometimes it is not. The thought about periodization in the mind of the ethnologist has been at times properly, but at times improperly, attributed to myths of the peoples studied.

We avoid any universal and automatic functionalism. Not everything in myth or pertaining to myth can be explained by time; some of the myth's most important aspects can indeed be explained in reference to time, but not all. There is, as well, the idea that myth is not in history but in the present, here and now. This would appear to controvert the idea, so carefully laid out by de Santillana and von Dechend, that time is inseparable from history and history from time. Which of these ideas about myth, time and the perpetual present is correct? All of these thinkers have taken up a part of the field of myth, occupied and mastered it, shaping it meanwhile to their several purposes. Time is of all kinds, linear, non-linear, subjectively flowing and segmentary. The segments are in time arranged into successive periods, and the periods are conceived to be progressive, regressive, advancing and sinking. Time has a function in myth, but not all aspects of myth have a function relative to time, for some aspects of myth fall outside time, and have nothing to do with it. But a good deal of myth and thinking about myth has to do with time and its segmentation into periods.

The periods in some cases resemble our periods of history or of evolution, but once we step outside Western historical and evolutionary periods, the segmentation of time and its periodization take turnings which may appear strange to us.

In one sense, by means of a periodizing outlook, the myths of the past time give way, as they are conceived to be once upon a time, but not now, to present reality. They were but are not. In another sense, the mythic action was and is, but not in our time sequence, which proceeds from the past to the present. The theory of time is complex and multifaceted enough to encompass both these approaches to "mythic" in relation to "real" time.

We observe that what the Chukchis call *lye*, genuine or real, refers to the Chukchi people, their speech and myths as genuine or real, and others which are not. This concept of genuineness and reality differs from that which was given above.

One kind of functionalism explains or accounts for everything; time, it is said, accounts for everything in myth, a view of myth which perhaps goes too far.

The great ethnographer V. G. Bogoraz thought that the humankind proceeds through five stages of religious evolution, at the early part of which is found the belief in ancestral spirits, which gives way to higher stages until attaining the highest, which is monotheism. His colleague and friend, Waldemar Jochelson, opposed this view of the evolutionary stages of religion, and considered that various elements of belief are coexistent; in the theoretical conception of Jochelson, the magical amulets, beliefs in ancestral spirits, totems, guardian angels, and efficacious saints who intervene on behalf of human beings in order to fulfill their

desires, wishes, prayers and hopes are various manifestations of related attitudes, which are not restricted to a primitive stage as opposed to a higher one.

J. G. Frazer thought that the Australians practiced magic, not religion, and supported his opinion by the consideration, that among the original inhabitants of that continent the magical cult predominated over religious beliefs in souls, mythical beasts and deities. This is the expression of another periodizing schema, which leads from the stage of magic to that of religion.

By means of an outlook which divides human history into progressive periods, certain perspectives to myth are propounded, and others are excluded. One of these, which has hitherto been excluded, is the view that there are myths of the past and myths of the present in addition to reality, past and present. We may think that the myths of the past, as they were conceived by our ancestor, were more valid than our present myths. Certainly, Bogoraz and Jochelson thought of the Chukchi and Yukagir myths in this way, and many others thought so in the nineteenth century, and even in our own. Theories of history have been constructed which have referred to an age of heroes and of myth; Hegel's theory of history and myth is of this kind. But from another standpoint, myths are constructed at present, bearing on the present, on the past and future. Their truth or falsity does not come into question, but our commitment to them is no less intense than that of the ancients to theirs. They are valid to those who hold them to be so. The psychological interpretations of myth are neither more nor less valid than the historical; each provides a perspective which enriches our research. The psychological investigations sometimes introduce a universal, as an archetype of the mind, which is supposed to go back to an evolutionary period deep in the past. This approach to myth is a conflation of several perspectives and is kind of myth of myth. What may work in curing problems in a psychiatric clinic at present is projected in this way onto the whole of humanity throughout its history and evolution, but without warrant. Now our present-day experiences are expressed intensively in our myths, also imaginatively, and coherently or confusedly, according to our cognitive and affective capacities. The precision and richness of our minds, and our sociographic and ethnographic knowledge, are exposed in myth and are orderly or disorderly therein. The service of myth as an expression of a worldview has been brought out by Barrington Moore, to whom we will return below. Myth making is an orderly process in the minds of those whose minds are well ordered. The question of disorder in myth and its source is left open. The theory of myth refers to both. Myth is contemporaneous, archaizing, idealizing, factual, concrete and abstract, diffuse, bizarre, powerful, weak, organized and not, bearing

on the worldview of the tellers in interaction with the listeners, and with the ethnologists.

The Chukchi cosmogonical myth of Creator, Raven, the forgotten cloak and the fly agaric proceeds in mythic time through a sequence from the beginning, which is earlier, to the end, which is later on a single, one-directional line. The sequence of the myth is the same as the sequence and direction of our time. The duration of the account and the process of creation are both short. The personae are introduced with brief characterizations, so that we know them. All is then in place, earth, sky, water, in their particular forms, as ravines, lakes, seas and rivers. The tale gains a dramatic impact by introducing some surprises out of the general fund of our knowledge; thus the surprises are not surprises, but are acceptable within the bounds of the tale: everyone knows that we forget things from time to time; it is understandable that Creator forgot to create Raven, and left his cloak lying about, from which Raven then made his appearance: everyone knows that mushrooms, *amanita muscaria*, or fly agaric, is broken in pieces and eaten, then inducing a state of trance; in that intoxicated state we often disclose what we would rather have kept hidden; it is well-known that Raven is a thieving bird. From this general fund of permissible surprises, the first part of the tale flows into the second, which is its conclusion. There is a nexus between the parts, but there are several reversals. The Creator is at first all-powerful and wise but is then revealed to be forgetful; Creator and his wife are bored, and so they create the world; Raven ought to have kept his origin secret but revealed it. The rules are breakable, within the boundaries of myth. There is a close nexus between the sequence of mythic time and our own, but their difference is also evident, for Raven is a figure in both times, the mythic and our own. But more than that, outer garments, places on which to sleep, the relations of husband and wife, trickery and honesty, the mushroom intoxicant and its familiar trance state are all present in both times, whereas the sea, sky and earth are not. The myth has constants and variables, and these vary from myth to myth. In another myth the earth and sea constant and the mushroom intoxicant is a variable. In myth, time and space are changeable, and so are the conditions of being and of life.

Notes

1 Wilhelm Wundt. *Völkerpsychologie*. Leipzig Vol. 4. 1910.

2 Wundt, op. cit. vol. 2, pts. 1 and 3, 1905, 1908. — Franz Boas. *The Mythology of the Bella Coola Indians*, Jesup Expedition, vol. 1, New York 1898. Idem., *The Central*

Eskimo, Bureau of American Ethnology, Annual Report, vol. 6, 1888. Idem., *Tsimshian Mythology*, Bureau of American Ethnology, Annual Report, vol. 31, 1916. Idem., *Mythology and Folktales of the North American Indians*, *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 27, 1914.

General Note on The Myth of Asdiwal. See Franz Boas. *Tsimshian Texts* (New Series). American Ethnological Society. Publications, vol. 3, 1912. The myth is titled, The Story of Asdi-wa'l; or, The Meeting on the Ice. The name is also pronounced of Asi-wa'l. The myth is listed, but not retold, in: Franz Boas. *Tsimshian Mythology*. Bureau of American Ethnology, vol. 31. 1916. See further, Claude Lévi-Strauss. *La Geste d'Asdiwal*. Paris. Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Section, Sciences Religieuses. Ann. 1958–1959. Repr.: Les Temps modernes, Marches 1961. The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism. E. R. Leach ed. See there the article by Mary Douglas. *The Meaning of Myth*, with special reference to 'La Geste d'Asdiwal'. London 1967.

Franz Boas published the names of those from whom he wrote down the texts. The reader is directed to his work for these accounts.

For the Myths of Asihwil see Franz Boas. *Tsimshian Texts*. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 27. Washington 1902. — A note on the potlatch. This is a ceremonial feast given by the Kwakiutl, Tsimshian and other peoples of the Pacific Coast in traditional times. For the feast they accumulated property in skins, blankets, candlefish, together with (in some cases) copper insignia of rank. At the potlatch they consumed food stored up for the ceremonial occasion, inviting their village and a rival to the feast. By having the wealth, the food and the copper ensign consumed, the giver of the potlatch gained prestige and rank; the rival sought on a later occasion to outdo the first one. The expression of this rivalry was one of the chief purposes of the potlatch. — Asihwil in giving the potlatch of the elk skins gained prestige in the Tsimshian village in the myth, as the psychic concomitant of the gift of food.

The potlatch giver Asihwil, of the Tsimshians, the Pawnee mythic figure, Ready-to-Give, and the chief protagonist of the Chukchi tales of hostilities *aqälilet pymylte*, are representative culture heroes of the same general kind, with the differences between them which have been mentioned.

- 3 Krader. The Shamanist Tradition. *Anthropos*, op. cit.
- 4 V. G. Bogoraz. *Chukchee Mythology*, American Museum of Natural History, vol. 8, Leiden and New York 1913. Idem., The Folklore of Northeastern Asia, *American Anthropologist*, n.s., Vol. 4, No. 4 1902.
- 5 On the relationship between God and demonic powers see Freud's discussion of Wundt on taboo and antithetical terms in section (1) of chapter two 'Taboo and Emotional Ambivalence' in *Totem and Taboo*, op. cit, pp, 18–25.
- 6 V. G. Bogoraz. *Materialy po izučeniju čukotskogo jazyka I fol'klora*, vol. I, Trudy Jakutskoj Eksped., pt. 3, vol. 11, 1900. Idem., *The Chukchee*. Jesup North Pacific Exped., vol. 7, Leiden and New York 1904–1909.

- 7 V. G. Bogoraz. K psihologii šamanstva u narodov severovostočnoj Azii. (On the Psychology of Shamanism of the Peoples of Northeastern Asia.) *Etnografičeskoe Obozrenie*, 1910, nos. 1–2. See Lawrence Krader. Primary Reification in Primitive Myth. *Diogenes*, no. 56. 1966. The article was originally titled, Reification in Chukchi Myth. The terms primary and primitive are not correct in this context.
- 8 Waldemar Jochelson. *The Yukagir*, Jesup Exped., vol. 9, 1926. Krader, in *Diogenes*. 1966, op. cit. L. Krader accounts of the work of V. G. Bogoraz and W. Jochelson in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1967 ed., and *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 1968.
- 9 Giorgio de Santillana, Hertha von Dechend. *Hamlet's Mill. An Essay on Myth and the Frame of Time*. Boston 1983. See the chapter, Myth, History and Reality. F. C. Baur, as we have seen, thought that myth is time and symbol space. The world of learning is as rich, colorful varied as the world of myth. De Santillana and von Dechend have worked in the fertile fields of Orientalism and the classics of Greece and Rome, and poke fun at those who have studied the one but not the other. They have the same opinion about myth as Baur, and the opposite of Lévi-Strauss, the former their predecessor by over a century, the latter their contemporary. Without ridiculing either side in these debates, we think something can be learned from all of them. They begin with myth as the realm of the fantastic, hereafter, possible and impossible. They are all opposed to those who think of myth as realistic, actual, current. The theory of myth which is here presented takes these opposing views into account.

Winnebago Trickster Myths

Radin, Malinowski, Kluckhohn

Myth is a product of people who live in space and time, not in isolation, but in the world. Myths have their geography, and their history, changing with the times, with the lives of the people, and in turn changing the popular perceptions of the events and the times. Raymond Firth, whom we refer to elsewhere, brought out this aspect of myth. No people, however remote they may appear to be from us, is without its history or apart from history. The peoples of Northeastern Siberia did not live in isolation but had contacts with peoples in other parts of the world. Their shamanism is of the same general kind as the shamanism of the Eskimos*, the Tungus-speaking peoples, the Yakuts, the Buryats, the ancient Mongols and Turks. Their myths have many themes in common with those of the American Indians, among them being the theme of the trickster, Raven. We will see the trickster appears among the Pawnee Indians of the American Plains, and among the Winnebago Indians to the east and north of them. The Chukchis had many cult practices in common with their neighbors and with peoples far to the south of them; they imbibed the intoxicating mushroom in their myths; that mushroom, or its congeners, was part of many cults in northernmost and southernmost Asia. They are in history and have their history.

* Please see the note on page 1 regarding the use of the term Eskimo.

These perspectives toward history and myth appear to be obvious today, warranting no justification, but such a view was not always so readily apparent. Many books were published in the past which referred to the peoples without writing as “the peoples without history.” It was as though the only history was thought to be written history. Thus, the *Communist Manifesto* of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels began with the notion that history is the history of class warfare, whereby it was implied that the peoples without social classes and without the struggles between them were without history. Engels later amended this thought: he meant *written* history. But this changes the original thought not at all, for many aspects of class struggle are unwritten. They had earlier meant perhaps that the history of the peoples they know best was determined by the warfare between the social classes.

In our view, all human works are in history, that is to say, they have their history. The older view, that history is a fact of life of the literate nations and no other, still has its vestiges in such phrases as “prehistory” or “protohistory” of a people, a nation, or of the humankind, phrases which imply an untenable view of human beings and their history. The periodizing schemas, which proceed from “prehistory” to “history” are ethnocentric views of the world and of history.

In setting forth the preoccupation of mythologists with symbols and deciphering of mysteries in myths during one historical epoch, and the preoccupation with borrowing and diffusion of myths in another, we do not present one more periodizing schema of the history of mythology. We do not think of a progression from one period to another, for many mythologists still today are preoccupied with diffusions of myths, and others with decoding or deciphering them. Periodization is often a subjective scheme, in which we express an unspoken desire to live and work in one time rather than another. There are objective indices of human development beside these.

The Trickster appears both in Siberian and North American myths. Paul Radin¹ recorded Winnebago myths, which he classed among the prose narratives. These narratives are of two kinds. One is *waiKAN*, what is sacred; it takes place in a past which is irretrievably gone, belonging to a realm of things no longer possible or attainable by men or spirits. No *waiKAN* could be told in the summer, or at least it could not be told when the snakes are above ground; and myths had no tragic ending. Their chief mythic figures were always divine, such as Trickster, Red Horn (He-who-wears-human-heads-as-ear-pendants), Thunderbird, Hare, Morningstar, a. o. These figures could not be killed, or if they were killed, suffered death only temporarily; hence the mythic themes could not end tragically. Hare and other *waiKAN* figures were, accordingly, or at any rate, according to

Winnebago “theologians,” animal spirits and were distinct from living animals, such as hares, etc. Trickster in Winnebago is *wakdjunkaga*, a word of unknown etymology. The second kind of Winnebago prose narrative is *worak*, whose chief figures are human, rarely divinities; the events of the *worak* take place in our own world; *worak*, what-is-recounted, can be told at any time and must end tragically. No *worak* could ever become a *waikan*, but sometimes a *waikan* could be turned into a *worak*.

The *waikan* are myths properly so-called, having a place in myth cycles, which are connected with particular figures, Trickster, Hare, Red Horn, Morningstar, and others. The Winnebago myths are their sacred narratives, the myths of Trickster, Hare and Red Horn having the common features of all Winnebago *waikan*, dealing with supernatural figures, taking place in some other time than in the time of our everyday experience, and being recounted at one season of the year, but not another. The themes and treatment in the trickster *waikan* do not differ from the themes and treatment of the other Winnebago myths.

Chukchi Raven and Winnebago Trickster are like the Homeric gods, having human traits; they are on occasion sly, obstreperous, sullen or capricious; they relate to the side of the human personality which is obscene and scurrilous. We have seen from the reports of Bogoraz that the Chukchis regard the mythic Raven as a trickster, liar, and thief, attributing the same traits to the living bird. Raven is also creative, but there is an ambivalence to his creativity.

Andrew Lang thought that religion is serious, its words are holy and believed; the myth on the other side is playful, scatological, unholy and disbelieved. This schema may work for some periods of ancient Greek religion and myth, for Zeus cohabits with many women who are not his wives; Aphrodite is vain, wishing to be judged the fairest and playing up to human lust in order to gain her end. Other religions of ancient Greece, in the various cults of Orpheus and Dionysus, are not this kind. Trickster and Raven have traits in common with the Homeric gods but differ in others. The Homeric gods were not held to be sacred in the works of Plato, but he had other beliefs which were sacred to him. There is no evidence that the Chukchis doubted the accounts of Creator and Raven; they believed in both of them. For these reasons, I do not think that there are two systems of the Chukchis, one religious and one mythic, nor are there two such Winnebago systems. Lang had a particular insight, and appears to have over-generalized it, beginning with a certain model; others, although their model is not always the same, have acted in a similar way.

The period of the beginning of the twentieth century was one in which a number of professorships in departments in universities, and curatorships in

departments of museums together with research institutes and government projects and posts in anthropology and ethnology were introduced in many parts of the world. These foundation processes of the twentieth century were developments on a large scale of the more modest undertakings of like kind which had been opened up at the end of the preceding century.

We will limit our comments on the significance of these developments to two tensions or oppositions which became evident in the study of myth at this time. One of these is the institutionalization of the study of myth, the other the opposition between fieldwork and mental systems of all kinds, whether scientific theories or philosophical and psychoanalytic speculations about myth. As to the first of these, the work in ethnography and mythology by missionaries, travelers, gifted amateurs and administrators, local residents and judicial authorities gave way to professions and institutions devoted to these particular studies. Some of the people in the former group, such as Edward B. Tylor and Adolf Bastian, then moved over to the professional and institutional side, the one in the university, the other in the museum world, as part of the development of their discipline during the late nineteenth century. Claude Lévi-Strauss has called attention to the importance of the publications and other activities of the Bureau of American Ethnology during this period. The organizational work of Antti Aarne in the classification of oral folklore, including myth, was a product of this time.

The professional anthropologists and ethnologists who wrote on the subject of myth related their writings and theoretical views to their own fieldwork. Franz Boas brought out his generalizations relative to myth in close conjunction with his work among the Central Eskimos*, the Tsimshians and the Kwakiutls; Bronislaw Malinowski related his theories of myth to his work among the Trobriand Islanders of the South Pacific; Bogoraz and Jochelson brought out their views on this head in connection with their fieldwork among the Chukchis, Yukagir, and Siberian Eskimos*. In the following generation, Clyde Kluckhohn developed his theories of myth in relation to his fieldwork among the Navahos, carrying his theoretical work a step further in relation to themes and problems of psychology; Paul Radin wrote on myth in connection with his own work among the Winnebago Indians.

The philosophers, Schelling, Lévy-Bruhl, Bergson and Cassirer, and the psychoanalytic schools of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung had treated myth in relation to the mind, truth, symbolic processes and forms, the unconscious and

* Please see the note on page 1 regarding the use of the term Eskimo.

the consciousness. The philosophers raised questions about myth with respect to abstractions, universal or philosophical simples which were not further reducible to anything else. The psychoanalysts sought for insights into their clinical practice through myth on the one hand, and for speculative systems of the psyche on the other.

As a sub-class of this second opposition with regard to the study of myth, Marcel Mauss distinguished between the gathering activities of the ethnographers and the analyzing activities of the ethnologists. These divisions and tensions cannot be taken too far, for the ethnographers did indeed express themselves theoretically; yet, for their part as a rule, the speculators held themselves aloof from collection of raw data of myth. We notice at the same time that the cleft between those who studied myths from the ethnographic or ancient sources, that is, who regarded myth as a traditional problem, and those who studied myth in relation to the present and to the political ideologies was well-nigh absolute.

Bronislaw Malinowski² wrote that myth investigated among the living is not symbolic but a direct expression of its object; it is not an explanation to satisfy a scientific interest, but a narrative revival of a primeval reality; it is recounted to satisfy deep religious longings and customary needs; the function of myth in primitive culture is to express, heighten, and legislate belief; to strengthen custom; to supply a warrant for the effectiveness of ritual; and to provide practical rules for conduct. Myth, he held, is found in its living original form in primitive society; there it is not merely a story told, but a reality lived. It is something really believed to have really happened in primeval times, and which continues to influence the world and human destinies. As the sacred story of the Bible lives in the ritual of the devout Christian, governing his ritual, morality, faith, and conduct, so the myth of the savage does for him.³ Malinowski used the terms *direct expression* and *reality lived*, *primeval reality*, and *living original form*, having in view their relation to the practical rules of conduct of the people. He did not deal in absolutes but accepted explanatory or aetiological functions of myths in some ways, not in others. The notion of direct expression and reality lived are not taken as philosophical universals, but as notations in an ethnographic record of the way in which the myths were recounted and heard.

It is no longer the practice (in ethnology) to write of primitives and savages in the way that Durkheim and Mauss, Boas and Malinowski did, for these terms are now deemed to have an ethnocentric burden; they appear to express a subjective value judgment, and to imply a relation of superior to inferior which is humanly unacceptable. Notions such as primitive categories and elementary forms, direct expression in myth as opposed to a mediate relation between the symbol and its

object therein emphasize a difference between peoples which is made into an absolute, having found its way into the writings of speculative philosophers. The empirical research is relative, and some capacities of expression may be found in a style broadly distributed among the peoples with and without writing; Lévy-Bruhl, Bergson and Cassirer, among others, have taken up in their works on myth certain empirical notions and made them into universals. Past practices in the empirical domain are not the current ones; the substance has not changed, whereas the terms and style of expression by ethnologists have been modified.

Malinowski wrote of myth as a revivification of a primordial reality; he did so in the consciousness that this primordial reality is the same as the beginning in the myth of Creation in the Bible and the Redemption of Man through Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross. Those who attributed an aetiological function to all myths were guilty of the error of arguing from a partial or occasional occurrence to a universal. Moreover, the primitive aspect of myth is not limited to savages but is a living reality to living peoples everywhere; it is as the primitive in all the humankind.

Malinowski did not write in an outmoded language representing views and solutions to ethnological problems of mythology belonging to the past. He wrote in a way which in the last decades of the twentieth century is taken to be apposite.

Clyde Kluckhohn took up the problem of myth in a narrower focus, with respect to ritual alone.⁴ Myth and ritual are interdependent, but neither is derived from the other. The myth and ritual are parts of a symbolic system, which is constituted of further systems. Myth is a system of word symbols, ritual a system of symbols of objects and acts. Both myth and ritual are affective, not cognitive processes; they are symbolic systems which deal with the same human situations in the same affective mode. Kluckhohn's treatment of myth and ritual is psychological in a sense that Malinowski's is not. Malinowski made reference to factors of individual psychology, such as longings and needs, but concerned himself more fundamentally with myth in relation to custom, rules of conduct, and generally with the social functions of myth and religion. Kluckhohn took up as fundamental the analysis of the psychological basis of ritual which he then transposed onto a social plane or context; he considered ritual to be an obsessive repetitive activity which was often a symbolic dramatization of social "needs." Mythology in Kluckhohn's theory is the rationalization of the same needs, which were conceived to be psychological, as opposed to economic or social; according to this view of needs, ritual and myth provide a cultural storehouse of adjustive responses for individuals. The theory of myth in Kluckhohn's representation is a means of accounting for cultural and social processes by psychological

explanations; this is made plain not only by his reference to obsessive repetitive acts in ritual, and their symbolic dramatization in myth, not only by his references to needs of the individual versus “needs” of the society, but also by his references to the adjustive responses of individuals, all of which are elements in psychological analysis. The adjustive responses are means of treating anxiety, for instance, concerning sickness. Myth and ritual are drawn on for curing not the body’s sickness but the anxiety in its confrontation; the anxieties are of several kinds, those of the individual who is ill, of the kinfolk in attendance, or wider circles of the community.

In addition to anxiety, Kluckhohn brought other psychological problems into this body of theory in connection with their possible treatment by ritual acts and their representation by myth, such as aggressive feelings and deeds both within the local group, the family, or community, and outward; fears, such as fear of abandonment or of hunger, have likewise been studied in this context. Kluckhohn pointed to the sublimation in myth of antisocial acts in general and of aggression in particular. By means of myth and ritual, the antisocial potentialities are discharged into socially acceptable conduits. Moreover, myth and ritual are responses to the need of the humankind for regularity, particularly in respect of the cognitive and affective spheres; at this point, Kluckhohn referred to the anxiety potential of the members of a community, which has been mentioned.

Myth in relation to ritual was transposed into a psychological problem *grosso modo* by Malinowski, and in great detail by Kluckhohn; it was originally conceived as a sociological problem by Durkheim and as a historical one by Robertson Smith; Harrison and Cornford conceived the problem of myth in relation to ritual in the historical aspect of ethnology. Joseph Fontenrose⁵ criticized Frazer’s treatment of myth and ritual; Kluckhohn pointed to the case of the Todas, where a rich ritual does not appear to be accompanied by an equally rich myth system, and to the cases of the Mohave Indians, peoples of South Africa and ancient Greece, where an extensive system of myth existed without a comparably extensive ritual system. There are enough of these ethnographic studies to indicate that no general law governing a close relation of myth and ritual can be put forward; we cannot conclude that myth is derived from ritual, or ritual from myth; nor can we conclude that myth and ritual are in a necessary, or a one-to-one relation to one another.

A further problem of myth as ritual concerns the recounting of myth as a ceremonial act, not to explain such an act, nor to avow a belief, but to recite the myth as a ritual. The Chukchis recited their myths, in the presence of V. G. Bogoraz, in such a way as to perform a rite; to this rite a magical deed was attached, which

was intended to calm the tempest. In theory we separate myth from magic; the performance of the myth as a ritual and the achievement of a magical effect are indeed not the same. Thus, the Chukchis also recited incantations and conjurations, which are not myths, for magical purposes, and applied their myths to these ends; some of their myths as tales were attached to rituals, were as such rituals, and are or were performed with the same end in view as their incantations; a considerable proportion of the Chukchi, Koryak, Yukagir, and Eskimo* myths had little to do with their rituals.

At the beginning of this section, brief reference was made to the question of history and its periodization, time and myth. The Winnebagos thought that the history of the world was divided into two periods, one of myth, *waikan*, which took place in the past and is gone forever; the other period and its events are depicted in the present time by tales called *worak*. The humankind is rich in speculations about time, history and myth. Some of the most learned writers about myth who are mentioned in this work think that mytho-history represents a certain period, and that history succeeded that period; the Hegelians are of this school of thought about myth and historical periods, which has something in common with the Winnebago view. But others, such as Schelling and Cassirer, thought of myth as being timeless, or outside space and time.

Notes

- 1 Paul Radin. *The Trickster*. London 1955.
- 2 Bronislaw Malinowski. *Myth in Primitive Psychology*. London 1926, chapter 1. The Role of Myth in Life.
- 3 See also Malinowski. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London 1922.
- 4 Clyde Kluckhohn. Myths and Rituals. *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 35, 1942, pp. 45–79.
- 5 Joseph Fontenrose. *The Ritual Theory of Myth*. California 1966.

* Please see the note on page 1 regarding the use of the term Eskimo.

What Is True Myth?

Pawnee Creation and Coyote Myths. Dorsey and Grinnell

George A. Dorsey, in his work on *The Pawnee Mythology*,¹ collected tales from four Pawnee bands or tribes. They recognized two great categories of tales, those which are true, and are supposed to relate to actual happenings, and those which are false, and are considered to be inventions, chiefly by old Pawnee men, for the purpose of conveying some moral precept. The tales which are true are further divided: (1) Tales concerning the supernatural beings of the heavens. Many of these are cosmogonic, having a religious element. They are told as a rule during religious ceremonies, but not as part of the ritual. They are told during periods of rest during the chanting of a long ritual, at which time the priests recount the tale of the origin of their band, or the beginnings of the great buffalo hunt, on which these Plains Indians in part depended for their livelihood. (2) Tales of the culture hero "Ready-To-Give;" these tales may or may not be true, but are associated with a supernatural being of the north, who is the supreme guardian deity in matters of food quests. This deity is Kawaharu, the patron of hunters, and in these tales, the hero, usually a poor boy, defeats a human enemy, or else finds and brings the buffalo to his starving village. These tales are told in order to encourage heroic thoughts in young men, many of them having to do with the calling of the buffalo. (3) Stories which are told as true, treating of the wonderful deeds of supernatural beings of the earth. Most of these tales concern the acquisition of an individual medicine, or Manitou. They explain the rites of the medicine-men,

and with these tales there are many songs. The tales are considered as private property and belong either to individual medicine-men or to a group of them, who control a medicine ceremony, and recount the tales, sing the songs and perform the medicine rites only on special occasions, on receipt of some agreed upon recompense. These tales explain the medicine rites, or the origin of the medicine, such as the loon or beaver medicine, or else the origin of the medicine powers of individual medicine-men; these tales are hereditary, passing from father to son. (4) Tales of the mean trickster, Coyote, or Wolf; they teach especially the ethics of the Pawnee customs; they are told as inventions, which are known to be false; they are told to encourage ambition in boys and girls, to overcome bashfulness, and are also told as a pastime, for entertainment. Coyote is here depicted as a dissembler, who is caught out in his tricks, sometimes being punished for them, and sometimes by cleverness getting away. Pawnee Coyote, Raven of the Chukchis, and Trickster of the Winnebagos are much like one another.

The Pawnees distinguished between their priests and medicine-men. The priests prayed to Tirawa, their supreme deity. The medicine-men were also religious practitioners, albeit of another kind; as shamans or healers they controlled the sacred bundles, and supernatural powers or manitou.

George B. Grinnell² collected Pawnee hero stories and folktales in the nineteenth century, attributing to the Pawnees a well-ordered theology and system of myths. The Pawnee priests in this account interceded on behalf of the people by prayer to the high god, Tirawa; Grinnell compared these priests to Moses and Tirawa to Jehovah. Among these priests was a High Priest, who was one of the oldest men of the tribe, and its Secret Pipe Chief. This priest told Grinnell that the Ruler of the Universe gave the sacred bundles, and through them, and through the buffalo and the corn, they worship Tirawa. Through his power the Pawnees were taught how to make bows, arrow heads and stone knives. George A. Dorsey recorded a more complicated, more circumstantial creation myth of the Chaui band of the Pawnees, which runs: After Tirawa created the sun, moon, stars, heaven, earth, and all things on earth, he spoke, and at his voice a woman appeared on earth. Tirawa asked the gods in the heavens what he should do to make the woman happy, that she might give increase. The Moon spoke: "As you made all things in pairs give the woman a mate, so that the pair can help one another in life." Tirawa made a man, and told them, "Call the earth 'mother', and the heavens 'father.'" He showed them how to build a lodge to keep out the cold and the rain. He gave the earth timber, and the human pair were told to get it, cut ten forked sticks from the timber, and set them in a circle. Poles are placed across the forks. Four of the upright forks form a parallelogram, with the longest

side running east-west. The post set in the ground to uphold the lodge represent the four gods who hold up the heavens in the northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest. The southside of the lodge will be for the men; the men will be on the right, the men will be strong, and so they will be on the right, as the lodge is oriented to the east. The women will be on the southside of the lodge. As they are not as strong as the men they will be on the left. He gave them buffalo and corn.

The Pawnees were removed from Nebraska to Oklahoma in 1874. While in Nebraska, Wolf was to them the mean trickster, and also a powerful one who transformed himself into other things, as well as the transformer of different things into one another. Wolf-Star once sent Wolf to the people. The people at that time lived with Lightning, and lived at peace, without warfare or death. Wolf attempted to steal the people from Lightning, who failed to sacrifice Wolf, and thus the people on earth became subject to warfare and death. Wolf the Trickster brought this all to be.

A Pawnee Creation Myth

The first who lived on earth were giants, big and strong, who hunted the buffalo on foot. They were so swift that they could run down a buffalo, and kill it with a stone, a club, or a flint knife. A single giant could throw the big buffalo bull over his back and carry it to the camp. He could push the head of a yearling under his belt and carry it as we do a rabbit. They did not dream of the dead or of talking with them; they did not dream of being dead and did not pray to Tirawa. They thought they were so strong that nothing could overcome them. Tirawa grew angry. He made the water rise; these giants sank into the mud and were drowned. The great bones found on the prairie are the bones of these people. After the destruction of the giants, Tirawa created man and woman who were small like us. They were good and Tirawa gave them corn. The Pawnees are descended from this first man and woman, and since then have cultivated the corn.

On their forced resettlement in Oklahoma, Coyote became their chief trickster figure. Unlike the stories of the giants and Tirawa, which are “true,” the Coyote stories are not true. The corn and buffalo myths are given as “true.”

Coyote and Scalped Woman

Coyote met Scalped Woman and saw that matter was running from her head. He made fun of her and said that it looked like mush running over a pot. He thought

he might have sex with her, and so he said, "I am talking about my grandmother's pot." But afterward he said, "I did mean you." She chased him, but he changed into a tobacco-grower, then into a great warrior. She caught up with Coyote but came to be stuck fast in a rocky place, in a hole. Coyote raised her dress and had sex with her. She said, "Let me out, and we can do it right." After Scalped Woman got loose she hit Coyote with her hand, and said, "You are a rascal. You are now my husband." They lived together for a while, but then Coyote pretended to go off on a hunt; he never came back.

The woman in this tale is the domesticating power, the male is unstable, unreliable and venturesome, changeable and playful. In the "true" tales, the male is a youth, the culture hero, who finds meat for the starving people. In the "true" tales or myths, Lightning is represented as a mighty figure, and Thunder tells the people to listen to Lightning as to a father.

In the Pawnee myths, the first people were the giants, unbelievers, who had no traffic with the dead. The giants were buffalo hunters but had no corn. According to the Pawnee historical traditions, their living was gotten from the buffalo hunt and domestication of the corn or maize.

Some of the Pawnee myths are straightforward mythic declarations of the construction of the lodge, its orientations in space, and the meaning of the orientations, east-west, north-south, left-right.

Raffaele Pettazzoni³ found that the Pawnee tales or myths are much like those of other Plains Indians in traditional times. He agreed that myth in general is not a mere fiction, nor a fable, but an account which is "true," and is opposed to the "false" accounts. Pettazzoni critically treated the Pawnee classification of their tales of the beginning of the world, and of Coyote, accepting the cosmogonical tales as myth, not the Coyote tales, excluding the "false" accounts from the field of myth. He found that many other North American peoples excluded the "false" stories from their myth, accepting only the tales of creation and beginnings of the world as "true"; he and they rejected the Trickster, Coyote, or like accounts as myths, for they are "false." For this reason, a different classification was proposed by Pettazzoni; the "true" tales are indeed mythic accounts, according to this latter classification, being both "sacred" and "old," whereas the non-mythic tales, such as the Coyote cycle, are "false," "profane," and "new," these being banned from the class of myth.

Such a classification schema has a great benefit as an approach to myth, for it begins with the categories of the Indians themselves; but it also contains inherent difficulties, for it selects the classifications and attributions of some peoples and gives them preferment over others. We see this in the comparison of the Chukchi

classifications and those of Bogoraz as well. All these classifications are good, all are valuable, being the way the Chukchis, the Pawnees, the Winnebagos, and others see the world and how it is described in myths; all these classifications are equally important, for just as all versions of a myth are equally valid, so all classifications of myth by its tellers are valid, none being superior to another. There are objective undertakings of the humankind, whereby we get our living by labor and work, and these have objective classifications which are not our present concern. The myths are in the province of the subjective undertakings and classifications; we do not praise one myth to the detriment of another, nor is one myth more valid than another. In myth there are no objective undertakings and classifications; we do not raise one popular classification over another. In myth there is no objective judgment of “right” and “wrong,” or “true” and “false.” The Coyote, Raven, and Trickster cycles contain mythic accounts of prevaricators and dissemblers; these accounts are parts of the “true” or “genuine” myths of the creation or of ethical conduct, or of healing practices, as the Pawnees, Chukchis and Winnebagos have conceived them.

Some of the Pawnee myths are told as part of the rituals of the medicine-men, explaining the ceremonies or their origins, but other Pawnee myths are told during the intermissions between the chantings of the rites by the priests. Both kinds of myth are believed to be true by their tellers and hearers alike.

On the Relativity of Standards of Social Life and Myth

If we say that all myths are equally valid, we do not endorse the complete relativity of the judgments of the myths. A myth which advocates genocide or ethnocide, the exploitation or oppression of one people by another, is an inhuman expression, and we fight against those who utter it. We distinguish between the myth and the judgment expressed in it. For the myth as such does nothing, but expresses the fears, hopes, emotions and worldviews of a people, how they judge their problems, their natural and human surroundings, and themselves. We take up our struggle not against the myth if it is an inhuman expression, but against the judgments, mental set, social acts and relations which the holders of the myth bring out through it. We propose to make two main points in this connection:

1. The tenet of an absolute tolerance was held by Voltaire who is supposed to have said to Helvetius, “I disagree with what you say and will defend to the death your right to say it.”⁴ This is a dangerous liberalism. There

are some defenders of our civil liberties who fight for the right of Nazis and racists to free assembly. But if they gain power thereby, we will lose that right, and our lives with it. The absolute tolerance of liberalism fails to distinguish between a rule of law, which pertains to our civil liberties, and a rule governing that rule; this is the distinction between a rule of a language and a rule of a metalanguage governing that language.

2. We distinguish between positive and negative standards of myth, ideology, and other expressions of our judgments. Acts of racism and oppression are uncompromisingly rejected, for they are not subject to a rule of tolerance or liberalism. We can identify absolutely inhuman, antisocial tenets, beliefs, and commitments to them, as there are absolutely negative acts on their behalf. There is a doctrine of relativity of the standards of judgment bearing on the positive side of our feelings and thoughts, beliefs and commitments in relation to one another. The good we do is relatively good, according to our standards, which vary both historically and socially. These exclude some acts, such as genocide, which are absolutely evil, and no standard of tolerance can make them relatively good: the relativity of standards of myth bears on the positive side of our thoughts and feelings; the absolute standards bear on the negative, or what we hold ought not to be done.

This distinction between the positive and the negative standards, the one relative, the other absolute, is culturally derived. It arises from a worldview which sees the interplay in history between good and evil, the division between the positive and the negative, and between the absolute and the relative. The relation between this worldview and the treatment of relativity and of absolute liberalism is to be further examined, but to do so here would lead us away from the study of myth. Likewise, the relation between tolerance and the distinction between rules of language and rules governing the rules ought to be further explored, but not in this book.

Notes

- 1 George A. Dorsey. *The Pawnee Mythology* I. Washington 1906.
- 2 G. B. Grinnell. *Pawnee Hero Stories and Folk-Tales*. New York 1889.
- 3 Raffaele Pettazzoni. *Miti e leggende*. Milan 1948. Cf. also his article in *Paideuma*, vol. 4, 1950.
- 4 Both the exact wording and the originator of this famous quote have been the subject of scholarly debate over the years –eds.

Structuralists, Lévi-Strauss, Leach

Claude Lévi-Strauss has written as a structuralist about myth, having given his closest attention to this field over an extended period, primarily in the publication of *Mythologiques*.¹ He is known for his structural study of kinship², and for his works, *Tristes Tropiques* and *La pensée sauvage*, which are admired for their stylistic mastery as well as for their content. His studies of myth were announced by a programmatic article;³ they have been continued down to the present in a recent article.⁴ His own work among the Bororo Indians of Brazil, and his close readings of the reports of fieldwork of Franz Boas constitute the chief foundations for his studies of myth, to which he added readings in the myths of classical antiquity, and in the ethnographic literature.

The notion of structure has many meanings; it may mean a building element, such as a base or frame, in construction of an edifice or a theory; it may be the constant in relation to which other elements are variable; or it may be the timeless in opposition to that which is historical or evolutionary; it is sometimes thought of as the synchronic as opposed to the diachronic. It is in the last meaning that I will understand the term for thus it has gotten some consensus.⁵ The myth is thus abstracted from time and history by structuralists.

In his paper, "The Structural Study of Myth,"⁶ Lévi-Strauss wrote that a myth is made up of all its variants; it is a part of language where the formula,

traduttore, traditore, reaches its lowest truth value; for these reasons, all versions of a myth are taken into account, for all are authentic. He developed this thought further in his consideration⁷ that myth is a part of language in which anything can happen, and in which everything is possible. The combination and recombination of experience takes place in myth, which he refers to as improvisation; thus, the mythic value of myth is preserved in the “worst” translation. Myths have variants which have a constant theme throughout, whereby they are unified and constitute a body, no part of which is less valid than any other. It follows that all possibilities may be given expression in myth.

In his book, *La pensée sauvage*⁸, he took up the theme of myth as improvisation. It is a concrete activity, the bricoleur or improviser working with his hands, using means which are at odds with those of the craftsman. The myth tellers draw on a treasury of ideas, but in this act, they work with the ideas as second hand; mythic thought works with ensembles of ideas and thoughts already structured in the language. Art proceeds from the ensemble to the discovery of a structure and thus to the construction of the structure; the engineers go beyond, operating with concepts, opening up new ways of dealing with materials. Myth, in contrast to both art and engineering, dealing as it does with odds and ends, is neither innovative nor endowed with a structure of its own; the myth in its present form has been mapped in a bygone social discourse.

In the work last cited, Lévi-Strauss expressed his opposition to Henri Bergson’s notion of the *fonction fabulatrice*, or myth-making faculty of the humankind. Myths and rituals, Lévi-Strauss believes, offer to preserve in a residual form the modes of observation of nature. Although these modes belong to the past, they are real and not fabulous, or the product of fabulation. Lévi-Strauss opposes the idea of myth as unreal, or the notion of an unreal content of our observations of nature, which is maintained through the myth-making faculty.

The opposition is evidently a dialectical one, but it is not the dialectic of the real and the unreal as Lévi-Strauss says, nor is it the simple relation of the past to the present, as the suitability of the past social discourse to the present observations. The myth, in that it is a myth properly so called, and is socially accepted, warranted or believed, is imposed and imposing. It is imposed by those who have brought something forth from the past which is brought to bear on the present. The myth which is felt to belong to the past is a xenolith; it is in this case not a story about monsters but is a monstrosity. The myth, whether it is taken from the past, the present or the future, is a matter of the present, or it is not a myth. This point will be developed in many ways in all that follows in our work.

Cultures are of two kinds, Lévi-Strauss has written, hot or cold. The cold seek through their institutions to cancel almost automatically the effect of historical factors on their equilibrium and continuity. The hot are the cultures which internalize the historical factors, making them a part of their development.⁹ The hot cultures are those of peoples conscious of their history, the cold are those of people without this consciousness.¹⁰ Thus, Lévi-Strauss deals with people without and with historical consciousness, and locates the myths he takes up within the former. In his article, "How Myths Die,"¹¹ he is concerned with myth not in time but in space, dealing with the subject synchronically, and not diachronically. Thus, he does not compose a historical study of the subject. Myths live and die in space, passing from one people to the next. The myth is treated in this case as a formula, having integrity, which is preserved or deteriorated, and dies. The structuralist abstracts his subject from time. To the structuralist, myths are conceptual instruments and works of art which arouse profound aesthetic emotions in those who listen to them.¹² The myth is at times opposed to the poetic work, but the opposition implies that the two forms were once complementary, as members of the same category.

In "Myth and Forgetting," in "The Tale of Asdiwal," and in "How Myths Die"¹³, Lévi-Strauss treats myth as a tidal movement of enrichment and attenuation. In the last mentioned paper he treats myth as non-canonical, having many versions, no one of which has a supreme or decisive validity. Myth is the realm of possibility, social existence the realm of reality. Myths are presented *a posteriori* in the construction of a homogeneous system of disparate rules.

If we say that Lévi-Strauss has no system of myth, this is to be understood in the sense that he attributes no system to myth, for he asserts that the signifier converts into the signified and vice versa in myth, which cannot be regarded as a systematic relation; next, he avers that myths are made up of odds and ends; thirdly, he considers that there is thought in myth, but its structures are not its own; they are erected as ensembles already structured in language and taken over second hand in myth. The second and third points are connected, for odds and ends, rummaging, are acts relative to things we acquire second hand. The main thrust of the third point is that whatever system there is in myth is adopted from language. But the first point was that in myth the signifier and the signified convert into one another. Thus, whatever is systematic in language is lost in myth, in which the word becomes the act, the instrument, the person, and the latter convert into words. The points are made in *La pensée sauvage*. In fact, he attributes a system to myth which he then withdraws.

The structuralist approach to myth, as Lévi-Strauss develops it, abstracts his subject from time. On the other hand, his view that myth is non-canonical, non-definitive, and independent of its linguistic context is a powerful and important conclusion, which is supported on other grounds beside the structuralist. He has effectively argued against the idea of myth as something fabulous or unreal. His structuralist doctrine has led him to take up myths as codes, which is a conflation of the theory of myth and that of codes. The question of myths as codes will be taken up shortly.

We cannot agree with the system of structuralism, either of Lévi-Strauss or of Edmund R. Leach, to whom we now turn, any more than we can agree with the system of myth as a symbolic form of Cassirer, or a system of mythic symbols of Carl Jung. Yet all of these writers on the subject have important things to say about myth. One observes that they have taken up some significant aspect of myth, but in no case the same aspect. Each of the several aspects of myth they raise is vital, and so are the points raised by Boas, Kirk, and others whom we have considered or will consider. We also provide a standard to judge their conflicting viewpoints, and a general guide to the willfully confusing field of myth.

Leach has taken up many themes of the treatment of myth from Lévi-Strauss and has been considered by some writers to be the disciple of the latter. Leach has tried to show where he agrees with Lévi-Strauss and where he diverges from him. Leach argues, that while both are structuralists, they come from different traditions; while both are anthropologists, they come from different parts of the field, particularly with regard to what they mean by the term culture. Leach has written a small book about Lévi-Strauss which avers that his own structuralism differs from that of Lévi-Strauss. Leach, in this book,¹⁴ refers to three definitions of myth: 1. Myth as fallacious history, or a story about the past which we know to be untrue; 2. Myth as a formulation of a religious mystery, or the expression of unobservable realities by observable phenomena; 3. Myth as a sacred tale. Leach holds that the notion of history as true and myth as false is an arbitrary one. He identifies the second approach to myth as that of the theologians, and the third as that of the anthropologists. As a member of the last group, he holds to its definition of myth, and has recently given that definition a more extensive formulation, as we shall see. In his work, *Genesis as Myth*,¹⁵ Leach wrote that all human societies have myths in the sense that they express unobservable realities by observable phenomena. (The reference to realities here is thought to refer not to objective realities but to those which are accepted by those who recount and accept the myths in question, and believe in them, holding them to be sacred.)

The myths as sacred tales have to Leach a dual aspect. He refers, in the fourth chapter of his small book on Lévi-Strauss, to the New Testament as myth, but also avers that it is myth from one point of view, and history from another. He writes that nearly all human societies have a body of traditions about their own past, and the beginnings of this body of traditions is necessarily “mythical” in every sense of the term. In his work, *Genesis as Myth*, he writes that all human societies have myths in the sense of the term as it is used by a theologian whom he cites with approval. Regarding the relation of myth to reality, Leach further holds that the least probable myths are the most important; “the least probable” have the least to do with objective reality. We can understand what is meant by objective reality in several ways; as the reality of our concrete, everyday experience; as the reality of our senses of sight, hearing, feeling; as the reality observed in many sciences, such as physics and chemistry; as the reality of physical things existing independently of our consciousness of them; or as the reality shaped and changed by our concrete labors and by our abstract labors which are joined to the concrete ones.

Leach, in a subsequent and fuller definition of myth,¹⁶ writes that it is a sacred tale about past events which is used to justify social action in the present. In that work he considers myth to be a subject of faith, which is true for those who believe in it; he is among those who have regarded myth as an aspect of the religious experience, which has concern for its own truth and creed. In myth, Leach asserts, the fabulous and the impossible, which exist in another world and another time, become the sacred. That which is fabulous and impossible in the sacred is the mythical in it.

In the light of Lévi-Strauss’ *Mythologiques*, Leach considers whether we are able to differentiate between the logic of technical actions and the pseudo-logic of expressive actions. He then takes up Lévi-Strauss’ problem of mytho-logic and appears to identify it straightway as pseudo-logic. It is an expressive behavior which is readily recognized in religious discourse. It is a part of religious discourse, myth being sacred narrative in his definition; mytho-logical statements are non-logical, conflicting with the logical rules of ordinary experience, but can make sense “in the mind” so long as the speaker and his listener share the same conventional ideas about the attributes of metaphysical time and space and metaphysical objects.¹⁷

Myths have internal inconsistencies, they make combinations and leaps which we make in ordinary life, and they move in unpredictable directions when weighed against our everyday experience. Yet, Leach says, there is sense behind the non-sense, or a logic of the mytho-logic. These formulations carry the notions

of non-logic, pseudo-logic and non-sense of myth. There is no logic of myth, for there is a vast variety thereof. There is no general rule of mythic reasoning, for myth varies from one people to the next and from one era to the next. This kind of historic variation was studied by Raymond Firth, who observed how myths changed in recent Tikopian history.¹⁸ We eschew all attempts at homogenizing or rationalizing the mythic traditions in general. Thus, there is no mytho-logic any more than there is a somno-logic of dream, a thaumo-logic of wonder, or a phantasmologic of the imagination.

Argument in myth, moreover, proceeds by analogy, metaphor by taking the part for the whole, and the whole for the part. In myth we anthropomorphize the stars, making single ones into the ancestral spirits, as the Aranda, or groups of them into figures of men and women, as the Greeks. In myth we humanize animals or endow human beings with the traits of animals.

In poetry it is often as it is in myth: The poet Heine tells of the distraught wanderer, who, lost in the forest, observes that the bird of myth accompanies him, hovers over his shoulder, and sings. We argue by analogy in poetry, science and myth; some physicists hold that part of their science is a metaphor; while myths are ethnocentric; neither are we free of ethnocentrism in anthropology. In order to demonstrate this, we will consider our most fundamental technical terms, culture and human. Culture is etymologically connected to Latin *colere*, to cultivate, till, and human to Latin *humus*, the fertile soil. Both concepts are legacies of an agricultural people and its language, but we apply both to non-agricultural peoples, and to agricultural peoples, to industrial and non-industrial alike. Further we cite the term civilization, which is etymologically related to Latin *civitas*, city. Society is etymologically connected to Latin *societas*, association, league, company, business partnership or union, not to terms for band, or clan. As scientists, we apply the terms of our history and of our traditions to those of other peoples of other types who are neither town-dwellers, nor work the land.

There is no particular way of reasoning or of logic in myth that is not found elsewhere in life; we argue forth and back, sideways and by leaps, in myth and in our daily discourses. There are perhaps more saltations and lateral motions in myth than in our ordinary language, but it has no language or logic that is qualitatively different. Conversely, there is no reason in our daily lives that is not found in myth; Benedetto Croce thought that our speculative power learns its logic from myth. We may argue with equal cogency that myth learns its logic from our speculative power.

In myth as in speculation, we advance the affirmative and the negative of any position or tenet with a comparable force for the persuasion of others and an equal sense of inner conviction.

Bronislaw Malinowski thought that myth is the revivification of primordial reality, and Lévi-Strauss held that it is bricolage, gathering together scraps, odds and ends. Jensen asserted that genuine myth does not explain, but directly “is.” Leach considered that myth conflicts with the logical rules of ordinary experience and has its own rules. It is therefore not a revivification of anything but is living reality. In the account of the Chukchi shaman which was recorded by V. G. Bogoraz, a living reality was experienced by the shaman and by the ethnographer. The shaman really believed that the antlers march in procession around the mound, that the peltries speak in the night, and that the raven draws in the grey bird’s song with its breath. He coupled these mythic accounts with the explanation that what exists lives. This is the doctrine of animism, which states that the world is alive, and that all that is in it is alive. Whether the existent world and items in it have souls is a question apart. The meaning of these myths to the shaman was direct, and his world made sense to him, as internally consistent.

We are faced with the dilemma of science, in which someone makes a generalization, which does not fit with the case that “I” (e.g. Bogoraz, or anyone else) know best. Now it is excessive for ethnology to claim that through myth we gain access to primordial reality; and some myths have rules which we share in our everyday experience. All these thinkers about myth, and many others, have begun their considerations from the inner substance of their subject, or the various forms myth may take. The substance of myth is bricolage and primordial reality, the form is bricolage and mytho-logic. Philosophers once held that the world has a soul, *anima* or *pneuma*.

Our main point is that myth is exceptionally variable both in substance and in form, and any attempt to grasp what myth is, or its meaning, or its *differentia specifica* from the form or the substance goes astray. The positive aspect of this chief point is that there is a way to grasp what myth is; this way is shown in another part of our work.

Myth is impressively subjective, as Fontenelle and Schlegel point out. There is also, in the second place, an objective side to it. It has form and substance, sense and meaning; it is sometimes explanatory and sometimes not. It has both internal and external relations and processes. These qualities are shared with other aspects of human life, which is objective, subjective, senseful and meaningful, senseless and meaningless, in its inner and outer relations. The myth has subjective

inner meaning to the true believer. Its meaning is other to the ethnographer. The explanatory mythic expression has both outward and inward meaning, and this is as valid as any other.

This judgment cannot be made into a dogmatic rule, for it varies according to the people described, and according to the ethnographer. We begin with the observation that affect, emotion, and their development as passion are all subjective and immediate experiences, in both literate and nonliterate societies. They can be transmitted by empathy, sympathy, projection and intuition of feeling and understanding into the world of the ethnographer or of another outsider; and this bears on the inner meaning of the experience of the myth and the mythic world of the insiders and the outsiders. As to the ideational form and substance of myths, a line is drawn between the myths of peoples with literate traditions, writers, legal and religious specialists and teachers on the one hand, and the nonliterate traditions of myth and its transmission on the other. The sense of the latter is a rule without concordance; it appears as a heap of inharmonious and fragmentary parts, inchoate, without order. This is in keeping with the viewpoints toward myth of the writers just mentioned. The literate traditions of myth, as the codes of law of literate peoples, bring out their order, system, harmony and concord. This is the sense they bear to the external observer. The form and substance of the myth in its ideational aspect are separable, whereas the form and substance of the myth in its affective aspect are not so readily separable, if at all.

Myth and the Realm of the Possible

Through myth we enter the realm of possibility. We may consider this idea positively, or we may consider it negatively, in the sense that no possibility is in and of itself excluded. On the one hand, the impossible which is brought into our social reality through myth is seemingly unlimited. Objectively, the impossible is limited by the bounds of our experience, whereas subjectively, there is no bound to our belief in what otherwise would be incredible, or some comparable attitude we attach to matter judged to be impossible.

The realm of the possible in myth is not absolutely free but is linked to the experience of the people who hold it. Thus, there are ranges of possibility, which are relative to one another in myth and science, these ranges being greater in myth, or less trammled in one way, and narrower in science; conversely, the range of possibilities in science is infinite for the humankind; potentially it is

without limit, in its bearing on our statements and judgments which run counter to facts and their interpretation by us.

Possibility in myth is opened up, for there we argue by analogy, by inversion, by introducing the unforeseen, by coincidence; contradiction is ignored, the dead revived; we are not obliged to provide the motivation for any act. In myth we are not obliged to enter the realm of reality, but remain, if it pleases us to do so, in limbo, in the grey area which is neither black nor white, neither one thing or another, in purgatory, which is neither heaven nor hell. In certain myths we may remain in purgatory forever, without effectuation, as a potentiality that is never made actual. For Aristotle himself said that potentiality is greater than actuality. This is another myth of reality, which presupposes that we know all about potentiality, all about actuality, and all about reality, which is impossible.

We may say that in myth we go beyond the social reality which is known and felt by us; the myth in one sense is the possibility in relation to that reality. But in another sense, we go beyond myth in social reality; myth in this sense belongs to the world which we have overcome, whereby we open up new possibilities, new potentialities and new realities for ourselves. Finally, we judge that myth provides a kind of orientation to these new factors and developments in our lives. Myth in this sense helps to overcome itself, or through myth we overcome our old myths, and create new ones. Not all of mythic possibility is fantastic, some of it is sober, but it is undisciplined, uncritical. The fantastic possibility of myth is opposed to the hypothetical possibility of science. Possibility, like myth, is inexhaustible in its substance; some forms of possibility are trivial, and some significant.

Notes

- 1 Cl. Lévi-Strauss. *Mythologiques. Le cru et le cuit. Du miel aux cendres. L'origine des manières de table. L'homme nu*. 4 vols. Paris 1964–1971.

Here the method of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, or coincidence of opposites of Nicholas of Cusa is brought out: nature versus culture, hot versus cold cultures, planned work versus haphazard, engineering versus improvisation, structure versus bricolage, logic versus myth, presence versus absence of consciousness of history, mythic possibility versus social actuality. Improvisation inexactly translates bricolage which has the opposition of structured versus unstructured elements.

- 2 Lévi-Strauss. *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté*. Paris 1949.
- 3 Lévi-Strauss. Structural Study of Myth. *Journal of American Folklore*, LXVII 1955, pp. 428–444.

- 4 Lévi-Strauss. De la possibilité mythique à l'existence sociale. *Le regard éloigné*. Paris 1983.
- 5 See the discussion of these matters in L. Krader. Beyond Structuralism. The Dialectics of the Diachronic and the Synchronic Methods. In: *The Unconscious in Culture*. I. Rossi ed. New York 1974. See the review of this work by P. E. de Josselin de Jong, in: *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde*, vol. 131, 1975. The reviewer mentions several others who have discussed the cleavage between structuralism and time, and the need for a synthesis between diachrony and synchrony. The opposite is to be said of Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, op. cit. They concentrated on the relation of myth to time and diachrony and will have nothing to do with structuralism and synchrony. We find that the diachronists and the synchronists both have something to offer to the study of myth; if we omitted either, the study would be the poorer. Although de Santillana considers only esoteric myth, which is understood only by the few, despite its mass appeal, and thus opposed to the myths of the cold cultures of Lévi-Strauss, it is "resistant to falsification." Lévi-Strauss says the same in his own way.
- 6 Lévi-Strauss. *The Structural Study of Myth*. op. cit.
- 7 Lévi-Strauss. *De la possibilité mythique*, op. cit.
 This group of thoughts is connected to the ideas that there is no preferred or superior culture, no preferred or superior dialect of a language, and a set of table manners which is to be preferred or considered to be superior to another. Any form of culture or dialect is correct.
- 8 Lévi-Strauss. *La pensée sauvage*. Paris 1962.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 See also his article, written with R. Jakobson: Jakobson, Roman and Claude Lévi-Strauss. 'Les Chats' de Charles Baudelaire. *L'Homme*, T 2, No. 1, Jan.–Apr. 1962, pp. 5–21.
- 11 Lévi-Strauss. Comment meurent les mythes, in his *Anthropologie Structurale*, II, Paris 1977.
- 12 Lévi-Strauss, foreword to the article "Les Chats de Charles Baudelaire." op. cit.
- 13 *Anthropologie Structurale II*, op. cit. Cf. his "Myth and Forgetting" in the same volume.
- 14 Edmund Leach. *Claude Lévi-Strauss*. 2nd ed. London 1974.
- 15 Leach. *Genesis as Myth*. London 1979.
- 16 Leach. *Structuralist Interpretation of the Bible*. London 1983.
- 17 Leach. *Culture and Communication. The Logic by which Symbols are Connected*. London. 1976. Section 6, on the difference between the logic of technical actions and the pseudo-logic of expressive actions. Section 15, on logic and mytho-logic.
- 18 R. Firth. The Plasticity of Myth: Cases from Tikopia. *Ethnologica*, n.f., vol. 2, 1960. Lévi-Strauss. *The Structural Study of Myth*, cited above. Cf. Leach, sections 15 and 16, Basic cosmology, of his *Culture and Communication*, op. cit.

Myths and Universals

The notion that there are universals, whether of culture or of the mind, whose experience is supported by the evidence of myth, has been propounded variously by Schelling in the past century, and more recently by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Henri Bergson, and Ernst Cassirer. These universals are abstractions, existing apart from the world that we see and hear. They are sometimes thought to be the product of the human mind; yet at other times they are thought to be the product of a mind which exists independently of our own. Myth is conceived to be a universal category, in the sense of a pre-logical mentality active in all the humankind, whether literate or not; this mental capacity was propounded in a law of mystic participation in the myth and totem by those who believed in them. It is supposed that there is some sort of mind which is without logic. We judge it by its effects, inferring that it exists by the statement in which the mind's holder or embodiment claims, "the totem of the clan is I, I am the grub, or the bird." The pre-logic is proposed as a prior state, which may be understood to be either prior in time or prior as a logical presupposition. The judgment that the pre-logical mind exists is further made by its effects in the world of our senses, by the narration of the myth, the statement of the belief in the totem, or the acting out of the rite. We do not know if the pre-logical mind exists apart from its effects. Since Lévy-Bruhl modified his interpretation of the pre-logical

mentality late in life, and since we have only a fraction of his notebooks containing his later thoughts, we will not further pursue this idea. Cassirer thought that myth is a unitary energy of the mind. Myth is everywhere in human life, as one of the symbolic forms, together with others, such as language or art. These symbolic forms are real, but their reality is beyond the world of sense experience existing in ideality. The symbolic form of myth exists independently of the other symbolic forms; they are all of the world of the psyche, which itself is an existent in the ideal world, and is not an empirical entity or datum. The myth, within this psychic world, is of its own kind, as an autonomous configuration of the human spirit, and is not reducible to allegory, philology, or some other mental activity or science. Myth and mythic thought combine the sensory and super-sensory worlds. Schelling had conceived that wherever there is a definite relation between two figures, two members or parts, myth transforms this relation into an identity between them, called tautegorical, which is a mixture of two parts, the one, *tautos*, meaning “the same, own, self, identical,” and the other, -egorical, which is the latter part of such words as allegorical, or categorical. The term might have been spelled *tautogorical*, but then its analogy to allegory might have been lost. The usual combining form of *tautos* in ancient Greek is *tauto-*, which is still to be seen in such words as tautology.

Samuel T. Coleridge¹ distinguished the allegorical, which expresses two subjects with respect to a resemblance between them, from the tautegorical, which expresses the same subject, but with a difference. Metaphors and similitudes, he thought, are always allegorical; he also held that myth (*mythus*) in part is a symbol which passes into allegory, but never ceases wholly to be a tautegory. The tautegorical alone, he held, is a symbol or symbolic expression properly so called. One must leave to specialists in Coleridge and Schelling the problem of deciding which was the father of tautegorical concept and construction; clearly, Schelling’s advocacy of its usage appears to have found a greater resonance in the twentieth century than Coleridge’s.

Myth is multifaceted, being relative to art, particularly to poetry and to the graphic arts in figurative mythology, to aesthetics, to religion, to philosophy, and to empirical science. The universals of myth, as they have been propounded in speculation, are likewise of many kinds; they are global and unitary, absolute and eternal, or they are relative to particular processes of mind, spirit, language or religion; they are a symbolic process which emanates from the human mind, or they are given to the mind by an immanent or external inspiration. Cassirer considered myth globally among the categories of the symbolic forms, constituting together with other forms an ideality of the human spirit; myth was not

considered by him as an empirical category, nor was the psyche an empirical category in his philosophy.

The difficulties with this concept of myth are of several kinds. First, myth as an autonomous configuration of the human spirit would then be an independent configuration or gestalt, and law unto itself. Yet myth appears to be guided by other human processes and thus is not subject to a law of its own. The activities in myth are also found in poetry, in dream, in fable or legend, in speculation, and in imaginative expression, these having much in common with myth, but are yet distinct from it. The aetiological and symbolic functions are found in science, in poetry, in painting and sculpture. Thus far, no *differentia specifica* has been imputed to myth. The tautegorical is in myth but it is also found in other mental activities as well; thus, it is not particular to myth. The second objection to Cassirer's philosophy of myth bears on the supposed ideality thereof. Here we move outside Cassirer's philosophy of myth, but not outside his philosophy of symbolic forms. Cassirer thought that Bastian and others who had proposed a psychic unity of the humankind based on the evidence of the myth had another notion of the psyche than his own, for to them the psyche is empirical, whereas to his own view it is ideal. This concept needs further consideration. To be sure, Bastian was one who had collected evidence only from his own (empirical) field-work and that of others. The psyche, *Geist, mens*, mind or spirit, the unity of which he and his colleagues or contemporaries envisioned, is not clearly an ideal or clearly an empirical category. One does not therefore put Bastian's, Tylor's, or Waitz's notion of the psyche in one class of the existents, and Cassirer's notion of it in another. One may (as I do not) criticize the empirical scientists for having begun with empirical, concrete evidence of our senses for concluding that they have had then arrived at an ideational process. Cassirer has not argued in any different way. He examined myths of the ancient Greeks and the modern Australians and proceeded from the empirical observations of these phenomena to the ideal world of the mythic symbolic forms. In another sense he indeed argued differently from the others, for he put the ideality of myth where he then came upon it, assuming thereby its existence in its ideal form. The universals of the various schools of idealism are in question, not those of realism or of nominalism.

Next, we consider Cassirer's tenet that myth is a category of the symbolic forms by analogy to language and art, but this analogy is misleading. Language is a system, or body of systems, but myth is neither the one nor the other. Myth is unsystematic, fantastic, mystical, utopian, and without autonomy, for it is bound to the people and traditions in which it is found. Cassirer proceeded not from the empirical data to a universal, but conversely, from the universal to the concrete,

empirical data, taking as his model an abstract concept of mind and the symbolic forms thereof, and adduced a theoretical construct of myth in relation (a) to the symbolic forms, and (b) to the mind. The construct is then supposed to fit the empirical data of the myths. To proceed in this way is just as untenable as the opposed procedure, for the empirical world is not constructed of universals, and universals are neither constructed out of the empirical data nor overthrown thereby. A universal is in a constructive or destructive relation to other universals. Samuel Johnson did not controvert Bishop Berkeley by stubbing his toe against a rock; but Berkeley's universal also did not ease the pain of Johnson's foot.

Myth is offered by Cassirer as a category of the human spirit, having the attributes of autonomy and unitary energy. Hence, what is said of the energy of any one of its parts is said of any other. If myth is closely bound to the traditions of the people who have brought it forth, then it cannot be treated globally or homogeneously; it would be a matter of speculation to treat it as a unitary energy. The point at issue, however, concerns not the tenets about universals, or the entities of an ideal world, but the relations of these tenets to myth, the world of myths and their study.

Myth is in a close relation to the traditions and concrete experiences of the particular human social groups; it varies according to these experiences and traditions and is not apart from them. It is not shown that all peoples have myths; and it is not shown that myths of the peoples who possess the mythic tradition have them in an ideational sense. Myth is likewise sensational, representing in a fabulous mixture the world we see, hear, feel and otherwise sense. That is not all there is to myth, but any theory of myth which ignores the elements of fabulation as they bear on the world of our sensations strikes out a major part of the substance of the mythic traditions. Other parts of the mythic traditions bear on the beliefs which are held by many, in a marvelous world; it is a world in which our all too human cares and troubles, anxieties and pains are eased. This second part of the mythic substance, like the first mentioned, is not exhaustive of myth, but is a ponderable part of it, and a theory of myth which ignores it may be accused of choosing among those elements of myth, disparate as they are, which are thought to be most comfortable for that theory.

Now consider myth as an entity existing solely in the ideational world, independently of our sensory experience, of our cares, joys, sufferings, and the sublimation thereof in our myths, hope- and wish-dreams; it is supposed that they do not exist in this sensible world, but only in the idea, the symbolic forms and noumenal being. It is not shown how the unitary mental energy passes to the world of our senses, or how these ideas and forms pass into the world of the sensations,

emotions, etc. There are several problems to be considered. If myth is outside space and time, then it ought to be shown how it passes into space and time. If it is in another space and time, it ought to be shown how it passes into “our” space and time (n.b., this formulation is related to Leibniz’s notion of passage). Alternatively, we may conceive that myth is a dual existence, in a sensible and an ideal world. It may also be conceived to precede or to arise out of the idea or out of the sense experience into the idea. Most of these notions, with exception perhaps of those connected with the theory of passage (of Leibniz), are speculative and belong to one school of metaphysics or another. Their consideration further would lead us away from the problem of myth.

The myths are representations in words, pictures and other human acts of our thoughts and feelings, put into an image, narrative or symbol, a slogan, law, or vision, a lyrical flight, or fantastic voyage in joy, fear or hope.

The myth does not exist in a world which is not seen or heard. The myth has its existence only in that it is accessible to our senses, in that we hear or read it. The world of myth is not the same as the world of our senses, but is often a confabulation of that world, or a speculation upon it, which does not stray far from the latter; or else, in another confabulating process, the parts of the myth form a wondrous rearrangement of the elements of the sensible world. Therefore, there is no reason to consider myth a law unto itself, or a tautegorical world, for we make fantastic rearrangements of the data of our sense in other ways than myth as well, and we engage in speculations not only in myth but in our non-mythic philosophies. The rearrangements of our sense data, and of parts of animals and plants, were undertaken by Leonardo da Vinci, and are undertaken at present by surrealists and others; wish fulfillments are found not only in myth but in many other living contexts. Sometimes there is causality and harmony in myth, but not always; myth is the realm of the arbitrary as well as the causal and harmonious expression. All these utterances are concrete, and do not exist apart from the figures, symbols, actions, visions and declarations of myth. Thus, in respect of its content, there is nothing particular to myth, for themes and subjects found in it are also found elsewhere in our mental life, both in its cognitive and affective aspects, and in our expressive capacities, poetic, graphic, symbolic, nomothetic, narrative, or picturesque.

Myths are widely distributed among the peoples of the world and have a deep history. Indeed, the archaeologists and prehistorians of Europe and Asia have sought the evidence of myth in the paleolithic times, by interpreting the possible mythic significance of figures carved in stone and wood which are many thousands of years old. Myth is a term found in some languages, not in others.

In the Indo-European family of languages alone, it has widely ranging meanings within a circumscribed number of languages. Greek *mythos*, talk, is related to Persian *mōja*, complaint, *must*, complain; Gothic *maudjan*, to recall to someone; Lithuanian *āpmaudas*, care; Old Slavonic *mysl'*, thought; and perhaps Irish, *smúainidh*, thinks.² We do not argue from silence, for that is a delusory procedure. Thus, if the term for myth is not present in a language, we do not conclude that the practice of mythmaking is absent, or its concept is lacking. Our sole inference is that mythic thinking, feeling, legislation, narration, symbolization, expression and conceptualization are highly variable, and not always explicit. The practice of mythmaking is world-wide. We are, however, the innocent victims of a particular way of looking at the world, and by becoming conscious of this constraint may burst free from it. The term myth, its concept and denotation come to us out of a specific social and historical context, in which the Greeks looked back at their own religious figures, their acts, thoughts, and motivations, finding them admirable, incredible, disgusting, suggestive, absurd, profound, helpful and useless, true and false. The Chinese and the Greeks had objectified their traditions. Hecataeus, Theagenes, Xenophanes, Plato and Aristotle among the latter speculated about them; Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides treated them poetically and tragically; Herodotus wrote of them historically and ethnographically; he thought that many of the names of the gods, and some of their attributes, came to the Greeks from the Egyptians, and in certain cases from the Libyans. He wrote that the Egyptians paid no divine honors to heroes, and thus differed from the Greeks.³ In this respect he anticipated Euhemerus. The ancient writers about myth were sometimes skeptical about myth. These are precursors of our objectification and critical treatment of myth.

A few in the Enlightenment in Europe and in the nineteenth century were able to develop this connection, and recently we have been able to examine myth of the various kinds, of others and of our own, objectively and critically, as sacred and as secular. Myth is generally found among various human groups, particularly among those who have speculated about their origins, or the origins of the world, and among those who have a strong vision of their future. These are the ethnographic, cosmogonic and utopian myths.

In Western thought, the Bible, with its account of the creation, the fall of man and the flood, is a myth of cosmogonic and human origins; like accounts are of Sumerian, Akkadian and other provenience in the ancient East, and the Greek traditions provide comparable data for the same. Some thinkers, coming to the study of myth from the European tradition, which is the heir of the Biblical and Greek thought on these subjects, look everywhere

for confirmation of the universality of their worldview through the study of myth outside Europe; they do not question this European form of myth as a hypothesis, but assume it to be the case, seeking elsewhere for the verification of their assumptions. Myths of cosmic and human origins are widespread, but we do not know that they are universal in the human psyche, nor yet that they are brought forth by every human group at all times and in all places. Nevertheless, one can never prove that a given people is without myths of its own, for one may always find a myth among them, or something like it, if one looks further. We do not assume *ex hypothesi* that the myth will be there, and that we have but to find it out.

In myths, some people hold that the world rests on an elephant standing on a turtle, others think of the sky as a roof, of life as a spiritual breath, and of the world as the offspring of processes of biological generation. Myths are the expressions of the recombination and fabulation of our perceptions in both possible and impossible forms; the expression in their combination and recombination fall within the range of our concrete experience of the view of the heavens, the earth, plants and animals, of our own community and of our neighbors. These fabulations are without end, but in each of the traditions of myth we note that certain possibilities do not recur. The polar peoples have no myths of the floras which are found only in the tropics. The myths also have rational elements in them. Cornford and Collingwood praised the Bible because it is closer to our account of the world, which they held to be scientific and rational, at the expense of the myths of Homer and Hesiod. Collingwood had in effect laced the achievements of our own society on a pinnacle of success, and the achievements of others, who are accounted as our intellectual forebears, lower down on the same scale of creatures. This is a myth of a myth, not in the sense of myth as tradition but as the word uttered by the individual is known, just as the author of the Platonic myth is known. Behind this myth of myth is an analogy drawn between an evolutionary process, such as the evolution of life, and a like process which is attributed to rational thoughts. The myths are expressions of human social groups and fall within the concept of culture in this sense. Culture is not fixed but variable from one people to another, and from one era in their history to another; the myths therefore vary in history. The mind is a human process and product and is variable within the human system of life; it has both conscious and unconscious parts which are variable in relation to one another, and in relation to our internal and external processes. By our internal processes we create abstractions, among them the universals of form, symbol, mind and others. These abstractions have no existence apart from the life of the humankind, which is abstract and concrete,

practical and theoretical, from which the thoughts, including the thoughts of universals, such as form and symbol, have arisen.

Myth is both a process and a product of our social relations, of our expressive powers and of our mental capacities. The process is the means whereby myth is produced, the product is the myth as the result of the generative process. The product is concrete, for it has no existence apart from our sense perceptions; the process is abstract and concrete, as an abstract recombination of our daily sights and sounds. It is an abstraction of these in the most unprepossessing way, but an abstraction, nonetheless. The myth is in this sense a part of the process of our learning to make abstractions, to seek for causes, and to provide explanations for the events and observations of our lives.

The myth as a symbol, as a metaphor, as a law, as a narrative, or as a social force that moves us is an abstraction or a concretion. The symbol is a means whereby we represent one object by another; it is not a pure convention, which is an arbitrary device, adopted by agreement among the parties to the convention, and dropped by another agreement. The symbol is a representation bearing something in common between itself and what it represents. The commonality between the two is a relation between the symbol and its object of recognizability, an attribute shared by the two, or an index of the one by the other. The representation by a conventional device is a sign, which we can make up by any manner we choose. The representation by a symbol relies on similitude or some other index of recognition between the symbol and its object. The index or common attribute may be of a traditional or of a novel kind. The line — is a symbol of division, not a sign; it is of a traditional kind, not a novelty, whereby we divide one object from another; in arithmetic, the line — or | separates the divisor from the dividend. The representation which we make by drawing the three lines, →, symbolizes the arrow; there is a similitude between the figure shown by these lines and the arrow's shaft and head; the relation between the lines is an index of the direction of the arrow's flight, in this case from left to right; it is an index of direction in general, left, right, up, down, or various combinations thereof; thus the symbol is an index of a concrete particularity or of some abstraction, such as the direction of motion in general. Charles S. Peirce had considered that the symbol refers to an object, and acts through a replica; it is, in his theory of the symbol, a general type or law,⁴ which is an abstraction alone. This is a vital part of the notion of the symbol, and of the process of symbolization, the symbol being, as we have seen, both abstract and concrete, and both general and particular.

Alfred N. Whitehead⁵ thought that our minds function symbolically when some components of our experience “elicit consciousness, beliefs,

emotions and usages” respecting other components of our experience; the components of the first kind are the symbols, those of the second kind are their meanings. This description is very useful, for it brings out the constituent parts of the symbolic process. Reference is a process which is abstract in relation to some object, but that object is as such concrete or abstract, general or particular.

If we distinguish the symbol from the meaning of the symbol, we are soon confronted with the paradox of the symbol which is its own meaning. It is not another component of our experience but the one which constitutes the meaning of the symbol; we do not emerge from this difficulty by thinking of two sets of components of experience, the one as a set of symbols, and the other as their meanings. A symbol is a means of referring to an object, or a way to talk about it. There are other ways of referring to objects than symbols. Signs are one other way.

A metaphor is a kind of symbol, in which replication in respect of similitude between the symbol and its object is brought out. Aristotle began his analysis of the metaphor with the remark that it presupposes resemblance of one thing to another, and Ivor Armstrong Richards⁶ followed him in this. The metaphor thus is the complication, both as a qualitative unfolding and as a quantitative extension of the symbol; the myth arches over both, as well as other expressions of our cognitions and affections, our sentiments of loyalty and of opposition in society. Symbols, we have seen, are traditional or novel; they are general or particular, abstract or concrete; myths are the same. Myths in the usage employed in this book are traditional and anti-traditional, but they are not wholly novelties. The composition of the elements of myth is in most cases unsystematic and has been made in some social practices into systems by specialists, who render them harmonious and internally consistent, as far as they are able.

Notes

- 1 S. T. Coleridge. *Aids to Reflection in the Formation of Manly Character on the Several Grounds of Prudence, Morality, and Religion: Select Passages from Our Elder Divines, Especially Archbishop Leighton*. London 1825.
- 2 Julius Pokorny. *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Bern 1959–1969.
- 3 Herodotus. *History*. Bk. II, ch. 50.
- 4 See C. S. Peirce. *Collected Papers*. Cambridge, Mass. 1931 ff. Vol. 2.
- 5 A. N. Whitehead. *Symbolism*. Cambridge 1934.
- 6 I. A. Richards. *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Oxford 1936.

Part III

Introduction to Part III.

Theory of Myth

Some general trends in the development of theories of myth are lasting and constant, others, after making their appearance have fallen away, and a third group of theories come and go in a tidal movement. That myth is an oral expression which is anonymous and popular has been recognized since the time of classical antiquity and is either explicitly stated or tacitly assumed in most modern theories of myth.

The main points to be developed here will be supported by references to myths, and at the same time by references to those who have written about the subject, particularly in the twentieth century. The myths we will refer to are the ancient and those which are alive among us. They are sacred and secular, traditional and novel, taking the forms of narrative in prose and poetry, and the expressions of symbols and laws. They represent our notions of how things came to be the way they are, and the way they ought to be; they give expression to our prospects of hope and of fearful doom. Those who have treated myth in our century fall into two great camps. The one considers myths which come from oral traditions; if they then take up the myths from written sources, it is by analogy to the unwritten; the themes of these myths are predominantly sacred, often ancient and supernatural, and are usually narrative in form. The other camp treats of myth which is secular, related to our current concerns and ideologies; if

the traditional and sacred themes of myth are taken up by this second group, it is only as variation of the main themes of contemporary myths.

We formulate a general theory of myth, while conscious that the writers mentioned are but a small proportion of the totality; those writing in either sense, among those listed, have largely ignored the other, and even those who have written about myth on both sides seldom bring their thoughts into a whole. Those writers whom we have looked into have a great diversity of viewpoints and backgrounds, hence varieties in their theories and interpretations.

Some of the myths we consider are tales, others are laws, covenants, commandments, symbols, utopian visions or eschatological dooms. We are able to propose a general theory of myth on the grounds of the diversity among the myths we have considered, and the diverse viewpoints of the writers mentioned on the subject of myth.

We leave to others the task of distinguishing between myth, fable and legend. We observe the fabulous element in myth and the mythic element in fable; legendary factors are present in both, and both mythic and fabulous elements are found in legend. Marvelous things are present in myth, which have been brought to them by others, past or present, who invented them. We bring the sense of wonder to them, discovering the marvels of the myth.

The attitude toward myth is quite various; in ancient times there were believers in myth, and those who were sceptical on this subject. Several thinkers were enthusiasts, others scoffed at myth. The scoffers were seldom critical, the enthusiasts were seldom sceptical. Many in ancient times thought that myths served useful purposes, deepening a sense of loyalty to religion and to the state; they even shaped the traditional myths to these functions, both in the Far East and in the Mediterranean worlds. Many historians felt that myths could help to clarify some dark passages in the past; others thought that the knowledge of history would be pertinent to the elucidation of otherwise incomprehensible aspects of myth. Some held that myth is a lie, others that it contained the truth. We have referred to those who maintained one or another of these options about myth in ancient times; during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the same doctrines, attitudes and opinions enjoyed their recrudescence. Myth was held to be the key to the truth, or else it was mere falsehood; others held that by the study of myth we gain a deeper understanding of the history of nations than we would otherwise, which would reveal to us the thoughts, practices and feelings of the ancients. The study of myth together with the study of languages, laws, religious cults, the monumental and other arts could reveal the historical processes, and these would in turn reveal the meanings of the myths. To these students the

myths were chiefly, although not exclusively, within the human world; the explanation of human events by the interpretation of myth, and the explanation of myth by the interpretation of human events, whether the founding of a city, or the downfall of an empire, were their primary but not sole concern. Myth in their perspective was ancient, anonymous and traditional; it was narrative in form and related to popular beliefs in supernatural forces. Thus, Euhemerism was a part of their apparatus, but not their sole analytic technique.

All these approaches to myth, theories about them and applications of the approaches and theories have had their representations not only in antiquity and in the renaissance and enlightenment, but down to our own times. Ancient thinkers held that myth expressed an original wisdom which the primordial human beings had, and which since has been distorted; modern thinkers have likewise held that by the study of myth we get at the original truth, to the Ur-religion, or Ur-consciousness, others in modern times have held that in myths are found certain universal forms which are just as valid in their own way as the universal to be found in religion, philosophy, art and language. Myths were read as codes and ciphers in ancient times, and so they have been read in the twentieth century.

By the study of human history, ethnology and sociology we have learned the relation of our mythic and other expressions to their social settings in space and time. This thought too was adumbrated in ancient times, for it was then known, as we know, that myth is given a characteristic form by a people and is their representation of their world to themselves; it is likewise their representation of themselves to their world. Ethnocentrism is everywhere attested in myth. Some of the keenest philosophers and historians have made so bold as to place themselves at the forefront of a great human development, at the back of which is mythic thought, which we have overcome. Several of the most gifted ethnologists have contrasted their own thought to the thought of the peoples they have studied, whose psychology they held to be primitive and expressed in myths. Ethnocentrism is everywhere, and some future student will perceive the traces of such thinking in my own work. It would be foolish to think that perfect objectivity has been attained by anyone. Yet, wherever ethnocentrism is found, it is suspect.

There are many myths of myths. The myths themselves are popular expressions, whereas the myth of myth is a construction made on the myths by some individual. Plato thought that all myths are lies, Aristotle that they contained the original wisdom; Plato perhaps believed his myth of myth, not the myths themselves; but Aristotle believed both his myth of myth and the myths themselves. One of the myths of myth which we have often encountered is that there

is a genuine myth, and that other myths are false or imperfect copies thereof. The alternative to this view of myth is that all versions of a myth are valid, further, that all versions of myth are good or genuine, and this is said of all-myths as well. The notion that there is a genuine myth as opposed to a false or spurious one is found among many peoples, but the criterion for distinguishing the one from the other is variable and never the same. In our culture there is a tradition that we have the universal standard for the determination of what is true and what is false, what is genuine and what is spurious in myth, this standard being superimposed on all others by some thinkers in the Western tradition. But as this is an ethnocentric perspective toward myth, it is suspect.

We may make some judgments in favor of ethnocentrism. As we grow up in a particular time and place, and in a particular tradition, we learn to think and express ourselves in this way and in no other. We struggle against the error of imposing our own standards, judgments, and modes of feeling on those of other peoples. However, the error is insidious, and influences our cognitions and emotions. We reduce its more overt effects by constant criticism and self-criticism. In its more extreme forms it expresses cultural superiority, xenophobia, or imperialism; but in an extreme or modest form, it is nevertheless a factor in our lives. But the critical attitude toward our preconceptions and prejudices is also there as an element in our upbringing, and this criticism is directed against mythic representations and other uncritical expressions. Thus, an ethnocentric disposition is part of the materials of our thoughts and feelings, and a point of departure in our judgments, for we begin by referring our mental data to our experiences in our social group. We regard critically that mode of judgment and reference system. Consciousness of our ethnocentric judgment is the beginning of critical judgment.

Myth is a human expression which is widely if not universally distributed. It has not one but many forms, oral expression, narrative, legal, symbolic and visionary. It is brought out in several of the arts, as poetry and music, the dance, painting, sculpture and architecture. It is various in form therefore, and also in substance, having supernatural and natural, fantastic and realistic, traditional and newly invented, cognitive and emotional subjects and themes.

A myth is a statement of some kind. What makes the statement into a myth, whatever its form and substance, is that many people hold it by belief or other commitment to it. These people form themselves around their myth as a unified group, nation, community, class, party, or sect; but myth in itself has no unity. The myth is a twofold process of representation. 1. It is a representation of the group's internal unity. The myth is not the only way to make such a statement.

2. It is an uncritical representation of the unity, worldview, vision, intentions, and emotions shared by the members of the group. It is an act which makes them into a social unit.

The myth has no internal unity but varies accordingly, as the experiences, history and constitution of the group holding it vary. The myth has representative functions, some of which have been mentioned; it has also explanatory functions or aspects, but in many cases the myths explain nothing, have no relations to cause and effect, do not regard any matter as necessary, or regard it out of necessity. Some aspects of myth are intensifications of our feelings with regard to its themes and subjects, but others serve as a release of our affections and tensions; still others reassure us that our world is the same, the way it ought to be; other aspects of myth arouse our sense of right, and still others arouse our sense of wrong; the senses of right and of wrong are not universal, but where they occur they give rise to appeasement or indignation, quietude or protest. Myth is an expression of some of the most profound poetry, wisdom, cognitions and feelings we have.

A Note on Allegory, Symbol and Metaphor

While a narrative takes place in time, and makes chronology concrete, a symbol may be temporal or it may be timeless, and is in this sense a universal, or quasi universal. The symbol of the Cross, the Crescent, the Six-Pointed Star, or the Five-Pointed Star is of the latter kind. An allegory is a style of language and art which is metaphoric or picturesque; it is also in certain cases a device to put what we mean to say in other words, in which we say what we do not mean, and mean what we do not say, as figurative or metaphoric speech. Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, pt. 2, ch. 43, considered the speech of the Biblical prophets, who showed by allegory certain ideas, but spoke directly of objects to represent them. Thus, the prophet Zechariah in a vision took two staves to lead a flock. The one is called *No'am*, meaning pleasure (in being with God); the other staff is called *hobelim*, a term which is connected directly or by transposition of the consonants with meanings of destruction, loathing and rejection. Allegory is in Maimonides' view inseparable from the interpretation thereof by the prophet who utters it, whether in a dream or a vision, or on coming to himself after the mystical experience in which the allegory is expressed. The dream or vision appears to the prophet in its allegorical form, as the object together with its meaning, and then is transmitted by the prophet, together with its interpretation made for and by

him. Thus, we have the allegory of a dream interpreting a dream, a paradox found in Chuang Tze as well.

Maimonides showed that allegory follows laws as well as paradox. An allegorical figure moves into reality; it follows this movement because the allegory requires it, that is, it is a movement according to necessity, thus according to law. But paradox follows another kind of law.

Allegory is narrative, symbolic, visionary. Whether as a tale, symbol, vision, or translation, it has a point to make, which we get at by interpreting it. The allegorist interpretation is opposed to the literalist interpretation of the same symbol, tale, vision, or image. The myth of Gilgamesh was read as a straightforward poem about an arrogant youth who took women for his pleasure and sought immortality in vain. The allegorists look on the poem as the representation of all men for satisfaction of their lust and desire for immortality. Allegory has been opposed to the symbol in the interpretation of myth. G. W. F. Hegel in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* (op. cit.) thought that allegory is cold and bald, dealing with abstract generalities: Poets such as Virgil deal in allegories because they cannot create individual gods as the Homeric. Such a comparison of poetic creation is a thankless and vain task, which we will not pursue.

Hegel found a disciple in Juan Eduardo Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (1962). To Cirlot, a symbol is real, both emotively and conceptually, as imbued with true life: allegory is mechanical, derivative, a devitalized symbol. The consideration of allegory often leads to contradictory views.

Samuel T. Coleridge conducted his research into allegory in a different direction, as we have seen, opposing allegory to tauteory. Emile Littré thought of allegory as an extended metaphor. We will look into allegory concretely in the analysis of Titian's painting of the *Flaying of Marsyas* by Sydney Joseph Freedberg and the analysis of Albrecht Dürer's three *Master Engravings* by Erwin Panofsky.

Allegory is a schooled, learned way of treating mythic materials. By allegory the themes and persons of myth are reshaped in the various modes of expression, by representation, theology, poetry, in painting, engraving, sculpture and architecture. Allegory, as any learned art, may degenerate into pedantry; Cirlot appears to have begun and ended with this last point: Pedantry is sterile, devitalized, derivative. But others, and not only Coleridge, have treated allegory in a more vital way. We will consider briefly, for it is marginal to myth, a set of oppositions which go into the make-up of allegory. These are the oppositions of narrative and non-narrative, and time and the timeless. The myth of Gilgamesh is particular and concrete; it is a tale about a youth who in his arrogance seeks immortality. The myth becomes a universal at the hands of the allegorists who

speak of Gilgamesh as representative of all youth, or all men. On this head, allegory is an aspect of the interpretation of a text; it is opposed to the literal interpretation of it. Those who take up the Bible allegorically consider themselves to have endowed it with a spiritual meaning, as opposed to the literal one. The learned Gershom Scholem, in his *Kabbalah* (1978), gives to the term שכינה (*shekhinah*), literally, the presence of God in the world, a variety of allegorical significations, in the ancient Gnostic doctrine of the term; these are psychological, historical and mystical.

Narrative and non-narrative. In this connection we take up the relation of allegory and symbol. In the iconography of Titian's painting, *The Flaying of Marsyas*, the symbols of the panpipes, the *viola da braccia*, the exalted look on the player of the instrument, the water pail in the hand of the god Pan, the merciless look on the face of the god Apollo, who skins the living Marsyas, and the contemplative regard of King Midas, who attends the flaying, are all parts of an allegory, which is also a narrative (cf. S. J. Freedberg 1984).

We turn to the non-narrative use of allegory in connection with symbolism in art. Erwin Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (4th ed. 1954), considered the symbolism of the three "Meisterstiche," or Master Engravings, of the artist: *Knight, Death, and the Devil*; *Melencolia I*; *St. Jerome in His Study*. These are allegories of life. They do not tell a story, but each has a unity of symbols in an allegorical structure. In the first, a resolute Knight, armed and mounted, accompanied by his hound, rides past Death in the form of a skull with an hourglass and the swinish, sneaky Devil; the scene is a wilderness; on a distant height is the mighty fortress, *die feste Burg*. In the second, *Melancholy*, a robust woman, is seated with folded wings, staring fixedly, held back from activity in her distraction, surrounded by an hourglass, a bell, an open book, a genius who repeats her posture on a reduced scale, by carpenter's tools, a purse, and magic square; the scene is a courtyard; in the distance is a flying bat bearing a scroll with the insignia, *Melencolia I*, a seascape with a lunar rainbow and seaport. The third engraving depicts St. Jerome in his study, seated, reading, in a blessed state, with a halo, hourglass, lion and pet dog.¹

The three engravings are not ordered in consecutive time frames, but are together by juxtaposition, as are the Knight, Death and the Devil in the first one mentioned. The three engravings have a unity in that they are all engravings, known collectively as the *Meisterstiche*; they have a thematic unity as representations of the three states of human life, the state of activity, melancholy, and blessedness. In another sense they do not form a unity, for we do not proceed from one to another, either chronologically or systematically; Panofsky notes that the

Knight rides past Death and the Devil, unaffected by them, having no contact with them.

We may speak of a narrative, mythic, historic, or other, if a work patently tells a story, or illustrates a scene from a story, which is the case of the *Flaying of Marsyas*; the engraving of St. Jerome illustrates a story of an event in the life of the holy man who has healed and tamed the lion. The only story in the engravings of the Knight and of Melancholy is the story we read into the one or the other. In Titian's painting and in Dürer's engravings, the symbols and the allegories constructed out of them are intended to have the same meaning for all the humankind. The intention in this case is a part of a structured world in which all things have their appointed time and place. Opposed to this is the particular, which has no universally intended meaning, and no intrinsic structure. Myth is a part of the world of symbols and allegories, but there are also divergencies between them. The symbols of the stringed instrument (which was Apollo's instrument), and of the Death's head, come from the world of myth; there they may be structured or not. The world of symbols is without end. Once we enter this world, we may consider everything to be a symbol; the symbols are potentially infinite. They are given a definite structure and significance in the symbolic-allegorical systems of Titian and Dürer. These structures are orderly, in the iconographies, and do not exist apart from the interpretations placed on them by David Freedberg and Erwin Panofsky, nor do they exist apart from the interpretations which we place on them. Thus, on the height, not dominating everything, but as a distant goal, in the engraving, Knight, Death, and Devil, is a mighty fortress. This is said in the consciousness that Martin Luther, Dürer's contemporary, said it first. The symbols are not in themselves structured, for there are conditions in which they appear to be free, without order. They are, however, structured in the triple levels of the artist's realization of his original vision, in art-historians' exegeses of the vision and in our participation in both.

Time and the timeless. Marsyas the satyr is caught in an eternal, timeless moment of pain, being skinned alive by merciless Apollo. Marsyas had dared to contest, with his Panpipes, the music of Apollo and his lyre. Apollo won the contest, exacting his cruel revenge. This tells one story taken from myth. Freedberg thinks that there is another story: in Titian's time, his countryman, Marcantonio Bragadino, was skinned alive by the Turks at the taking of Famagusta, which had been in Venetian hands (cf. S. J. Freedberg, *op. cit.*). Accordingly, the allegory of Marsyas presents the anguish of the Venetians at their loss, and as the torture of a Venetian. The narratives are not timeless but in time.

The engravings of Dürer are timeless, representing human states of life; but the representations are not static, for there is tremendous tension in the stern visage of the knight, his powerful charger and his dog, in the movement through the wilderness, past Death and the Devil, with the fortress on the heights in view. The tension is in the art, lines, masses and rhythms, in the iconomic meaning, in the historical and psychological meaning, in our empathy and sympathy with the representation.

Melancholy is caught motionless in a timeless moment, distracted from the book and compass which she holds in her lap, caught in a moment isolated from the moment which preceded it, and from the moment which ought to follow. The temporal isolation is a form of atemporality and is paired with spatial isolation: In the distance below her is a sea, a port, and islands before the port. On each island is an isolated tree. The notion of timelessness is in a contradiction, for Dürer was greatly time conscious. We observe that each of the engravings has an hourglass in it; *Melencolia I*, moreover, has a bell which tolls the hours.

Lucien Jean made the myth of Apollo and Marsyas into an allegory of a different kind of struggle. Marsyas challenges Apollo to a contest which Apollo wins by the judgment of Minerva-Athena and the Muses. Marsyas in defeat prophesies, "when your eloquence, which you believe to be immortal, will be extinct, the satyrs and fauns will recognize my songs in the eternal song of the trees, soil and waters." The allegory has a subjective element in interpretation. Marsyas represents the pastoral, rustic, native genius of the humankind, in conflict with Apollo, who represents the spirit of the academics and the learned schools. Georges Sorel, *Matériaux d'une théorie du prolétariat* (1929) repeated this form of the allegory and struck a blow against the academics. But we have seen that allegory is a learned way of treating myth materials. Sorel appears to be caught in a contradiction.

Whereas the contradiction between time and timelessness in Dürer's engravings and in Titian's painting are both forceful and creative, the contradiction in Sorel's conception is of another kind.

The point is commonly made with regard to the poetical use of allegory by Virgil, whose *Aeneas* may be read as one great allegory of the relation of love and hate; on a small scale, there is the love-hate between Aeneas and Queen Dido who exclaims on her death, *Exociare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor* (An avenger will arise from our bones); on a large scale, there is a love-hate between nations, and likewise between man and the cosmos. The allegory as the microcosmic representation of events and postures in the macrocosm is basic to the figured allegory of Titian and Dürer. Allegory in the cases of the representations of the

great by the small is a symbol within a narrative. It is never a striking isolate, or xenolith, but is doubly imbedded, as the small within the great, and the symbolic representation within the narrative. It is triply and quadruply imbedded: The allegory is believed, or we commit ourselves to it, as Virgil, Titian and Dürer to their allegorical world and worldview. Hence, the allegory is a species of myth, in which it is imbedded. But its imbedding is always weak; it is never as strong as the myth and the commitment to it, in which it is imbedded. The figured allegories of Titian, Dürer, Raphael, are reflections of the Biblical mythic tradition to which they adhered, on pain of death. Virgil's poetry is imbedded in the tradition of Epicurus and Lucretius, to which he had committed himself. This is a reflective tradition, which is intellectual, literate, the religion of the elite, which is far away from the religion of the tillers of the soil. The literate tradition touches on the concerns of the equites, Cavaliers, who were abetted by the sumptuary laws of ancient Rome, which decreed who might and who might not mount a horse, and on what occasion. The farmers' religion was concerned with flood and drought, and the hunger which forced many to sell themselves and their families into praedial slavery. The Roman praediator was one who bought up mortgaged lands at auction. Cirlot and Sorel had no clear ideas about allegory; they exaggerated the negative and weaker side of it and could not account for its magnificent representations by Virgil, Titian and Dürer, and what these mean in relation to myth.

Note

- 1 See L. Krader. *The Beginnings of Capitalism in Central Europe*. New York 2020, where the first two of the Master Engravings are reproduced—eds.

The Treatment of Myth as a Code

Many writers about myth have treated their subject as a code or a cipher, both in olden times and in the present. Among the chief protagonists of the view of myth as a code have been the structuralist schools of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Edmund R. Leach.

A code is a process which is part of the more general one of encryption and decryption. Parallel to the overarching category, it is composed of the acts of encoding and decoding; the code, whether of laws, transactions, thoughts, symbols, letters, or numbers, is the product of a codification process of a kind relevant to the given product. Myths are coded, as, for example, Antti Aarne and Hunter S. Thompson have accomplished this. But the code of myth in question is the work of scientists, who are outsiders to the myth. The myths are not codes as such, in this case, but are treated in an analogy with respect to codes.

The codes, according to Lévi-Strauss, are not analogies, but are intrinsic to the myths, in which they are conceived as indigenous models; these are of two kinds, natural and cultural, together with a transposition from one model to another. Thus, he refers to the Maori myths in which the entire cosmos unfolds itself as a kind of “kin,” in which heaven and earth are the first parents, the natural model thus transposing into a cultural model. In his article, “How myths die,” he conceives of myths as having a framework and a code, with two separate

acts of transformation, of the framework, and the other of the code. In treating the tale of Asdiwal, he thought of patterns in myth which are perceived as a language, being encoded and decoded into another. This thought about myth is applied to the pairs, nature and culture, one language and another language and myth, but also in the relation of one myth to another, and of one body of myth to another, with encoding of the mythic concepts by the one, and their decoding by another; this is further developed in the relations of the pairs, mythic being and social reality, aesthetic and cognitive structure of myth, narrative versus plot of myth, all of which are possible mythemes (as he avers in his *Structure and Form: Reflections on a Work by Vladimir Propp*). He refers to the evolutionism in the form of the struggle for life in the Polynesian myths; these appear in a mytheme of a cold culture, which is paired with the evolutionism of a hot culture, such as the theme of Darwinism in Western civilization. Myths are active and are thought in man. Myth is narrative, which has a plot. Lévi-Strauss has acted as though there was a system of myth, hence it is to be read as code. It is inconceivable that there is a code which is not a systematic use of parts, which constitute it. But I do not think that Lévi-Strauss has a system of myth. Nor do myths constitute systems *in concreto*, or in their particularity. They are rich, variegated, bizarre, amazing, and wonderful. They seem to rise up and leap about unpredictably, without inherent structure. If there is a code in myth, then it has a structure or system. Yet neither the code nor the structure, are *in* the myth, but both are brought to it by the structuralist. (We modify this statement for certain myths.)

As to the codification in its relation to myth, clearly if there is no system of myth, then analysis of it as a code fails, for in order for a code to exist, first a system of the myths must be shown. Before considering this point, we advert to a number of contradictions suggested by Lévi-Strauss himself in his treatment of myth. In his paper, "How Myths Die," he speaks of the construction of myths according to disparate rules. The disparate rules of myth are brought together in a homogeneous system, he has written, but that system has been constructed *a posteriori*. These are contradictions piled onto one another explicitly by Lévi-Strauss. The question left unanswered by him concerns the *a posteriori*: is the system constructed the product of the teller of the myth or of the ethnologist? If myth is non-canonical then the canonical system is evidently that of the ethnologist. In fact, he has reverted to this notion of the non-canonicity of myth on many occasions, having repeatedly asserted that all versions of a myth are valid and that it survives even the worst translations. His idea of myth being an improvisation, bricolage, has adumbrated this notion of the non-system and on-canonicity of myth.

The myths collected by Dorsey, Boas, Bogaraz, Jochelson, Radin, Kluckhohn, Malinowski, and Lévi-Strauss are not the product of schools of thought. Radin has referred to the Winnebago “theologians,” but these appear to have touched on particular, concrete points, not on any attempt at codifying or otherwise systematizing their tenets, beliefs, or myths. Neither the Winnebago nor the Chukchi, nor any other body of myths have been treated in the way that theologians treat their doctrines. Radin’s use of the term “theologian” is made by way of analogy or even of irony in this case. A different approach is recorded by Alexander Heidel, Samuel N. Kramer and Ephraim A. Speiser, who treated the cosmogonic and juridical accounts of ancient Mesopotamia.

The priests and scribes of Sumer, Akkad and Babylonia were indeed specialists in their respective doctrines, and no analogical argument, still less irony, is applied when referring to them as theologians. They recorded their traditional lore and learning, making their traditions into harmonious doctrines, which are contained in a number of codes or collections of laws from Ur, Babylon, Assur, and other places. No such collection from Egypt is known. These collections were either ascribed to the initiative of a king or placed under his name. The best known of these is the Code of Hammurabi, King of Babylon; this code was the product of specialists in law who made it into a concordant doctrine.¹

Judaic, Christian and Islamic specialists in law and theology have produced a Mishnah, Nicene Creed, and code of the Shariat, each of which is the product of debates, clarifications, codification and systematizations as they bear on the doctrines of the Old and New Testaments, and of the Koran. We juxtapose the Hammurabic to the later codes; they are generally of the same kind, but the Babylonian code did not serve as their prototype. They are all the expressions of specialists in their respective doctrines. The code of Hammurabi may be considered as a law code, bearing significant parallels to later codes, such as that of Justinian, or of Napoleon. If it was put together as the latter were, then it was the work neither of the king whose name it bears nor of the nameless people of Babylon, but of a college of learned men of their nation. All these codes have a generic resemblance, not a common developmental line.

Since myths as codes have been discussed by prominent structuralists, we will examine the general problem of codes briefly. Because of the complexity of the subject, we will restrict ourselves to the aspects of codes of law and of codes in the theory and practice of decoding, deciphering and cryptanalysis, with a view of the consideration of myth. Martin Noth, who devoted a lifetime to the study of Old Testament Law, has referred to more than a score of codices in the ancient world, among them the codes of Hammurabi and Hillel. We will sketch

out the first of these. The Hammurabic Code was a code of law which is dated from about 1700 B. C. It was not the first of these so-called law codes, for there is an earlier one of the city-state of Ur, which is dated about 2050 B. C. These are not law codes in the strict sense of the term, as we think of them today. In modern European code law, the code is understood to be a body of the law of a nation to which the judge and other legal officers subscribe, and which they are obligated to consider in making judgments or in administering the law. The Babylonian judges sat in judgment, considering cases brought before them, and made decisions in accordance with the edicts of their monarch and the customs of the people. The legal traditions were collected in the courts of law, set down in writing, and put into texts which have in certain cases come down to us. The “codes” appear to have been intended for the benefit of the people, and not particularly for the judges. The Babylonian codes were not binding documents.² At that time the practice of law was already given over to the specialists.

The Biblical law has been regarded as a code in many senses; of these, the Code of the Covenant between Yahweh and His people, and the Code of Deuteronomy have been examined by the specialists in this subject. The aspects of these codes as covenants, pacts, compacts or contracts have been much discussed. They provide a model for the mythic Social Contract, which was offered to the world by Thomas Hobbes, Spinoza, Samuel Pufendorf, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and many others in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This notion is in part developed as a myth of the origin of society on the one side and of government on the other; in its second sense it is traced back to beliefs of like kind which had been held in the Middle Ages and in the European Renaissance by such movements as the Puritans.³

The Code of Justinian

Justinian, Emperor of Rome in the sixth century A.D., commissioned a group of experts, led by Tribonian, at Constantinople, to compile a code out of the previous codes and other enactments. Their task was to omit all that appeared obsolete, or superfluous, to eliminate or otherwise overcome contradictions in the law, likewise needless repetitions, and where possible, to combine several enactments into one, thus, to simplify and harmonize the law. This was then done in the Law Code, the Pandects or Digest, and Institutes. We have mentioned the mythic origin of certain aspects of Roman law.⁴

The Code of Napoléon

The French Civil Code, sometimes known as the Code Napoléon, after the emperor who had presided over its completion, has been in force, with modifications, since it was enacted into law in 1804. Its stated purpose was to rationalize the law, in the sense of a bringing about a reconciliation of the customary law of the Republic and of the localities, regions and cities, with the Roman law, and thus, to effect a fluid transition from the past to the present. The development of the law code in the modern sense has the Code Napoléon as its example. These codes have the primary task of rationalizing and harmonizing the law, and of making it into a coherent system, and the secondary task of creating law; the second task may even be dispensed with. There is a sense in which one may interpret the notion of a development of so-called veritable codes of law from early forms in the ancient Near East, particularly in the history of Babylon and of the Bible, down to later forms. The relation of the law to custom and to myth, and the rationalization and harmonization of the same historic and legal elements are considered as common to all of them. Likewise, the participation of literati experts and specialized practices in the codification is discernable throughout the known history of the codes. Later codes sought to eliminate redundancy in the law.

If we say that rationalization and harmonization are brought forth in codes of law, it should be understood that these terms are referred to the standards of the codifiers, not of ours, nor yet to any absolute standard of reason and harmony.

Codes, Cryptanalysis and Ciphers

Codes and ciphers are together or separately a part of the techniques of transmission of messages in communication. A separate set of techniques is involved in their reception. Whereas in the twentieth century there has been much discussion of myths as codes, in the eighteenth century, much was written about the decipherment of myths; a few authors who published books in this vein have been mentioned. Ciphers and codes are parts of the art of en- and decryption. There are many meanings of the terms, code, cipher and encryption; according to one of these, a code is a systematic way of classifying and storing a body of information in a given language. It may be transparent or opaque, easy or difficult to express, communicate, receive and interpret, but in any case, it is a particular, not a general way of expressing and communicating in a given language or in

an interlingua between languages. The code may have been developed for any of several reasons, of which three may be mentioned here: 1. secrecy; 2. economy of time, effort of materials in communication; 3. conservation in an archive, library or dictionary. Conservation which is practiced neither for economy nor for secrecy has a separate technique of storage and retrieval of information from the others, and each has a technique of expression and communication of its own. Codes for conservation are less opaque than the others, and codes for the purpose of secrecy as a rule are the most difficult to read of all. The techniques, the different purposes, and the materials used in coding determine in major part the elements of the code. Codes may be a simple contraction or abbreviation. Substitution codes may replace a letter by a number, by another letter, etc. Substitution is then added to subtraction or addition of elements in decryption.

In one sense, ciphers are part of the process of encryption and decryption, another part of which is a code. In another sense, a cipher is a code which is developed for the purpose of secrecy. There are other uses of ciphers, in writing, in arithmetic, etc. In relation to codes, certain ciphers are not developed for the economy or for conservation but are techniques of making information cryptic and difficult to interpret; encryption and decryption of enciphered codes are ordinarily more complex than the coding practices of the kinds developed for the other purposes mentioned. Ciphers were thought of in the eighteenth century with respect to secret messages and information which they might bear. Sallustius thought that myth had a hidden meaning.

That meaning may have been put into the myth either intentionally or not, and consciously or unconsciously by its original teller; but these are all speculative matters. It is assumed in decoding or deciphering of myths that they have a system of their own which the interpreter will disclose by hermeneutic skills. However, since myths have no system of their own, it is unclear how they may be treated as code, whether without or with secret and hidden meanings. Codes may be developed with an eye to secrecy without economy, or conversely, to economy without secrecy. Myths conserve the traditions of a people, but not in a systematic way. Some myths may seek to do this, but not all. The failures of Chukchi and Yukagir myths to work in this respect were noticed by Bogoraz and Jochelson.

The chief difficulty in establishing myth as a kind of code is the presence in codes of their systematic treatment of information, and the absence of any system in many important bodies of myth, particularly those coming from cultures which Lévi-Strauss calls cold. Myths are not arbitrary, but they are fantastic, imaginative and diversified. They are not free but are bound to traditions of a given people. Myths also are diffused, Boas and Lévi-Strauss both having shown

that they are present in various, but related forms among neighboring peoples. They are seen to change, but without a system thereof. Thus, if the myths of the Bella Coola are more concrete, detailed, richer or more harmonious descriptions of the houses and villages of the mythic animals than are the myths of the Kwakiutl, it is not because the family life, houses and villages of the one are more concrete, detailed, richer or more harmonious than those of the other. The former own their myths, and these ownership practices by the Bella Coola are more precise than those of the Kwakiutl, but this is not because ownership is more precise or extensive or more greatly developed by the one than the other. Paul Radin was so impressed by the proclivity of the Kwakiutl to own goods and services of all kinds that he styled them the “capitalists of the north.” But the Bella Coola had a more highly developed sense of ownership of their myths.

The social organization of these peoples is generally of the same kind, and so are their economic practices; they are not simple hunters, nor are they farmers, nor do they have urban and industrial economies. They live in a region which has a great natural resource of fish, but their food supply is greatly variable, proceeding from glut to famine, and this variability is expressed in myth. These statements bear on their life in traditional times. The elaboration of ownership, embellishment and harmonization of their myths by the Bella Coola Indians may be traced to their practices in the society and the economy, and to the myths themselves, as they relate to those practices.

Leach, as Lévi-Strauss, treats myths from a structuralist point of view, and moreover, treats them as codes, yet considerable differences are to be remarked between the two, both as to their respective objects of investigation and as to their methods of treatment thereof. Whereas Lévi-Strauss, as we have seen, takes up chiefly the myths of cultures he has called “cold,” Leach examines the Bible as myth, which is part of another kind of tradition, both in history and in myth. For the Bible in both respects, as its name implies, is literate, and part of a vast hermeneutical tradition, which is thousands of years old and is active today; the interpreters within this tradition, or rather complex of traditions, are acutely conscious of their history. In his method of treatment of the Biblical myth as a code, Leach makes a point of analyzing the redundancies therein. Of the two, Leach has *prima facie* a better case to be made for this mode of treatment, in view of the myths he treats, not the method of treatment. The code, Leach holds, depends on the permutations of patterned structures, and is a procedure common to all forms of human communication. The method of encoding is not interesting, for it is referred to by the cryptic word, “somehow”; the method of decoding is interesting and is defined by Leach as showing “what persists in a sequence of

transformations.” The purpose is to read the Bible as myth and to provide that reading with a structuralist interpretation.

He has chosen the Bible, which has been the subject of exegesis by several religions over the ages. The exegetes have included scholars with keen and gifted minds; one need not think only of Philo, Augustine, Maimonides, Thomas Aquinas, John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Karl Barth, Hans Küng, all of whom show great talent in their harmonization, nationalization and explanation of their holy writ. Leach therefore has before him a text which has been harmonized and rationalized over many centuries. He begins with the assumption that it is a code, thus a part of a system of communication which is on one level manifest and on another covert. As a code, it has been encoded by the same person or persons. It has to be decoded, according to Leach’s method, by showing what is durative in it throughout a sequence of transformations. There is no basis whatever for holding that it was encoded originally. Now the question is whether it was encoded further along the way. The further question arises whether, given that it was a code, it was wittingly or unwittingly encoded. The code, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. If the Bible, or some part of it, is indeed a code, then it is perhaps to those who believe it to be so. It is not a code in any case if it is not a system of parts.

Leach views the mythic text as a code and assumes that it constitutes a system. Thomas Blackwell argued in a related way: he proposed to decipher the myths. In the modern system of cryptanalysis, by means of the code we enter into the world of secret meanings, hidden messages behind or within the overt message. Athanasius Kircher, Marius d’Assigny, Antoine-Joseph Pernety and many others had a plan which would bring out hitherto unknown systems of meaning of the hieroglyphs, and thus cause them to reveal their mysteries. However, setting aside the question of the theory of encryption, we turn to the actual technique of encoding and decoding. A code, as any other human system, has a plan in it, or underlying it. Somebody, or some group of human beings encoded a message; some person or group in another place or at another time perceived that there is a message in code and proposes to decode it. Leach avers that we do not know how the original message in the myth is encoded. Thus, it may have been wittingly or unwittingly, covertly or overtly intussuscepted into the text, and may have been intended for our eyes, or not.

The science of meaning will bring forth one interpretation if we conclude that there is a coded message in the text and that it was intentionally put there by an encoder. We will place another interpretation on it if we proceed from the assumption that it was set down without an intentional code in mind, but by a

subliminal or unconscious process, a general one in the human mind or culture, and not a specific one. Further, we will operate with one set of assumptions in our method of exegesis if we are the immediate recipients of the message in code, being the ones for whom it was intended: we will operate, however, with a different set of assumptions if we are not. Those who have interpreted myths as codes have a long tradition of such interpretation behind them, which have been varied.

This complex of questions pertaining to codes in myths was raised in the eighteenth century in Europe, and in the nineteenth century by their successors, who had various programs of inquiry for the elicitation of the meanings of the myths. Many in the last century, and in the present one, have acted on the assumption that the myths are a hieroglyph, or hidden language, with rules which we decipher and whose message we decode. Others conducted hermeneutic investigations in a looser sense. Through myth, Creuzer held, and Carrière followed him in this regard, we can get at the Ur-religion, and Schelling thought that we can get at the Ur-consciousness thereby. C. G. Jung has proposed that myths reveal the archetypes of the human psyche. Their methods have had detractors. Voss decried such efforts and maintained that myth is but a jumble of foolish notions: Max Müller insisted that it is a disease of language, and Lewis Mumford agreed with him; Frazer thought that myth is mistaken science. But a later generation has turned its back on their opinions. We will set the consideration of an unconscious or subliminal code in myth aside on the grounds that it is a speculative matter, for no one knows who or what codified the myth or put the code in it.

Next, we turn to the question of the historicity of myths in relation to their interpretation. Now much has been made of historicity in Biblical exegesis, and indeed these exegetes have contributed more to the notion of historicity than perhaps any other branch of historical science. We understand by historicity the reality of an event or a doctrine within its historical setting, as opposed to a mythic representation of the one or the other. But myths have their historicity as well. We start from the point that the myth, the doctrine of the myth, and its interpretation are inseparable to those who commit themselves to the myth. The myth and its interpretation are then separated by those who study them. There is no doubt about the myth and its historicity in the minds and feelings of the believers; the doubt arises among those who separate themselves from the myth. This demythologizing of myth was practiced by some of those who wrote down the Bible, by some of the ancient Greeks who looked at the myths of Homer, and perhaps by some of the ancient Chinese who saw in myth a practical tool for the support of the royal ideology.

The Bible has had many layers of interpretation, and many channels within each layer, each having many adumbrations and sharp delineations. Mention has already been made of a few who have worked in this field. The main impact of these traditions has been to evoke the text as evidence of harmony, rationality, and system. It is regarded as a sacred text, which was pronounced either directly or indirectly by divine inspiration, showing the supreme wisdom. If there are inconsistencies or disharmonies in it, then it is our own mortal and defective brains which are at fault; many Biblical exegetes were and are persuaded that if we know enough and if our minds are powerful enough, all will be made plain in its harmony and perfection.

Leach, who is a scientist with an objective standard, acts in a way which is related to that of the devout among the Biblical exegetes. He begins with the assumption that there is a system which is evidenced by the coded message and is communicated to us. The product is a system which has been maintained over two and a half thousand years in the course of which the message was encoded, transcribed and retransmitted. We may agree that transmitters are known to have enciphered and deciphered the message in the text. But the events and the text of the Bible constitute a history which is more than a thousand years earlier than that. The history of the recording of the events and the record as such are neither a code nor a cipher. The meanings of the early recorders and their intentions in the second millennium are not at all, or at best dimly, known to us; they have been reinterpreted, changed, standardized, harmonized and reharmonized according to the intents of intervening schools of dogma, each with a purpose of its own. The original of the text is neither a cipher nor a code; it is to its hearers and readers a sacred text, but is sacred to them in various ways, each of which is no less valid than the other to the objective observer. The usefulness of this idea does not bear on the error of the notion that the sacred text or myth constitutes a code with a hidden message. Objectively, what is there is to be read and translated if it is in some other language. The myth is not a language, for unlike a language, the myth, and the corpus of myths of which it is a part, is not a system. Nearly all who have dealt with myth have taken notice of its imaginativeness, or fantasy; some have further recognized that myth is not perfectly free but operates within the limits of a given social group, people, or speech community, or within the limits of related groups, neighboring groups, unrelated speech communities, inimical groups, or exchanging groups, who transmit and modify their myths in the passage from one to another.

There is no evidence that there was an original myth; all the evidence points away from this conclusion. The creation in the Bible is somewhat like and

somewhat unlike the creation myths of Babylon or Assyria. The point is that it was expressed and believed in a particular historical setting and was differentiated by its believers from its congeners. Objectively viewed, the creation myth in Genesis has been changed, harmonized and rationalized by later generations, if the comparison to like myths provides any clue to its treatment. In the form in which it has been transmitted to us it has awakened the admiration of Cornford and Collingwood, who compared it with the ancient Greek cosmogonies; in this light, and to this extent, the reasoning of the modern thinkers is surely sound.

The lives of the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are placed in a known historical setting, from the eighteenth century before our era, and after; the life of Moses is placed several centuries later, in the second part of the second millennium; some have located it in the fourteenth century, and some shortly thereafter. We will follow two historical tracks briefly and observe how they diverge and come together. The one historical track leads from the patriarchs to Moses, Joshua and David, from the general ethnic identity to the formation of the state; the connection of Abraham to Mesopotamia, and of Moses to Egypt is good in terms of the philological, ethnographic and archaeological evidence. The second historical track is a record of treatment of the processes which were set down in the first. A thousand years after the time of the Patriarchs and of Moses, and this, I think, is Soggin's main point, a demythologizing tradition was introduced with respect to the Old Testament, and therewith, a separation of myth from faith. David's reign is dated about the year 1000 B.C.; then the demythologizing of the record of the Bible, which began perhaps during the first millennium before our era, immediately following his time, was developed. The text of the Bible was transformed into a canonical work.

That canon has its history, for Abraham and Moses are sacred figures, and their words and deeds are likewise holy in many religions which are at odds with one another. To the devout in each religion, the text and its canon are in history, and have their history; the historical processes are not one but several. These histories are other than the objective history of the events of the Bible. We are concerned with the problem of the text canon, exegesis and critique, not with the history of the events.

The separation of myth from faith in one sense is connected to the factor of inseparability of myth and doctrine of faith in another. The early myth was inseparable from faith, the myth and faith were later separable and in fact separated. The separation was made in part by faithful, who began this process; the outsiders, the non-believers, the scientists carried this process of separation of myth and faith forward. If we say that all interpretations of myth are equally

valid, this has a dubious relativity and tolerance. For we may say as objective scientists that the interpretation of a given text by one religious sect or community is pro forma neither superior nor inferior to another. But if that sect or community has an authoritative head, whether an individual or a council, then such freedom of interpretation among the faithful, as it questions that authority, would be intolerable.

The Biblical text in its various receptions is holy but is decreasingly mythic. It was not at first the work of specialist priests and scribes but belonged to the people; it was later made into a canonical text. It was throughout a holy work, but its holiness was transformed from a popular to an esoteric representation, which was then handed down to the people, the latter receiving it unquestioningly in its various redactions. There is no thought of a double layer, one overt, and one covert in the earlier form, whereas its later treatment permits, with good warrant or not, the view of the Bible as an object of esoteric and exoteric indoctrination, hence its interpretation as a layer of overt and one of covert messages. In this light, it becomes an object to be decoded, and the esoteric or covert layer is considered to have been an exercise of encoding. This activity does not bear on myth in general; it has no direct bearing on the Bible as myth in general; it has a bearing on certain readings of the Bible which have emerged from demythologizing it, and from the act of separation of myth from faith. Moreover, this activity bears on the intervening procedures of mythographers, hermeneuts, exegetes, harmonizers and rationalizers in the intervening centuries; to later writers their doctrines are inseparable from the Biblical text. The message and code complex are then visited upon the latter and treated as an object for encryption and decryption. Some of the treatments are the work of the devout, and others of unbelieving scientists. It is not the sacred text which is decoded but the sacred text as it is given to us by its exegetes. Now the two texts are not the same, for though they may have the same outer appearance, in their meanings they differ, for the same complex of sacred text and exegesis is only the same in form to the devout and the unbeliever; in substance, the two have profound differences. The unbelieving scientists' approach to the sacred text takes up the text and its exegesis with a distinction between them. To the devout, however, the text and its hermeneutic treatment are not separate matters. The question of decoding a text would bear, as we see, only on the sacred text, such as a myth, which is perceived through the works of the later interpreters of an original, which is inseparably interwoven with its exegeses.

The idea that there is a hidden message which is to be decoded arises out of the relation between the original sacred text and its subsequent exegetic

treatment. To the decoder there appears to be a palimpsestic arrangement of an underlying text and a supervening interpretation, for it is thought that if we can but get past the exegesis we may attain to the original, pristine form of the text, which may hold a secret to be laid bare. To the believer, there is no text apart from its interpretation; the Bible to the Mennonites is one with its interpretation by Bishop Menno; to the Lutherans it is not apart from its interpretation by Luther; to the Roman Catholics it is the Bible as it is interpreted by the Councils of Trent and the Vatican; to the devout Jews it is the Bible of the Halakha; the Koran to orthodox Moslems is not apart from but given through the Shariat. By the statements of these individuals or colleges the text is converted into a canon, which is a standard and measure of fidelity; the text to the faithful is read only through the canon and is comprehensible only in this way. The text and its canon thus give rise to several meanings which are worlds apart; they have one meaning to the devout and another, or others, to the infidels. The latter are the outsiders who regard the inner message as a secret from which they have been barred, and which they will dig out in the way that diplomatic, industrial, mercantile or military secrets are decoded.

Now this relation to the sacred text is not universal, but is developed through the institution of schools, colleges, councils, and ulamas which are particular to certain religious practices, and not to others. To the schools, colleges, councils and ulamas, the doctrine of the text is esoteric and can be treated only by authority. How that authority is laid down, whether once or for all time or by periodic renewal, varies from one religion, sect or people to another. In all cases there appears to be an inner doctrine which is actively formulated and interpreted by an authoritative core and source, who hand it down to an outer mass of followers, who are the faithful, and who passively receive the doctrine and do not alter it. This is the relation of the inner or esoteric canon to the faithful. Certain structuralists have taken up only one kind of sacred myths, omitting any other. The text has been the subject of division into an esoteric and an exoteric belief in its history, the esoteric creed having been made into a secret doctrine in the ancient and later religious practices. The structuralists have in part been swayed by the religious beliefs and practices of their own culture, and in part by the teachings of the learned world which educated them, and which has transmitted what is known of the Egyptian, Pythagorean, Gnostic and other religious lore. They then treat all myth as a code, which is an argument, by implication, *pars pro toto*. One may indeed sometimes make out a case for the elucidation of an inner, secret or esoteric meaning of a text which is adopted and construed by a college, or another kind of authoritative body, and treat it as a code. One may further decompose the

text into an original layer and a later construction which has been made upon it. This is a common practice in the structuralist analysis of a literary text as well. But this treatment of the system of beliefs and myths obtains only for a few, well known cases. There is a danger of ethnocentrism in this way of looking at myths.

There is no sacred text apart from the belief in it, or the canon if such there be, which is made of it in any given religion; there is no inner myth apart from its outer form. From this it follows that the division of myth or doctrine into an exoteric and an esoteric aspect, mode or layer is made by an outsider, with an objective, critical and doubtful view of the myth, doctrine and religion. The inner, faithful world and the outer, skeptical world are both real. The former varies greatly, some peoples having their religion, their sacred text and myth, but no body of exegetes who have made it into an esoteric doctrine; others have their religion, or sect, their sacred text and myth, together with an expert body who have made these into an esoteric doctrine and canon, of which they are the handlers and authorities.

The factors making for the treatment of myth as code are summed up as follows: the myth is a sacred text, of a people, a religion, a social group, or a sect which develops a body of experts in the hermeneutic treatment of the text; the experts are kept apart from the laity, and their text is made into an esoteric doctrine which is withheld alike from the common people, who are the believers, and from non-believers, from outsiders, specialists and not. The outside specialists act as a forum external and seek to pierce through the inner doctrine, which is held secret by the initiates. The former conduct their researches into the secret doctrine by many means, among them by treating it as a code and seeking to decode it. A code, however, is in one sense a formalization of a corpus of dicta, oral and graphic expressions, and this form may be imputed to some bodies of myth, but not to others. Structuralists who treat myth as a code have attributed the formalization of certain bodies of myth to others where there is no good warrant for doing so. The myths have a form or system in some cases, but not in others. A code implies an encoder, such as a college. Structuralists in this case appear to project a view which originates in one culture onto another, in an argument which is somewhat misplaced, for a mythic code has the role of a canon for the ulama, council or school. The code is not in all myths, and the colleges are not present in all cultures. Not all peoples have developed such bodies; yet many of them have myths. An alternative would be to hypostatize the code, to have it appear not from the hand of an encoder but from some other source which is mythic or otherwise mysterious. There is a further difficulty in decoding, for the decoder often seeks to get back to a pristine form of the myth, such as the

original meaning of the Bible. But according to a profound structuralist insight into myth, all versions of a myth are equally valid. There is no secret or pristine code, or an original meaning.

Codes and redundancies sometimes go together, and sometimes they do not; there is in any case no essential connection between them. Thus, for example, Justinian's codifiers made themselves the enemies of superfluity and needless repetition in the law.

A further problem which will be mentioned is the relation between believers and non-believers. Some believers recognize the belief of others and distinguish the latter from the atheists or agnostics. But other believers group together all infidels, whether believers in another myth, another god, a god who to themselves is false, with atheists or agnostics generally, without distinguishing one group from another. Now the two groups of believers, the one tolerant, the other strict in their respective doctrines, have different relations to secrecy of their beliefs and practices. The strict doctrines may regard their faith as an esoteric matter, as opposed to all outsiders, whereas the tolerant may lack such a division between esoteric and general, or between secret and public representations.

Notes

- 1 The Law Code of the Babylonian king Hammurabi (Hammurapi) is dated from c. 1750 B.C. It was meant to be applicable to the peoples of Babylon, Sumer and Akkad, and to establish justice among them. The element of the law of retaliation, of an eye for an eye, is not a primitive concept, for it imposes limits on how much retaliation can be exacted from an offender for an injury. There is implicit in it some sophistication, for the demarcation of criminal justice from other areas of justice is noted. Carelessness, negligent work, and corruption were controlled. Thus surgeons, judges and the professions generally came under the regulation of the code. Fair or just prices were given for the control of the marketplace. Cf. C. J. Gadd. Hammurabi, in: *Cambridge Ancient History*. Vol. 2, ch. 5. 1965. Idem., Hammurabi, Code, in: *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 1967. Roland de Vaux. *Ancient Israel*. 2nd ed. London 1965.
- 2 Martin Noth. *The Old Testament World*. London 1966. Cf. de Vaux. op. cit. and G. E. Mendenhall. *Law and Covenant in Israel*. Pittsburgh 1955.
- 3 J. W. Gough. *The Social Contract*. Oxford 1957; J. W. Allen. *Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, Rev. ed., London 1957. Pierre Mesnard. *L'Essor de la philosophie politique au XVIe siècle*. Paris 1969. These writers discuss the different relations of Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Spinoza, Rousseau, Kant and others to the idea of the social contract, as a compact of society and of submission to the

state, the government, the monarch, etc. Some of the writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries believed in the reality of the social contract, while others did not hold it to be literally true, but as a truth of reason, which they believed. It is a myth in any case.

- 4 The Law of the Twelve Tables. See W. W. Buckland. *A Text-Book of Roman Law*. 3rd ed. Cambridge 1975. Herbert Jolowicz. *Historical Introduction to Roman Law* 1932 (3rd ed. Barry Nicholas ed. Cambridge 1972). According to tradition it was enacted about 450 B.C. It was supposed to have been influenced by the Greek Law of Gortyn. Cicero, some 400 years later, wrote that Roman children had the law of the Twelve Tables by heart. It survives only in fragments. It was a collection of rules, mainly of ancient Latin custom, and was held in great reverence, without great difference between religious and secular legal rules; those who expounded the Law of the Twelve Tables were the Pontiffs, or priestly officers; they had the power to interpret and thus alter the Law, which they did in ingenious and not very logical ways.

The Institutes of Justinian, T. C. Sanders (ed.). London 1934. Cf. Buckland and Jolowicz. *op. cit.* Justinian was born c. 482 A.D. and reigned from 527 to 565 A.D. His place of birth was ancient Tauresium (or Taurisium), modern Taor, in Yugoslavia. There are two Taors, one near Skopje, in Macedonia, and the other near Valjevo, in Serbia. As Sanders considers his Taurisium to be in Bulgaria, which lays claim to Macedonia, perhaps the Taor near Skopje is meant. He is said to have been a Gothic peasant by birth, whose name was Uprauda, upright, or just, Latin Justinianus. The Institutes are coupled with the Digest or Pandects of Justinian; the latter is a codification of juristic writings in the sense which has come down to our time. The Digest being considered too difficult for students to begin with, an introductory text, known as the Institutes, was drawn up by Tribonian and others called to assist him. The Institutes were not only a textbook, but had the force of an imperial statute, together with the Digest.

Myth of the Law in the Book of Daniel

The myths are particular in form and substance to a human social group, in a given period of its history. Some are well represented by symbolism, others not so; some have stronger causal chains than others. Some have to do with analogy, or metaphor; some are prosaic and some poetic; some are intricate cycles of myth of vast compass; some are serious, given as laws, but some have paronomasia, other verbal tricks, and playfulness; There is no one general form of myth. As to its substance, it may deal with the origin of the world, or its end, or its midcourse, or a mythic present; it may deal with events which took place before the world began, or it may deal with occurrences of our daily lives, giving them a meaning other than or beyond the meaning of our ordinary, concrete experience; or it may reinforce that meaning by our commitment to it.

The question of our separation of form and substance in our social life, and of their non-separation in myth can be discussed in relation to the law in social reality and in myth. In certain of its aspects the law has its origin in myth; the Decalogue and the most ancient Roman law (of the XII Tables), while socially real, have mythic roots. They are real in another sense. There, the form and the substance of the law are inseparable. The law in social reality introduces a time factor, is changing and changed. Thus, the law of contracts is ever changing in its form. It provides a frame within which certain social acts of contractual rights

and obligations are carried through. We obey the law of contract, and, by following it, a particular contract is valid; this validity is socially substantive, within the time frame of the law of contract, and within the time frame of the specific contract. But a contract in one timeframe, such as the tenth century, being applied within the law of contract of another time frame, say that of twentieth century, would be invalid. The social reality in its substance has meanwhile changed, the social forms have in consequence changed. Or if you wanted to keep to the validity of the older contract in the later time, you would have the burden of proving that the forms meanwhile had not changed. If we move the perspectives toward changing time frames back further to the fourth century, the change in substantive issues of society and of contract will be judged to be even more profound, and the divergence between the forms in the law of contract and of the particular contracts will be even more acute.

Consider in contrast the case of the law in the Book of Daniel, chapter 6. The Judaeans were defeated and held in exile by king Nebuchadnezzar, in Babylon. He was succeeded by Belshazzar who, at a feast, saw a hand, writing a message he could not read on the wall of his palace. He then summoned Daniel to read and interpret the inscription left by the mysterious hand. The king trembled at the interpretation Daniel placed on the message, which told that the days of the kingdom were numbered, that the king himself had been weighed in the scales and found wanting, and that his kingdom was to be divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Belshazzar was struck down in the night and Darius was made king in his place. Daniel made petition and supplication to god thrice daily. But according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which altereth not, petition may be made, within a thirty-day period, only to the king. Those who break this law are cast into the lions' den.

Reference in several different verses of that chapter is made to the law of the Medes and the Persians which altereth not, and so it is stated to be by the king; the Biblical (Hebrew) commentator concurs in this, but an Aramaic commentary places another construction on the king's statement, averring that the king's law passeth not away. Now if the law altereth not, then, according to one construction, it is beyond appeal, for once given, even the king cannot change it. But the Aramaic version permits another construction, for if that law passeth not away then it is everlasting and exists among the eternal things. If we say that the king's command altereth not, this may be said because no edict or interdict of his can be changed.¹ But this says nothing about the passing away of the law and is in fact the interpretation placed on the law of the Medes

and the Persians in the *Book of Daniel* itself. This interpretation has nothing necessarily to do with the immortality of the king's law, as it is construed in the Aramaic. Aramaic and Hebrew are closely related Semitic tongues but are not the same.

There are many redundancies in the account. Our concern is with the redundancy with respect to the law's unalterability. The law is repeatedly stated, then interpreted, and we learn that from both angles of view the law cannot be changed; and that moreover this quality of unalterability holds for various kinds of the royal law, whether it be a command, interdict or statute, or an answer to a petition. One may ask about the function or purpose of such redundancy. It is not put there through such carelessness or oversight, but either to extend our information, which is a cognitive problem, or to intensify our feelings about the interdict of the king, which is a matter of affective response to it, or both. We consider the law of Daniel and that of Darius, that by the repeated reference to the inalterability of the law of the latter, feelings of horror, dismay and indignation come to be intensified, for the law of the Medes and the Persians is made to appear as though it were of the same kind as the law of God. To the believer, the Bible in its entirety is the Law, and the law is found in particular sections of the Book.

We have seen that redundancy in myth is of more than one kind, whether cognitive or emotional, intellectual or affective. We do not separate the intellectual and emotional factors in myth which is narrative or in myth legislative. But a separation of this kind is made in the interpretation of myth, perhaps by believers, but certainly by objective scientists, by non-believers, agnostics or infidels.

Redundancy in Myth

In music, poetry and myth, repetition or reprise is often encountered. The theme, motif or phrase in myth is treated in these ways for many reasons, among which are the expression and intensification of our joy that the sun has risen, that the day has come, what warmth and light are about us, that the winter is past, and the spring is here again; of our pleasure at meeting an old friend, or at hearing that those we love are well; of our feelings of fear on entering the places we dread. By redundancy of themes or phrases, we intensify or mollify our ecstasy or terrors. By redundancy, repetition, reprise, *sostenuto* or *da capo* phrasing we may strengthen our bond to those who share our hopes or fears, joys or sorrows in the singing of the song, the recital of the poem, or the telling of the myth.

The notion of accuracy or of variation in the singing, chanting, recitation or recounting is itself variable. The Eskimos* broke into the telling of a myth, correcting the teller who has omitted a phrase or changed it. In respect of the Bible, it is the same; there are those who will allow not the smallest deletion or addition of a jot, or tittle, a quotation mark, or *keriaia* in copying or reading it. But others in other cultures enjoy the variation on a mythic theme and obtain the willing consent of their hearers in the pleasure of novelty. The variety of human responses at the telling, of those who would retain the old, and those who would embrace the new is great.

The repeats in myth may be considered as a kind of redundancy, but they are not introduced into the telling of the myth for the same reasons that they are introduced into the communication of information; redundancy in the science of myth is not the same, as a rule, as in information science, for redundancy in myth has an affective, emotional or passional element which is intensified or alleviated, as in playing fast or slow, crescendo or diminuendo in music, or in a recital of poetry. In the cognitive element of communication, redundancy is the same in myth as in any other human communication. For myth is a dual process, the expression of our feelings and emotions, and the communication of information within a group and by its members to the outsiders; further we express the cognitive elements therein and communicate our feelings and emotions.

The theory of myth bears upon its affective and its cognitive aspects; the analysis of expression in myth bears primarily, not exclusively, on its affective aspect, whereas the analysis of communication bears chiefly on its cognitive aspect. These are not absolute categories of exclusion and inclusion, but relative ones, for expression has a cognitive function and communication an affective one. But in our analysis, we state our priorities, and in taking up redundancy, novelty, accuracy of repetition and variation thereof in expression, we begin with the emotions, affections and passions, but do not end there, proceeding to the cognitive element in the redundancy. In the analysis of the communicative process of myth we begin with the cognitive element, and then proceed to the affective element thereof.

In myth the factor of belief, while not a universal, is important. If one takes away the factor of belief in myth, then a major part of the myths of the world are eliminated. Redundancy in myth is part of the intensification of belief. But scientists, insofar as they are scientific and not subjective, get more control of the

* Please see the note on page 1 regarding the use of the term Eskimo.

data, but they do not get intensification of their acceptance from redundancy of information. The scientific information is part of an information system, which is part of a scientific system. But if it is correct to say that all versions of a myth are equally valid, as Lévi-Strauss has declared, then myth is not a system; if myth is a bricolage, then there is another reason for concluding that it is not a system; that it is a system of odds and ends is a contradiction in terms. The object of cultural anthropology is not a thing of shreds and patches. Robert H. Lowie, who was a great cultural anthropologist, was sharply criticized for saying that it was, or that some cultural objects were, shortly after the First World War. He came to agree with his critics, pleading in extenuation special circumstances.

Interpretations of myths are made by outsiders or by believers; we will consider first the latter. Many peoples, and many sects control strictly the interpretations of their myths by their believers, the control being placed in the hands of a supervening authority. But other peoples and sects have great latitude in this respect. The variability in hermeneutics has to do with “hot” and “cold” cultures.

Given that there is great variation in the interpretation of myths, from rigid control to utter freedom, then there is no system of interpretation of myth. Scientific procedure differs from that of the believer in myth, for in the former case we lack the freedom of variation of the versions of myth, and in many, not all, religions, we lack the freedom of variation in the interpretation thereof. The question of redundancy in myth, to this extent, treats the subject as an intellectual matter, as a part of cognitive processes, and not as an affective matter, in which our feelings and emotions are involved. But redundancy plays a role in the latter respect as well as in the former. By redundancy in scientific communication, repetition of a message is made as exact as it can be. If we vary the information, we seek to control the accuracy of the variation. The entities in the information are not multiplied without necessity; this is a restatement of the law of William of Ockham. But we have seen that what is deemed necessary in myth is not the same as what is deemed necessary in information science. The addition or subtraction, multiplication or division of mythic entities are culturally variable. In myth there is freedom in some cases to embellish, aggrandize, or diminish an element, or otherwise vary it among some peoples, whereas others sharply restrain such practices, or permit it not at all. In sciences of information, the goals and purposes of economy of effort in communication are other than those of myth.

We may elect to analyze redundancy in myth bearing a model in mind which has been taken from information science, in which case we will grasp the cognitive element; but the affective element in the intensification of our emotions, in

the passionate burden of the myth, in its representation of the beliefs and sense of unity of the group will be ill-served by such a model. Alternatively, we may elect to analyze redundancy in myth by means of a model taken from the sciences of affect, poetics and musicology; in this case, we will grasp the factors of intensification, diminution, sustainment and reinforcement of our emotional responses, of our beliefs, of our feelings of commitment to the group and to its myth, and of our sense of membership in the group. For the analysis of this aspect of myth one is well advised to take up both models, and not to omit either. The analysis of mythic law bears on its cognitive element, and on its substance, which is its relation to the social life, beliefs and commitment of the group, thus on its affective element. The form and substance of mythic law are inseparable; this point is even clearer than it is in relation to mythic narrative.

The scientist may well regard the redundancy as a problem in information processing; the believer in the Bible takes the redundancy as a matter of form and substance, whereby the superiority of the divine law over the human, even though the latter be royal, is affirmed, confirmed, deepened and broadened in the intellect and affective mind. The faith of the devout is then attested and renewed. The redundancy of the affective content of the passage in the Bible then becomes new information to be processed alongside the redundancy in respect to the cognitive burden. The two information processes are separable to the scientist, not to the faithful, any more than the latter can separate the form from the substance in attending lessons of Scripture.

Redundancy in its aspects as repetition is brought into poetry, the dance, music and other arts; thus, it appears in poetry, the dance, music in myth. Aside from this, we may consider myth as an art form with its own practice of redundancy. The redundancy is a means of repeating a phrase, a theme, a motif, or an entire section of a work. The phrase is repeated, and is thus marked as redundant, in order to establish a certain rhythm by the poet, the dancer, musician, or the mythopoet. The redundant phrase is marked in our eyes, ears or minds for the purpose of the pleasure we take in the tension and release of tension, movement back and forth or up and down; these are experiences of extension of the rhythmic ebb and flow, or the intensification of the process. Redundancy in its aspect as repetition may be introduced for the purpose of practice in order to perfect our command of the art, whether of the dance, the music, the poetry, or any other. There are many other aspects of redundancy beside these. We will consider redundancy in myth with respect to mythic law and mythic narrative.

Narrative, formally regarded, is a process during a period of time which refers to another period of time in which the events narrated take place. The

events have relations of connection and difference between them, which constitute a sequence. The relation of time of the narrative is the same as the relation of time of our everyday experience.

Narrative is a way of recounting which bears on the formal side of myth. But accounting of and for the world around and in us is both a formal and a substantive process, which leads to mythic recounting as an expression, and to speculative forays on the one side; it leads to scientific analysis, which is the idea of Aristotle; it also leads to business practices, which is implicit in accounting. Narrative expressions and accounts have their substantive aspect as well. In narrative we proceed from a beginning to its development, and if not always, then often enough, to an end. A tale proceeds in a given direction, which in our concrete experience is the direction of time. The process may even appear to be inevitable or fated in the myth. Mythic narrative has this direction among others, which are fantastic and mystical.

Narrative is one way of forming a harmonious account of a process, an idea, or a subject, but it is not inseparably welded to consistency, strict causality or other virtues of the rational mind. Narrative form admits of the long reach of coincidence, of the inconsequential, of the surprising. The narrative phrases, once upon a time, ברשית (*b'rešit*), in the beginning (*asit raš*), once there was a king, have a binding force on many levels; they announce a beginning, an accounting from the beginning, and a process of advancement; they bring things together and promise to go on, bringing more and more things together. We enter the world with which we are already familiar and are bound to our customary familiarity by the process of forward movement from the beginning. We are bound by the teller to the tale and bind ourselves to both the account and the one who makes it. These are the grounds to take up the mythic narrative and follow it. The narrative itself provides a binding force of representation, symbolic expression and social sentiment of oneness between the teller, the tale, and the audience. The narrative is a development out of the representative and symbolic utterances, which are immediate and mediate. The immediate is rather more affective, pathetic and sentimental than the mediate elements; it is nevertheless representative and symbolic. The narrative representation offers a tale of a being which is meaningful to us, whose deeds make sense in our tradition, having an existence in a figure, or a person, and the deeds of that figure or person. That figure may be the Lord, who creates the world, or a sovereign who rules a kingdom. The creation accounts for the separation of the sea and the land; prior to their separation there was chaos.

Many people have endowed the life processes and atmospheric conditions with consciousness and a sense of purposive activity. Hebrew רוח (*ruah*) has the

meanings of breath, air, wind; breath or spirit as the symbol or sign of life; soul, mind, disposition, spirit. Greek *psyche* has the meanings of breath, life, living force, soul, spirit, immaterial principle of life. Latin *spiritus* has the meanings of air, breath, spirit, soul, mind; *animus* in Latin means soul, reason, mind, feeling; *anima* (Latin) means breath, wind, physical life, soul. Hebrew נְפֶשׁ (*nephesh*) has the meanings of breath, life, soul. Greek *pneuma* has the meanings of air, wind, life, life spirit and human spirit. Psyche was personified in ancient Greek myths, in a pair with Cupid. Spiritus in late Latin was personified as a supernatural being or entity.² It is impossible to treat these terms and concepts as a system, for the meanings overlap, and appear to vary within a given era, as well as from one era to another. This is mentioned as a typical non-system of myth.

The narrative may be analyzed into a temporal sequence having a purposeful end, which is the creation of the human being by breathing the life spirit into the lifeless clay; the temporal sequence is analyzed into days and nights, which proceeds forward in the direction of our earthly, concrete experience. The narrative is further analyzed into representations of figures, personifications of forces, and symbols of our being and works. The analytic elements are both concrete and abstract. The affective element is at once cognitive, and the cognitive affective.

The myth as a mode of accounting in narrative form seizes and binds us to it. It has the affective element of the familiar and traditional on which we seize as a solid ground in a world beset with perils and uncertainty. The myth is not only narrative. It is also law, which has an even greater binding force in society than the narrative. Myth has a cognitive element both in narrative and in law, whereby we account for the process from chaos to order, to the distinct shapes of light and dark, day, which is light and warm, and night, which is dark and cold. We not only have causal and teleological explanation in myth, but also express our intimate feelings of fear and hope, anxiety and confidence thereby.

The myth has a vast temporal scope, going far beyond our immediate experience. Myth is a jumble of the bizarre, the astounding, and the incoherent, transformed in history into the coherent, harmonious and synthetic elements in our expressions, feelings and thoughts. The mythologists, such as Schelling, Cassirer, Jung and others have gotten a sound insight into myth, but have carried that insight into great, speculative systems of the autonomous, or the tautegorical category of mind or spirit, symbolic form, and the collective unconscious and archetype. We distance ourselves from their speculations, not from any concrete elements in their insights.

It is evident that narrative and the temporal process in myth are other than narrative and the temporal process in history. Historical time proceeds in one

direction, from the human past to the human present. The time of myth is sometimes continuous and sometimes saltative. It proceeds backward and forward; or it proceeds not at all, remaining fixed forever in some timeless world of its own. Lévi-Strauss abstracted space from time in his account of myth. We conceive that myth takes place in several kinds of time, and in several kinds of space; one of these is the space-time of an everyday experience.³

The structuralists have opened up perspectives to myth which are other than those of the formalists, treating both form and substance; form and substance are interrelated in myth, and are treated separately only by hypothetical and external constructions made on both.

Other definitions of myth which are given prominence in modern discussions touch on their substance. Among these are the definition of myth as a sacred narrative and as a supernatural tale. For whether the myth is sacred or not is a matter of religious belief, and the supernatural element in it would be a substantive and a formal matter.

Boas thought that in myth there is implied a division of time, between the way things were, and the way they are. De Santillana and von Dechend went even further and regarded myth purely as a temporal process, abstracted from space. Redundancy is either a temporal or a spatial process, but in myth it is primarily temporal, and it is the same in music. The redundancies in myth are brought out as a process in time with particular strength in mythic narrative, mythic poetry, and mythic visions.

The myth is a process which goes forward on many levels, rational, irrational, metaphoric, analogical, symbolic, mystical, causal, positive, fantastic, empirical, harmonious, saltative, many of these having been addressed as the central one in any given theory of myth. The symbol has had close attention paid to it by the theorists in the nineteenth century, and by Jungian analytic psychology in the twentieth. The explanatory, rational and causal narrative in myth has had many adherents; but others deny that the explanatory myth is genuine, emphasizing thereby that the intellectual content of myth is not a primary reason for its being. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, truth was attributed to myth in various ways. The narrative conforms to a temporal process whereas truth is timeless in the philosophy of Schelling.

The mythic law is distinguished from the mythic narrative. Both the law as myth and the mythic narrative are sacred in the Biblical traditions, among those of the Hebrews, Christians and Muslims, also in the Buddhist traditions of south, southeast, east, and central Asia. Sacred law, its statement and interpretation, were clearly separated from narrative accounts of the law; the law thereafter

is demythologized, sacred law is separated from secular law; the form is separated from the substance of the law, and law adjective is separated from law substantive.

The myth as law has an even greater binding force on us than the narrative myth. The binding force of the mythic law is a social reality in its agency as a self-fulfilling prophecy, being so because we make it so. The account of the world in the mythic symbol is also self-fulfilling; it is an agency not only in the fantasy but above all in our social lives. The myth is an orientation to the natural and human worlds and the expression of our cares and fears, hopes and visions of our social lives.

The law has a quite different relation to time than has narrative. In the light of what has been discussed, we observe that narrative presupposes the flow of time which is objective in relation to us; it presupposes likewise the objective time consciousness and the subjective time consciousness which are introjected into the narrative, and into our response to it. The relation of time in the law is more complex. Subjectively, the law is treated as timeless, universal, or as quasi absolute. Darius and his court treated their law in this way. The king regretted this unalterable state of affairs, and fasted, while Daniel was in the den of lions, opposing the practice of Belshazzar, who feasted, and was destroyed. In either case the law of the land is made to appear as outside, or above time. It is also outside, or above space, and is made to appear as applicable everywhere. Thus is the universal in the realm, overcoming the particular, local practices, and customary law of the communities of the kingdom. It is universal in the second sense in this way. The law is, however, timebound.

The sociology of the law takes the conditions of society into account, and, as these conditions are ever changing, the sociological interpretation of the law is opposed to the sense of its timelessness. Moreover, many lawyers and judges are not always willing to admit the sociological factor or interpretation of the law, for it questions the validity of precedent. The distinction was made above between the inalterability of the law and its immortality. The question of its timelessness, inalterability and universality in this case bears on its jurisdiction in our world of social experience, and not on any eternity or immortality which might be imputed to it. The myth of its timelessness bears on both senses; thus, there are two myths, one pertaining to the law's unchanging way on earth, and the other to the law which passeth not away. The difference between the two myths, or versions of the same myth, arises on interpretation.

The mythic symbols as an apocalypse of the miserable future, or a utopia of plenty, are sometimes put in the form of political or of religious-political slogans, sometimes in the form of narratives, in which redundancy has an important role,

in intensifying our feelings, and attaching us to the myth. Myth in the law is usually as a commandment, a covenant, a decree or interdict. The reiteration of the command, covenant, or interdict serves to reinforce and intensify the law's force, and thereby reinforce and intensify its binding power on the community whose law it is. In a very immediate sense, the redundancy in this case serves to reinforce and intensify the bond of the community, through its members, to one another, and to the law. Redundancy in narrative in one sense is an interference with the flow of the tale; the action of the narrative stands still, doubles back, or moves in some other direction than forward, which is the direction of time. The attention is arrested by the redundancy in this case; we are kept from finding out what happened next. The interruption of the narrative flow keeps us, the listeners, from the cumulation of information. In being arrested the attention is focused, and reinforced, for it is bound to our desire to discover what will happen. The desire, thwarted by the redundancy, impatiently surges forward against the source of its frustration. The attention is therefore doubly arrested and doubly intensified.

The law as myth or as any other kind of law leaves no doubt about what its end or purpose will be. Otherwise, it is a poor law. Redundancy in the law as myth reinforces that purpose. We sometimes read an aesthetic value into the mythic law and derive pleasure or solemnity from the repetition of its phrases. The redundancy in the law codes of Justinian and Napoléon sought to avoid redundancy, as though they wished to eschew any aesthetic value. If the mythic law is heard, then the redundancy has the purpose of fixing the message in the minds of the listeners and reinforcing its binding powers in the several meanings of these powers. Redundancy in the narrative delays our resolution of the doubt as to the end of the tale. With the doubt resolved, albeit after the interruption, our relief at the result is reinforced. Now if it is a traditional tale, the reinforcement we feel bears on the confirmation that our universe is as it has been and intensifies our conviction that it will be the same as it was and is.

The myth of the law is an affirmation of our bond to the way things ought to be. This is opposed to the myth which is the expression of our *Angst*. Our desire to affirm our bond to the way things ought to be is expressed in the myth of the law in a traditional way and affirms our bond to the tradition. The myth of the machine is the expression of our worry about the machine and is anti-traditional. The machine is new as a factor in our lives and has turned on its inventors; the myth is in this sense bound to the tradition of the new, as it bears on the Juggernaut, which enters our lives. The Juggernaut is the figure or symbol not of death but of the machine of death. The redundancy in the mythic expression

applies indifferently to the myth of the law, the traditional myth, and to the myth of the machine Juggernaut, the new myth, or the mythic tradition of the new.

In the redundant expression, the sense of time is extracted from real time, from the flow of time and the resolution of real events in time. Redundancy is the interim time, the time of reflection, the do-nothing time, the reinforcement time, the time of impatience, interference, prolongation of doubt and its resolution, reaffirmation of commitment and belief.

The redundancy in the cases of the ideological myth, the myth of the new, the myth of our *Angst* and worry is a double act of intensification of feeling. One, it is an interruption which delays the application of the balm of a utopian vision; the feeling of pleasure in the blinding vision is the more intense for its delay. Two, the redundancy is a moment of anticipation of the best in answer to the worst that life affords us. The anticipation of the end which we envisage in the utopia is the opposite of the anticipation of the end in the expression of the traditional myth, whether as a law, narration or symbol. For the anticipation in the case of a traditional myth is a reminiscence of the old ways and of things past.

The redundancy in the case of the law as myth is a deepening commitment to its cause; the redundancy in the case of the mythic expression of *Angst* is the deepening of the commitment to flight from its source, to our indignancy, contempt, provocation and wrath; redundancy in the myth of the law expresses our protagonism of its tenets and our advocacy of its cause. Redundancy in the myth of our *Angst* expresses and normally intensifies our antagonism to its source.

Redundancy as a concept is inherently contradictory. A redundancy is on the one hand that which is unnecessary, as redundancy in employment; the redundant job is a useless job. A redundancy in poetry, music, and myth, on the other hand, may be felt to be apt, convincing, telling, and necessary for the intensification of the feeling expressed, and thus the opposite of useless or unnecessary.

On Form and Substance in Myth. Myths and Ghost Stories

A number of writers on myth have defined or otherwise thought of it as a kind of sacred history, or a sacred story. Those who have conceived myth to be sacred history, such as E. B. Tylor, may have had the opening part of the Book of Genesis in mind. History in this case is a form in which the myth is recounted; that it is sacred and that it is history are matters of substance, concerning what we believe about the way the world came to be, and how we came to be. Those who consider

myth to be a kind of narrative, tale, or story⁴ are not concerned with the substance of myth, but how it is presented. If they then consider it to be a sacred tale, or a traditional narrative, or a tale about gods or *daimons*, then they introduce matters of mythic substance into their theories.

The relations within the myth, its content, what it is about, are part of that substance; the relations of myth in society, whether in religion or in politics, are another part of the substantial process of myth. The formal approach to myth keeps to its external relations; the substantive processes are both internal and external to myth.

Myth, when considered as a kind of narrative, poses a formal problem. If myth is an account of the world made by particular peoples, then it varies according to the practices and customs of the peoples. If it is put into the form of a tale in prose, then that is how the people account for things. But others put their accounts or renderings into the form of song; some put their mythic worldview into an expression of the way things ought to be, as moral commandments, or laws; by others they are put together in a dialog of questions and answers; or they are expressed by a symbol or a figure, whether as part of a narrative or not; the symbol may be a metaphor; myth has also been conceived as a non-narrative expression of primitive science, or primitive philosophy. The classifications of myth are made according to formal criteria, and accounts are drawn up in these and various other ways. Tale, counting, accounting, are related concepts and practices in many languages, such as French, English, Russian, German, Italian, Spanish, etc. Thus, in German, *zählen* means to count, and *erzählen* to tell; in Russian, *ščët* means a count or score, *otčët* a report or relation.⁵ An account is not always straightforward, from the beginning to the end; mythic and dialogic accounts often follow twists and turns. Traditional narrative, sacred narrative, prose narrative, narrative in general are important elements of myth, but neither severally nor together are its sole form or constituent.

The definition of myth as a tale about supernatural beings or elements would also apply to ghost stories in Europe and the fox stories of the Chinese. They are traditional tales, which are told not for devout belief, but for their effect on us, to make us tremble, cry or laugh. We do not believe them as we believe the *Book of Genesis* or the Koran. A *daimon* can be an indeterminate god, a human soul inferior to the gods, a deified man, a ghost, evil spirit, or demon. It signifies the Devil in Greek of the New Testament. Bernard Fontenelle, Permanent Secretary of the French Academy, who wrote on myth and fable early in the eighteenth century, held that the great god Pan was the Master of Demons at the time of the Roman emperor Tiberius and of Jesus.

The belief in the ghost story lasts no longer than the situation in which it is told. Belief, which is widespread, with a deep commitment to it, is a fundamental element of myth. We distinguish the ghostly element in myth from the ghost story genre. The occasional credence which we bestow on the ghost stories may be compared to the belief in the occasional gods of whom Hermann Usener has written. The myths are distributed on a scale which ranges from those with a supernatural element in them to those without. Ancient and traditional myths have much to do with the supernatural, but modern myths have less and less to do with it, and in many cases nothing at all. We will take up the latter relations of myth in consideration of the myths of the state, of science, technics and the machine, and of myth in relation to ideology. These are all secular and non-traditional myths.

Belief in myth or anything else is a substantive matter. To those who are committed to a myth, who are loyal members of the group which holds the myth, it is not incredible. It is incredible to the outsiders, the sceptics, the disloyal.

The credence we give to the ghost story is the reaction to it as if it were true, and as if our credence were valid. Both the credence and the ghost story are of the land of make believe. We go along with the ghost story in order to enjoy its effect, which is a moment's entertainment. We thus borrow the effect from the world of myth and of our relation to it, in a way comparable to the one in which the occasional gods and the relation to them are borrowed from the gods of religion and the relations of the devout to them. These are derivative relations which have risen from myth on the one hand, and from religion on the other. In this connection we mention in passing the figure of the Grand Inquisitor in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*, who sacrifices himself, his spiritual and physical well-being, for the common good; he has given up his belief in the myth shared by the people, and his suffering is therefore great.

Notes

- 1 Another example of the king's law not being changed is found in the Book of Esther when Esther informs the king of the plot by Haman to kill the Jews, her people. The king cannot rescind the decree but he issued another decree on behalf of Jewish self-defense.
- 2 The reference to the law of the Medes and the Persians, to Belshazzar and Darius is in the *Book of Daniel*, 6.

On *ruah* and *nephesh*, see *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (W. Gesenius), Francis Brown et al eds., 1951. Marcus Jastrow. *Hebrew Aramaic English*

Dictionary. New York 1967. On *pneuma* and *psyche*, cf. H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, H. S. Jones. *Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford 1968. On *animalanimus, spiritus*, see C. T. Lewis and C. Short. *A Latin Dictionary*. Oxford 1969. On ancient Hebrew law: G. E. Mendenhall. *Law and Covenant in Israel*. Pittsburgh 1955. J. A. Soggin. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. 3rd ed. London 1980. Daniel, pp. 406ff. Roland de Vaux. *Ancient Israel*. op. cit. Law, pp. 143ff.

- 3 The various kinds of time and space are those within the human order. Space-time in the material and quantum orders of nature is entirely concrete but each in a different way. The space-time of the material order is better understood than that of the quantum order on account of the problems of entanglement, action at a distance, time reversal, wave-particle duality and other issues of quantum 'weirdness.' And the philosophers concerned with the quantum order argue over whether there is some deeper theory underlying quantum mechanics that will give us an understanding of what it is that 'goes on under the hood,' so to speak, i.e. what the processes are before the quantum wave functions collapse and what might in fact be going on when quantum particles can be in more than in one location at the same time. In other words, is it possible to develop an "'objective collapse model' that doesn't rely on human observation to collapse a wave function's possibilities to a single outcome, but that invokes instead an objective, physical process to do the job whether anyone's looking or not." See the intriguing article by Bob Henderson, "The Quantum Mechanic" in *The New York Times Magazine*, June 28, 2020, pp. 36–55.

- 4 William Bascom. The Forms of Folklore. *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 78, 1965, pp. 3-20. Myth as prose narrative.

A. Dundes. *Sacred Narrative*. Introduction. California 1984. Myth as sacred narrative. G. S. Kirk. On Defining Myths. *Phronesis*, vol. 1. Suppl. 1973. Reprinted in Dundes, op. cit. Myth as traditional narrative.

J. E. Fontenrose. *The Ritual Theory of Myth*, op. cit. Myth as a tale about *daimons*. *Daimon*—the term in ancient Greek meant "what is allotted to one," "what the gods ordain." Further, it referred to the semi-devine beings inferior to the gods, the tutelary or good genius, the souls of human beings in the Golden Age (Hesiod). In Sophocles it came to mean "bad fortune"; generally, it came to mean bad things from superhuman powers. In the New Testament it meant "Evil Spirit, The Devil." The Indo-European root is *da*, "divide, cut." *Damos*, "a division of the people." Old Cymrian, *dauu*, "client, following." Old Irish, *dam* "horde." Hittite, *da-ma-a-iš*, "foreigner," "people." Greek, *demos*, Julius Pokorny. *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Tübingen 1969. A. Walde, J. Pokorny. *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der indogermanischen Sprachen*. De Gruyter (repr.) 1973.

H. G. Liddell and R. Scott. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford 1968 and Jan de Vries. *Forschungsgeschichte der Mythologie*. Leiden 1961. Myth as a tale about gods. Robert Graves and Raphael Patai. *Hebrew Myths. The Book of Genesis*. New York 1983. Myths, dramatic stories relative to customs, rites and beliefs. Myths justify the status

quo and justify social change. E. R. Leach (see above, ch. 8. Structuralists. Notes 14–17). Myth as sacred narrative.

- 5 On the relation between the acts of counting, telling, accounting, recounting, storytelling, numerating, cf. O. Bloch, W. v. Wartburg. *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue française*. 4th ed., Paris 1964. F. Kluge and W. Mitzka. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*. 20th ed., Berlin 1967. *Conter, erzählen*, tell, enumerate the details of an event. *Raconter*, recount, is an iterative derivation. *Zählen*: Count, reckon, take into account (*berücksichtigen*). *Zählen* is linked etymologically with the root *tal*, Gothic, *talzjan* to teach, and English, *talk*. It is related to giving an account of an event in words or numbers. M. Vasmer. *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Bd. 3. Heidelberg 1958. Slovak, *čítat*, read, count; Ukrainian *čutáty*, read, reckon, count; Czech, *čítu*, read, count.

Esoteric and Exoteric Myth

Bella Coola Myth. The Myth of the Drunken Goddess

Myth is a human social phenomenon; it is variable, widely distributed in ancient and modern times. Many peoples among whom myths have been collected have quite divergent ideas about what myth is, or what the outsiders might call it. The myths of a people include expressions of their worldviews, and in certain cases represent an attempt at synthesis of the view of the people, bearing on what is known and what is unknown in their depiction of nature, the place of their own society and of the humankind in the natural world, and the place of other kinds of beings in it. Myth is not only an account of the known by the unknown, it is also an account of the unknown by the known. All or most human beings are able to imagine fantastic beings, combining the features of one entity with the faculties of another, giving a tree the ability to see things, and a fish the ability to talk. Most, if not all human beings have a capacity to speculate about the origin or cause of things, going beyond the known or probable to a source or beginning that is unknown, filling in the known by the speculative. Again, many of us put these combinations of the known, the unknown, the imagined, speculative and fantastic into a narrative sequence, whether in prose or poetry, which is handed on, becoming an element in the traditions of a social group. Some of these elements enter into the sacred lore, and some into the secular lore of the group. We do not know that all human groups act in this way, but a large proportion have

done so and continue to do so. The capacity to imagine whether fantastically or realistically, and to speculate in various combinations of the sacred and profane, realistic or fantastic, prosaic or poetic expressions, and to put these human productions into a consecutive narration, with likely or seeming causal chains is developed both by gifted individuals and by members of a social group. Chuang Tzu, St. Augustine, and Leonardo da Vinci have gotten justly deserved fame by revealing propensities of these kinds. Some social groups have developed these proclivities in more complex and synthetic ways than others. Franz Boas noticed that the myths of the Bella Coola Indians were more detailed, intricate and integrated than those of their neighbors, who were not very different from them in their economy, social organization and the general thematic of their myths. Investigations of shamanism in Siberia have taught that the Buryat shamanism is generally acknowledged to be more complex and inwardly harmonious than that of the neighboring peoples in traditional times. The social groups are not homogeneous but have certain members who have more of a skill or penchant for the kinds of myth-making activities than others in the group. Paul Radin, we have seen, remarked of certain members of the Winnebago people that they acted more like “theologians” than others, speculated more vigorously, searched for ultimate explanations for things, and sought out harmonious patterns in their intellectual processes. Aristotle thought that mythmaking began with a sense of wonder, which implied for him both a recognition of our ignorance and desire to overcome it. Wonder leads to speculative, imaginative and fantastic accounts as well as rational and empirically founded accounts of the world. The myths are usually mixtures of both kinds of accounts, given that they are socially transmitted over long periods of time.

Franz Boas¹ distinguished between the esoteric and the exoteric doctrines pertaining to myth. Now the great point about doctrines of this kind is that a distinction is implicit in the social organization in which they come forth between the inner and outer circles, a group of initiates versus the general populace; the initiates have access to an esoteric doctrine which is kept hidden from the outsiders, whether the latter be the general populace, the ethnographer, or the latter-day decoders and decipherers. The esoteric doctrine is considered to be a mystery both in the eyes of the inside group and the outsiders. The exoteric doctrine is generally accessible and is without hidden messages, secrets or mystery. Boas referred to certain bodies of myth which have been worked into a harmonious unit; he spoke in this case not of the myths but of “concepts” which are systematized, but sometimes also of tales. They are the results of speculation which then “take on the form of esoteric knowledge guarded by a few individuals, priests or chiefs.”

He contrasted the systematic bodies of myth which were owned by the various families of the Bella Coola, the myths in their system having been “developed out of the disorganized mass of myths and tales of British Columbia.” For example, the Kwakiutl, who live south of the Bella Coola, divide the year into a sacred and a secular season, but attach no myth to this division; the Bella Coola divide the year as do the Kwakiutl, but in their myths, they say that the keepers of the sacred ceremonial live beyond the ocean, bringing ritual at a certain time each year to this world. The Kwakiutl believe that all animals live in separate villages both inland and in the sea; an intermediate group of Indians in Rivers Inlet declares that all animals and plants reside in one house, in which they perform sacred ceremonies; the Bella Coola believe that this house is raised to the sky, and that beings live in it who have the functions of gods ruling over human destinies. The Bella Coola myths are owned by separate families and are systematized by them, each in its own way. They have developed their myths as an organized priesthood develops its myths, lore, doctrines and dogmas, harmonizing and embellishing them.

There is a further point to be brought out. The appearance of the esoteric and exoteric mythic concepts and theological doctrines arises as the society develops an inner core of initiates which is distinct from the general populace. This does not seem to be the case among the Bella Coola, whose myths are owned separately by separate families, each acting as a unity with respect to the myths. Each family is therefore the “inner core” with respect to its myths and is outer with respect to the core of myths of others. Each and all of the families are thus initiates with respect to something. This is not the case in the organization of the priests of ancient Egypt or other parts of the ancient East, the Pythagoreans, the worships of Thrice-Majestic Hermes, or other cases of guardians of esoteric doctrines, and is not the case in the organization of modern creeds, each with a body of doctrine, and with its special authorities in the interpretation thereof, whether rabbis, priests, preachers, mullahs, monks, or colleges of the same. The esoteric lore, tales, myths and the doctrines of the Bella Coola are esoteric therefore in another sense than those of the ancient Egyptians or of the modern creeds.

Now in Lévi-Strauss’s view, the esoteric doctrines of myth are the products of *a posteriori* processes, whereby they are systematized, codified, interpreted, made harmonious and rationalized. If myths are codes, then a system is attributed to them. But if myth is a code in any sense, then the system, the code, its encoding and decoding are brought to it from without, by priests or other specialists in the rationalizing or harmonizing of creeds and doctrines, and then by ethnologists and philosophers. The myths are not as such esoteric or exoteric, but they are

made to be so by members of a social group, nation, sect, etc., under given conditions, which are far from universal; these members are trained for their tasks. No classification of myths, of esoterica, or any other human expression is watertight; trickery hides in the universals, and we eschew all absolute judgment; thus, as to the distinction between esoteric and exoteric expression, the Bella Coola families who own the myths are in the intermediate range between the societies without and with specialization of doctrines, being without specialists in matters of doctrine, or rationalizers and harmonizers of the creeds. Each family is its own specialist in the exposition of its doctrine.

The distinction between exoteric and esoteric myth bears on the practices of the Bella Coola and on the social groups which have developed specialized roles and parts in them, such as initiates, priests, cabals and sects; thus, it has a bearing on the Babylonians, Akkadians, and ancient Egyptians. All of these peoples made a mystery of their cult and mythic lore, each within a small social group or segment, and apart from the rest of society. They produced within and at once, apart from the myths of the general tradition of the people or nation. However, there is a difference. The Bella Coola, having no specialized priests or scribes, had a body of myths which were at once esoteric in a sense and exoteric in another sense. Each family had its own esoteric myths which were external to others and hidden from them. But in the ancient Orient and elsewhere the myths were of two kinds, those shared by the general populace, and those kept hidden by the priests from the exoteric parts of their nation. The Aranda, Tsimshian and Chukchi myths were general, being accessible to all. This is to be modified, for the societies were divided into men and women, further into adults and children, and the mythic practices as well. The myths were recounted by one or another group within the society but were not the special property of priestly initiates; hence they had no mysteries which were withheld by the latter from the society. The families of the Bella Coola were all initiates with respect to one another, each possessing an inner core of mystery to which all the other families were external. All of the members of the society had an inner access to a myth which was sacred and in no way inferior to any other; thus, all the members had an immediate sacredness about them, and none were lay or profane. The reading of the Bella Coola myths as a division of esoteric and exoteric doctrine is in a sense projected from the division of this sort which is found in societies, such as our own, with a tradition of priesthoods, initiates and mysteries. This relation of the Bella Coola families to their myths, to one another and to the myths of other families, places all of them in a position of equality to one another. All have a like access to an inner core of mystery of the myth, which is kept hidden from the others, and

objectively the access, the inner core of mystery and the exclusion of the others are the same in all cases. Each version of the myth, therefore, is as valid as the other, as Boas and Lévi-Strauss have pointed out; Lévi-Strauss has gone even farther, holding this to be the case in respect of all myth, and the same conclusion on other, non-structuralist grounds can be sustained. One can agree that all versions of a myth are equally valid because they are of the people, folkish, ethnic, and popular. Therefore, one cannot look for a higher or deeper meaning, or a hidden core of doctrine in the myth to which the common people have no access. For all versions of a myth are alike in this respect. Therefore, the myths of our times are no better or worse than those of former times, and the myths of the Chukchis and Yukagir are no richer or poorer than those of their ancestors. Priestly myths are no deeper or more superficial than those of the common folk.

As the Bella Coola myths are divided among the families, each keeping its myths secret and apart from the others, they are all esoteric and all exoteric, all being inner, all are outer. The esoteric to me is exoteric to you and vice versa. One would expect the esoteric to be opposed to an exoteric body of myth, but this is not so in the Bella Coola case. Thus, their mythic doctrine was well developed, but in a one-sided way. In this respect, they differed from the Aranda, Chukchis, Eskimos*, Tsimshians, Yukagir, and certain other peoples, whose myths we have examined, for the latter appear to have had only general myths and no esoteric ones. Their practices with regard to the myths differed likewise from those of the ancient Egyptians to whom we now turn, for the latter had bodies of esoteric myths which were held in secret by their priests, the general folks of Egypt being kept from access to them; the latter had another body of myths of their own. Thus, the Egyptians had in their myths the opposition of the esoteric to the exoteric, and a priestly caste which kept itself apart from the common folk.

In order to examine this point more closely, we will take up the interpretation of the Egyptian myths. Henri Frankfort² found evidence of myth in the Egyptian folk tales and literature of the third millennium B.C. There, the sun-god Re was referred to as "His Majesty." He was not like a king, however; on the contrary, the king of the realm was likened unto him. This is a case of what Hegel called a reflex category, that is a category in which we deposit an attribute of royalty in the god, and then discover it there.

In these myths, the gods were humanized; they were born of a mother and a father, just as we. The gods came of age and one of them on reaching maturity

* Please see the note on page 1 regarding the use of the term Eskimo.

claimed his heritage, which was kingship over the land of Egypt. Another god opposed his claim, and the two gods fought. In yet another myth, the sun-god grew old and wished to withdraw from his human subjects, whose concerns he found to be tiresome; he had the lion-goddess destroy the humankind, which she proceeded to do only too well. He thought she went too far, and so he ordered seven thousand jars of beer to be poured on the field and stained red. The goddess admired her reflection in the red colored plain, she then drank the beer, liked what she drank, and became drunk. (The myth of the god who retires on finding how troublesome human beings can be, and the myth of the drunken goddess may be related.) But at the same time the Egyptians believed that the sun-god is unlike human beings, for his flesh is of gold, the metal which does not tarnish or rust. The god is thus understood to be immortal.

Frankfort placed myth in the folk art, and discovered coherence, straightforward narration and understandable allusion in it. But he also detected a jeering tone, obscenity and scurrility in it. It held the interest of its listeners by depicting marvels. The myths are written down, so Frankfort wrote, but were really the vulgarization of mythic lore, regarding both form and contents. The Egyptian myths, he thought, had no coherent account of the creation of the world, and indeed, in his opinion, its poetry was anti-epical in contents, or doctrine, while in their form they appeared to him to be without the accomplishments he perceived in other, more skillful literary products, such as the hymns, poetry, and literary short stories.

It may be a fact that the Egyptians of antiquity had myths but no epic; whether this is evidence of an anti-epical stance of those Egyptians is not at issue. Whether those Egyptians had two doctrines, the one vulgar, straightforward, understandable, popular, and the other hidden, mysterious, is our concern, for this problem touches on a central matter of myth. The ancient Egyptian society was divided into a ruled class and a ruling class; it had initiates, priests, scribes, and other learned people who kept a mysterious doctrine to themselves, and this was reported thousands of years later by Herodotus and other travelers who visited them. Frankfort thought of the myths he studied as a vulgarization, which can be taken to mean a popularization either in a positive, deictic and informative sense, or else in a pejorative sense; in either case it would imply an exposition of some meaning which lay concealed from the populace; there are those who are the preservers of the mythic lore, and these Frankfort opposed to the ones who engaged in its vulgarization. This interpretation complicates the study of myth when no such complication is warranted. The vulgarized is the exoteric; it is the myth itself. The mythic lore did not and does not exist apart from its popular or

vulgar expression. Apart from myth, there was indeed a secret doctrine of the ancient Egyptian priests, parts of which were religious, parts geometrical, other parts astrological, historical, hydrographic, and so on. This doctrine was kept from the laity as esoteric expression to which few had access. The Pythagoreans and many later sects and creeds, as well as individual learned men and women, dug out these mysteries, whose secrecy bore on the doctrines of the priests, not on the myths of the people. Frankfort's account of the mythic lore contributes to the myth which has been constructed around the ancient Egyptians, their doctrines and myths. Whether you prefer the poetry of the people or of the learned men is a matter of personal taste.

The question of the exoteric and the esoteric elements in myth is complex and should be further explored. The presence of priests, initiates, secretaries and specialists implies secrecy, mystery, and esoteric information opposed to the doctrines and myths of the general masses in ancient Egypt. The myths of the latter were common and general in one sense and were not opposed to the esoteric doctrines of the priests. But in another sense, they were indeed exoteric as opposed to the priestly, esoteric doctrines. The myths of the people are general but in some cases are cultivated, embellished and made over by specialists, who transformed them in some cases into harmonious accounts, however limited in purview. Those who wrote down the myths were certainly specialists, for writing was then an art mastered by few. The myths which are thus introduced into their doctrine and ornament are made popular. In their result, however, they are not the same myths, and in one sense they cease to be myths but doctrine of myth. In another sense they are indeed myths, for they have a continuity with the earlier myths which they have harmonized and ornamented. We will in this second sense continue to call them myths, for they continue to be popular, although with the reservations indicated. The priestly myths and doctrines, and this, one supposes, is Frankfort's main point, had a higher social standing than the general people and their myths.

The world of religions, such as the Buddhist, Hebrew, Christian, and Islamic, have elements within them which are general, and others which are caught up in the oppositions between those of the exoteric and esoteric kinds; in the latter case, each kind implies the other in the myths of a given people. If that popular tradition is without esoteric myth, then it has not exoteric myth to oppose it; it has no esoteric initiates who are opposed to the general populace and who keep the latter out of their secret myth. The Bella Coola case offers a transitional or intermediate position between the two mythic traditions, Chukchis, Arandas, and Tsimshian on the one hand, and the traditions of the world religions on the

other; the ancient Egyptian myth is traditional and general in the form in which it has come down to us. The Egyptian priestly religious doctrine was esoteric and was opposed to the exoteric doctrine of the popular myth. This points to another opposition, between doctrine and myth, the one esoteric, the other exoteric, an opposition which arises with the development of priestly castes and cliques.

Political ideology has a parallel question related to it. The control of the ideology of a party, in our times, is given into the hands of a central commission, and is a powerful weapon for the control of the party, or of an entire country. No one has access to the ideology, save those who are appointed to the commission. The people generally are the outsiders, the ideological burden being in the form of an esoteric doctrine under the control of the few, who have received a great secular myth, control its interpretation and secure its dissemination to the people. The latter have myths of their own, which are twofold; they are genuine myths of the people, which they hold fast, such as the patriotic myth of the motherland or fatherland; or else they are myths derived for the people from the central political myth in its ideological expression. The utopian vision may be of the glorious future of justice and plenty; this myth is an exoteric derivative of the esoteric ideological burden of the party doctrine under the control of the commission.

Notes

- 1 Boas. *Bella Coola Mythology*, op. cit. *Tsimshian Mythology*, op. cit. *Mythology of North American Indians*, op. cit. *Mythology and Folklore*. In: *General Anthropology*. F. Boas ed., New York 1938.
- 2 Henri Frankfort. *Ancient Egyptian Religion*. New York 1961 and G. de Santillana and H. v. Dechend. *Hamlet's Mill*. op. cit., have probed the question of esoteric and exoteric myths, giving the account by the great Persian poet Omar Khayyam of the mythic Jamshyd who had the seven-ringed cup and the magic mirror, which goes on reflecting the world, as it is the sky itself. The seven-ringed cup stands for the circles of the seven planets of which Jamshyd is the ruler. They then ask what Jamshyd was. Their answer: "To the simple, a magic image, a fable. To those who understood, a reflection of Time itself . . . It was the same myth, and that was enough." The exoteric fable is the fare for the unenlightened, whereas for those who are inducted into the mysteries it is a myth in which the laws of the universe are expressed in the esoteric language of time, which is specific to it. So keen is de Santillana's pursuit of the esoteric quality of myth that he pours all his scorn on "mathematics for the million" and speculations about the unconscious through myth. It is equally clear that the myth of Omar Khayyam and G. de Santillana is no myth of a simple society, but one which is

devoted to the keeping and unveiling of mysteries; the mysteries are not in the keeping of the many but of the few. The millions are simple, and can go no further than fable. Myth is beyond them, in de Santillana's opinion, for it is the domain of esoteric knowledge, of time and mystery. The opposition between the esoteric and exoteric in the doctrine of de Santillana is the opposition between the elite and the general public.

The State as Myth and Myths of the State

Hegel and the March of God through the World. Hobbes, Leviathan and Behemoth

The Chinese myths in traditional times were transformed by the literati into an element of the religion of the state. The cult of Confucianism was another part of that official religion, the ritual of which was part of the governmental service. Confucianism had myths of the master Confucius; many of the literati in the service of the state had no supernatural cult but had a creed of their own in which Confucianism was supreme. They believed in his doctrine of state service as the social task of the superior man, as they believed in the superiority of that doctrine, and of their own superiority in terms of their cult and cult figure. Their myths were in this respect without supernatural beings. What has just been said of Confucianism is a one-sided expression of the doctrine and is not meant as an exposition of it.

Max Weber in his "Introduction" to *The Sociology of World Religions* distinguished between Confucius and Confucianism, writing, "In the absence of all metaphysics and almost all residues of religious anchorage, Confucianism is rationalist to such a far-going extent that it stands at the extreme boundary of what might be called a 'religious' ethic. At the same time, Confucianism is more rationalist and sober, in the sense of the absence of all non-utilitarian yardsticks, than any other ethical system, with the possible exception of Jeremy Bentham's." The sinologist Herrlee G. Creel has applied the qualities of utilitarianism,

rationalism and sobriety of Confucianism to the man Confucius. There is a difference, however. While Confucianism has the almost complete absence of residues of religious anchorage and is at the extreme boundary of “religious” ethic, Confucius the man exhibited many traits which were well within the religious norm; he not only believed in Heaven, but also in something like fate; there are a few, not many, other mystical traits known of Confucius, whereas Confucianism as such is virtually without them. Confucius was made into a myth by later generations of Chinese, but that myth is apart from the extreme form of the ethic of Confucianism to which reference has been made.¹ Confucianism is often represented as a religion without a deity, serving only the ideology of the state. This version of Confucianism, which is widely credited, serves as a myth of the myth. Confucius himself expressed in his writings a belief in the power of Heaven, the supernatural being which rules all earthly affairs; this being has been translated by Christian sinologists by the term God; in Chinese it is *T'ien*; it has the etymological explanation of the one, great, or that which is above man.² (Leon Wieger³ defined *T'ien* more narrowly and more accurately, calling it Heaven, the vast extent of space which is above man. *T'ien* is the highest of all things. He noted that the character means *man* and not *great*. From this the early commentators derived the idea that *t'ien* denoted both physical and moral superiority).⁴

The myth of the state in the doctrine of Confucianism may be regarded as a part of religion, and as a sacred myth in one sense, and as part of a secular ideology, hence a profane myth in another. The same may be said of the doctrines of Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), and of G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* (1821); both treated the state as an entity which is profane, contributing in both cases to the myth of their object. They have different views of what is meant by the state, and other terms of reference to it in their philosophies, but the world of myth is variable in its contents, admitting of them, and other even more disparate meanings of the word. Hobbes called the state *Leviathan*, or the mortal god, with which no power on earth is to be compared. Hobbes referred to *Leviathan* and to *Behemoth*, both great beasts of myth in the Psalms and Job. Of *Behemoth* it is said that he shall attack *Leviathan* with his horns. By *Behemoth*, Hobbes had the Long Parliament in mind. Thus, we may read, The Long Parliament shall attack the monarchy in England with his horns. The Long Parliament is the figure for the monstrous state. *Leviathan* and *Behemoth* shall be hunted by the righteous.⁵

Hegel called the state the march of god on earth, the one and only absolute judge, and the absolute mind or spirit, which manifests itself in human history as the universal. He referred to the state as the ethical universe and whole; it is the mind or spirit on earth, the hieroglyph of reason which reveals itself in

actuality; in nature, mind is asleep, whereas in the state, it is awake. The state in the writings of both Hobbes and Hegel is made out to be godlike; its ideology is the statement of creed. There is evidence of some analysis of the state in terms of the doctrine of social contract, as the dual pacts of association and subjection in the formation of the state in the works of Hobbes; Hegel analyzed both the social contract theory of his predecessor and contributed his own. Both were concerned with the absolute power as a theory of the state, and brought out their notions of sovereignty, its supremacy and universality within the state, which is realized by the state, in their different ways. Here we are concerned with their allusion to the state as metaphor, as not divine but godlike. Both contributed to the cult of the state.

Just as the myth of the state is at first sacred, and then divided as sacred and secular, so the cult of the state is divided as sacred and secular. The myth and cult of the state, royalty and sovereignty were all sacred in ancient Egypt and Rome, the king being at once a god. The king in the views of Hobbes and Hegel has absolute power, but it and he are earthly, not divine. The figure of the king and the theory of kingship have both changed from ancient times to modern. We consider Hobbes and Hegel to have representative modern doctrines in this respect, their myth and cult being secular in either case, and not sacred.

The state is personified in the king, emperor or chief magistrate, and is given a figurative pomp, rite and ceremony, thus an element of a cult. The myth of the state is in part related to this cult, but also is freed of it and moves in another context. To be sure, neither Hobbes nor Hegel founded a social and political movement which went as far as the doctrine of Confucianism in Chinese history, yet all of these men participated in various myths and cults of the state. A potentiality of an actual political movement, or its reality, has been attributed to Hegel; Cassirer argued against this point.

Both Hobbes and Hegel took up the state in terms of the metaphors of myth. The myths which they took up, expressed, and in part evoked, were philosophical dicta, not narratives. They were speculative, analogical, secular, not sacred.

The state in history has specialists who administer, regulate, judge, legislate and enforce its decrees, legislative acts, judgments and executive orders by coercion or the threat to apply it. These groups of specialists exercised control of writing in ancient China, Babylon, Egypt, and other parts of the world, manipulating the records, history, cult and myth in order to maintain and extend the state power.

The Chinese myths, as we have seen, were altered, made harmonious, and controlled by the literati who served the state in ancient times. In Europe, the

sacred myths have been made into internally consistent and harmonious doctrines by theologians and religious philosophers; the secular myths have been made into consistent and harmonious doctrines by the philosophers of the state and politics, some of whom we have mentioned; the list should also include Plato and can easily be made longer. In recent years, the treatment of a secular myth of the state, of the public good and welfare has shaded over into political ideology, social ideology and ideologies of particular interests of all kinds as we have seen. Sometimes myth and cult go together, and sometimes they diverge. The myth of the state in Hobbes and Hegel has much to do with its cult.

Myth is therefore both sacred and secular, in respect of the state, and has been both the one and the other in ancient and modern times. It is secular in the political systems and institutions, and in this respect, the religious, sacred element in myth serves the state, supporting and extending its power and control into spheres, in which it is at first an intruder. The religious life existed before there was a state, which then appears in human history, coopting that which was there for other functions, using religion, myth, cult and belief for another purpose. The relation of the political, secular myth to the religion and to the state is historically variable, and the following account is advanced in brief, and is subject to further working out: In ancient Mesopotamia there was an equilibrium between the religious and secular arms and powers, the priest-kings combining the sacred and profane functions and controls in their own hierarchies. This was at first the case in ancient Egypt, where the king was held to be a god, and the god a king. Later in Egyptian history, the religious and lay powers were not always of one mind, but frequently clashed, as in the New Kingdom in the late part of the second and early part of the first millennia. In ancient China, we have seen, the sacred myths served the secular state, and the secularization of the myths is evident. The tyrants of Athens who put Socrates to death caused the sacred myths to be applied to a secular end, which was the maintenance of their own rule and order. The issue of the secularization of sacred myth is well known in the establishment and promulgation of the rule of the Roman emperors, who declared themselves to be gods; but only their lackeys concurred in their cult and worship.

In these cases, we are confronted with an esoteric doctrine and myth which is opposed to the exoteric, popular faith, religion, cult and myth, which has been well documented in Chinese, Hellenic and Roman history, in late Egyptian history in antiquity, and in ancient India. In modern Iran, the clergy regained the power which it had lost; the myths remain the secularized versions of the ancient sacred myths. The religion is in the service of the state in modern Iran. The Austrian archbishop, in Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Schwejk*, blessed the

Austrian troops before they went to slaughter in the First World War; just as the English, Russian, German, American clerics served their countries' troops.

The history of the transformation of myths from the bizarre, swirling and colorful shapes which they have presented into sober, harmonious, self-consistent wholes is the history of the development of specialists in dogma, politico-religious and political doctrine. These theologians, together with the theoreticians and practitioners of the political arts, the ancient scribes and clerics, literati, mandarins, Brahmins, scholars, were motivated by ideals, religious ends, personal ambitions and drives for power, wealth, or fame; their modern counterparts have perhaps fewer ideals and more naked ambitions and drives; we say this only because the modern are better known to us. All these men and women have contributed not to the destruction but to the secularization of myth. Throughout the history of the state, there has been a secularization of myth. Thus, myth is both sacred and secular, and in either case is ancient and widespread; that the sacred is the older of the two and is the greater in ambitus in social space as well does not alter the conclusion that myth is both sacred and profane and is to be studied in both aspects. Ernst Cassirer even devoted a book to this subject, although he understood its problem in a different way. He did not think that Hobbes made a myth of the state, but that he was furthering an earlier tradition of the subject, and that others have followed in his path. Jean-Jacques Rousseau made a myth of civil society, following others who had spoken of it in the same way, and was followed by yet others who have further advanced the myth. These are not the anonymous transmitters of myth, but they act wittingly and unwittingly, willingly and unwillingly in the promulgation of a particular, secular mythic tradition notwithstanding.

The state is not a universal or eternal entity but has a known historical process with a beginning a few thousand years ago, a middle, which we are living through, and, when the conditions of its beginning and middle are eliminated, an end. [This notion of the end of the state might be considered a utopian myth of Krader's—eds.] The myth of the state in all these cases is not the myth of the other but of ourselves. We, through our worship of a sovereign power which holds us all in awe, and through our speculations and wonder at it, have made a mythic creature of the state. It is not the myth of the other but of ourselves. Only lately have we begun to criticize the myth and doctrine of the state, to distance ourselves from it and view it from afar. We then have the capacity to see ourselves as others see us and find that there is no difference between us and them.

The esoteric doctrine as secular myth is in part mysterious and in part is not. The political myth in ancient times was kept hidden as something holy,

secret, and apart. At present, there is little that is mysterious about the myths, either sacred or secular. The exoteric myths of our times are in and of themselves open, the opposite of mysterious, veiled or obfuscated. The specialists in myth, both sacred and secular, have become skilled in revealing the hidden and mysterious in the myths of others; in the Reformation, the opposed sides were the Protestant and the Roman Catholic clergy; their opposition continues into the Counter-Reformation and beyond. The social power to which the opposing myths related was secular, but the myth which the opposing clerical interests represented was sacred. The myth was at once a state ideology; the myth itself was esoteric in the hands of the clergy, but became general, public, open and laic at the hands of the antagonistic interest. The myth of the state and of the state power has since become secularized in European history at the hands of the several schools of state ideology, capitalist, Soviet, Chinese, and other; reference to divine power and diabolical evil are introduced from time to time in the conflicts between the sovereign interests, but rather pro forma, without commitment to them.

The Descent of the Emperor Chingis Khan

The Mongols were a pastoral people, living chiefly from their herds of sheep and goats, cattle, horses and camels, and from the products thereof which they traded for the goods of their agricultural neighbors, the Chinese, Persians, and others. They lived in felt tents, called yurts, and were gathered into nomadic villages, moving about from one pasture for their flocks to another. Their social organization was the clan, and membership in it was handed down from father to son. They were not a simple folk, but at the time of the Chingis Khan, in the thirteenth century of our era, had the social division into the ranks of commons and nobles, the art of writing and specialists therein, likewise a long history of pacific and belligerent relations with their settled neighbors.

The Secret History of the Mongols is at the point of division between what is myth, and what is ideology, what is sacred, and what is profane. Those who have edited the *Secret History*, Ernst Hanisch and Paul Pelliot, have indicated its mythic origin, which has preserved a part of its poetic form. In its later passages, and throughout the work, it served the rule of Chingis Khan and the dynasty of the Chingisides. The *Secret History*, or *Family Chronicle, Mongol-un Niuca Tobcagan*, was written down in the thirteenth century of our era, at the time of Chingis Khan's death, or shortly thereafter.

The *Secret History* begins, “The original ancestor of Chingis Khan was the Wolf,** born of Heaven on high, bearing the celestial destiny. The Wolf’s spouse was Hoai Maral, the White Doe. They crossed the Tengis Sea, and at the source of the Onon River, by the Mount Burhan-Haldun, they made their camp. There, a child Batachi-han was born to them.”

The tracing of the descent line in the *Secret History* leads over a score of generations, with increasing historical detail, to the birth of Temujin, who later became the Mongol emperor, Chingis Khan. Thus, the work is in part a historical account of the line of descent with the references to the mythic animals at the beginning; in the later times, the agencies of the events are solely human or otherwise natural. It is not a character or other justification for the rulership of the imperial house; later accounts are more of a magnificative and justificatory style that is the *Secret History* itself. The latter is, apart from the account of the beginnings, factual, non-mythic, and neither excessively glorifying nor deprecatory of the life of the emperor. It recounts his birth, his family and clan relations, marriage, alliances, victories and defeats, his offspring, and the sequence of his elections, first to the office of king, *qan*, and then to that of the emperor, *qagan*.

The eminent Mongol scholar Rinchen has described the myths of the Mongols from within. At first, these myths were general and later transformed into an esoteric doctrine of the *Secret History*. The family chronicled therein is the Mongol in one sense and the Borjigin in another; this is the Golden or Imperial clan, which was the clan of Chingis Khan and that of Rinchen’s mother, Dolma, who lived seven centuries later. In the patriline, Rinchen belonged to the *Yöngsiyebü* clan, whose record is preserved in the oral tradition of Mongol shamanism in the form of myths, some of which he has recounted. According to their mythic tradition, *Yöngsiyebü* clan is the most ancient of all. A special hymn of devotion was sung at the feast of the first *kumys*, or fermented milk was drunk to the ancestors of the *Yöngsiyebü*. It is evident that with the downfall of the Mongol empire, the esoteric myth of the ruling dynasty became general. Yönsiyebü Rinchen, together with his predecessor Pomočnik Zhamtsarana and those with whom I have spoken, Tsendiin Damdinsürin and Kh. Perlee [Përlëe, Kh (Khòdòògiin)], in the Mongolian Academy in Ulaan Baatar, and the learned Buryat, my good friend Garma Sanzheev, have devoted themselves to the conservation of the Mongol,

** The wolf is called or referred to as Borte Cino; *cino* means wolf, *borte* is variously translated or glossed as blue, grey, green, or sky-colored. It may be that Borte-Cino and Hoai Maral are proper names, or descriptions, thus, a sky-colored wolf, and a white doe, respectively.

Darkhat and Buryat mythic traditions. These are all men of great learning who are skilled in putting together in a coherent and harmonious manner the shamanist traditions of their peoples.⁶

Matvei N. Khangalov described the myths of the Buryats in a comparable way. In both Mongol and Buryat history, the process from an undifferentiated social organization to a society divided into a governed and a governing class, with specialization in the conservation and transmission of the myths is set forth. These accounts of the Mongols and the Buryats are not historic or mythic alone, but a combination of the two. The account of Mongol history by Sanang Sechen, an Ordos nobleman of the seventeenth century, likewise is mythic in part and historic in part. They are not wholly mythic as are the Chukchi tales of the Creation and of Raven or the Winnebago tales of the Trickster; in these tales, there are, to be sure, realistic elements mixed in with the supernatural, and if we had only these accounts, we could surely reconstruct some parts of Chukchi, or of Winnebago traditional life. The accounts of the *Secret History*, of Sanang Sechen, Matvei Khangalov, and Yönsiyebü Rinchen are in major part historic, real and factual. The esoteric elements of myth and of history have latterly come to be indistinguishable from the exoteric, however much they were kept apart in the time of the Mongol empire. The Buryat case is not the same as the Mongol, their political history differing from the latter, but the mixtures of categories of myth and history, of esoteric and exoteric doctrine are evident in them, and are quite different from the treatment of myth in the accounts of the Chukchis.

The Myth of Alan the Fair

In the twelfth generation after the marriage of the Wolf and the Doe, there were two brothers, Duwa the Blind and Dobun the Wise (or Clever). Duwa was not actually blind, but had one eye, which was in his forehead, and with it he could see a distance of three days' journey. He arranged the marriage of Dobun the Wise, his younger brother, with Alan the Fair, and two sons were born of this marriage.

Dobun the Wise dies. Alan the Fair, being without a husband, bore three further sons. The two elder sons of Dobun the Wise and Alan the Fair questioned who the father of the three was. The mother seated them at a meal according to their order, and gave each of them an arrow, telling them to break it. This they did. She then bound five arrows together and gave them the bundle of arrows, telling them to break the bundle. They could not. She spoke to her two elder

sons: You have raised suspicions of me, asking, who is the father of these three sons? Night after night, a man of a bright gold color came through the opening in the roof of our tent, or through the space above the door's lintel, stroked my belly and entered my body. On leaving he went out through the sunbeams or the moonbeams, as a gold dog. The sign is clear that these are three sons of heaven. How can you compare them with the ordinary black-headed people? When they are kings of the world, then the common people will recognize who they are. You my five sons of my womb are like the five arrows bound together which could not break. Then she died.

In this genealogical account of the history of Chingis Khan's reign, the women in the early ancestry bear the fixed epithet, *Ho'a*, Fair or Beautiful. Some men bear the epithet, Wise, but not all; one is called Torholjin Bayan, Torholjin the Rich. Not only is the formation of the Mongol state traced back through this account, but also the origin of many clans and peoples of the steppes of Inner Asia. Alan the Fair prepared her sons to be kings; the Mongols were no longer a simple, undivided people but were in the process of forming ranks and classes, lower and higher. Her sons were separated from the common people by their mother and were made conscious of the political power of alliances. The sons were given a mythic parentage, and with it the mythic right to rule. Some ten generations later their line would culminate in the emperor, Chingis Khan. Thus, the account is a justification of Chingis Khan's right. It is not a formal legitimation of that right but is supportive of the acts set down in the *Secret History* which assert that right and give it legitimacy.

The legitimation of Chingis Khan's rule may be briefly told. He was born to the family of a man of minor rank; his father was *Yesugei Bagatur*, of a lesser nobility. The future emperor was given the name Temujin and suffered in early life from extreme poverty and isolation. He was a Mongol, rallying other Mongols to him, and by a series of formal friendships, a useful marriage alliance, incessant wars of conquest, and political confederations, he gathered the people, those living in felt tents, in a great assembly. His supporters got him elevated to the rank of *qan*, which is king, and he took the name of Chingis Khan. At a second great assembly before the people of the felt tents he was elevated to the rank of *qagan*, which is emperor; he was acknowledged in this new eminence as by right, and thus gained the legitimation of his rulership by the nobles and by the people. He did not innovate these ranks but drew on the traditions for their formulation and legitimacy.⁷

The formation of the state is a complex process of unification and division of society, the concentration of political power, and the imposition of social privilege

on society, the formalization and ritualization of these relations. These processes, in the case of the Mongols, had remarkably little supernatural sanction. We have recounted nearly all the supernatural details; *The Secret History of the Mongols*, as many other records of a nation, begins in a myth and ends in an empire. The application of the epithets in the early generations of the imperial genealogy bears on the traits of rulership, as wisdom and riches.

The mythic elements in the *Secret History of the Mongols* and in the mytho-history set forth by Rinchen are part of the account given by the Mongols of the process of formation of the state in their history. The Biblical accounts of the patriarchal covenants, of the covenants and law of Moses, of Joshua and of the rule of the judge are part of the Hebrew account of the formation of the state of ancient Israel. The accounts of the Gallic wars given by Caesar, and of Germania by Tacitus are part history and part myth which contribute to our knowledge of the formation of the state in parts of Europe, north of the Alps. There are accounts by Procopius, Jordanes and Constantine Porphyrogenitus which tell of the formation of the state among the Slavs; these are of the same kind as the accounts of the *Secret History*, the Books of the Pentateuch and Joshua of the Bible, of Caesar and Tacitus, in their accounts of the Gauls and Germans, all of which exhibit a strongly demythologizing impulse. For the process of state formation and constitution may apply myth as a means of reinforcement of the state ideology; we have seen this reinforcement at work in the history of ancient China; but the state also has a rational, utilitarian, practical element in its constitution which is opposed to the fantastic aspect of myth. This anti-mythic element in the constitution of the state then is projected back, in the case of the Bible onto a demythologized history of the formative process of the state of ancient Israel. The same holds for the processes of the state in history and the demythologizing thereof in ancient China, ancient Mongolia, and elsewhere.

There is not one myth of the state but many, these myths being variable both in form and substance. Prominent forms of the myths of the state are given in their symbolic representation by Hobbes and Hegel; the symbol of the state as Leviathan and as Behemoth was revealed by Hobbes; there, the state appears as mortal god. The state as a mythic symbol of the march of god through the world was depicted by Hegel. The state as universal and its bureaucracy as rational were described by Hegel and Max Weber. These are poetic flights which are taken from the realm of myth or enter into that realm by virtue of their popular character, their uncritical provenience, utterance and acceptance, and their entry into the traditions of the people and of the state. To the conception of the rationality of the state bureaucracy, which they regard as a fiction, Ludwig von Mises and

Friedrich Hayek have opposed the factors of irrationality and arbitrariness on the part of the bureaucracy in its relation to the people. These myths of the state are neither sacred, nor supernatural, nor narrative, but are symbols which may enter into narratives, or other forms of myth. The mythic law and the law as myth are still further forms which appear as the myths of the state and as part of these myths. One of the myths of the state is that it has taken up and absorbed all the law unto itself. This is the myth of the universality of the state and the law within a given sovereignty or domain.

There are many myths of the state in narrative form. One of these recounts that whereas the local bureaucrats are petty tyrants, and the provincial governor is a mean-spirited despot, there is a king in the distant capital, who is wise and just; that king is mortal, and hence is not all-seeing, yet if we could but gain access to him, and explain our problems with our local headmen, all would be resolved. The figure of the king is replaced as historical circumstances decree by some other representation of the superior power. The immediate experience of the state is insufferable, yet the notion that wisdom, justice and right in the abstract are embodied in it is a source of hope to which we cling; we then comfort ourselves as best we can by retelling such myths as this. By criticizing the acts of the state both near and far we realize that the local bureaucrats are of the same despotic mold and substance as the distant great man, supreme ruler, or king.

The symbols of the state as Leviathan, as Behemoth, or as the march of god through the world are uncritical; they explain nothing but afford a theatrical image for that we perceive by other means. But we feel a commitment to this myth for the superior power. It is a myth, for the reality of the state is other, more modest in fact. The power of one state is modified by the power of another, by war or by menacing postures, by economic interests and pressures, and by conventions, treaties and agreements which they reach between them.

The State which is supposed to arch over all particular states is an abstraction to which further myths are attached. Its realization on earth lives in a utopian world or dreamtime. The solace we draw from the myth of the supreme ruler who is wise and just serves to undergird the myth of the state of Leviathan, for the symbol of Leviathan, Behemoth or Juggernaut is humanly unacceptable, and therefore we seek some means of mollifying our sense of dread before this great, mindless force. As the imagination is fertile and the desire is strong, we create or adapt another myth as a countervailing influence against the former.

The state in ancient times was at once sacred and a secular institution; the monarch of Egypt was a divine or godlike figure; a number of city-states in Mesopotamia were ruled by priest-kings; the ancient history of China, India and

Japan, as well as of the Incas of Peru provides comparable data. The emperors of Rome had themselves titled as divine. The list can be extended, but there are also many counter examples; David, King of Israel, and Montezuma of the Aztecs, were lay persons. By demythologizing the state, the sacred myth and the secular aspects thereof have been separated. There remains a sacred myth and a secular one of the state, both entering into the state ideology, both supportive of the state, the rulership, and the concrete institutions of politics and law. The cult of the state remains a religious phenomenon; to be sure, the rites of monarchy carry into a secular age the traditions of an ancient time, when the sacred and the secular were undivided; these rites are anachronistic, in the strict sense. We turn to the question of the religious and profane elements of myth in general.

Notes

- 1 Max Weber. *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*. vol. 1. Tübingen 1922. From *Max Weber*. H. H. Gerth, C. W. Mills transl. New York 1946. H. G. Creel. *Confucius and the Chinese Way*. New York 1960, ch. 9. The Philosopher; ch. 12, From Man to Myth.
- 2 Bernhard Karlgren. *Analytic Dictionary of Chinese*. Paris 1923.
- 3 Léon Wieger. *Caractères chinois. Étymologies, graphies, lexiques*. Hsien-Hsien 1927.
- 4 Léon Wieger. *Etymological Lessons*. In: *Chinese Characters: Their Origin, Etymology, History, Classification and Signification*. Here he cites the Ch'un Ch'iu and Erh-Ya, both ancient Chinese texts.
- 5 Thomas Hobbes. *Behemoth or the Long Parliament*. 1679/ 1682. This was also called, The Dialogue of the Civil Wars of England. The Long Parliament sat from 1640–1653; there were Long Parliaments thereafter. — The title page of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, 1651, bears the subscript, *Non est potestas super terram quae comparetur ei*; no power on earth is like it. He refers this citation to the *Book of Job*. Below the superscript is the picture of a walled city and countryside, with settled places in it, the whole being dominated by the figure of a crowned monarch, a mature man, who rises over the landscape; only his upper torso, arms and hands are seen. He faces the reader, in his right hand a sword, in his left a staff. His torso and arms are covered by a peaceful multitude facing him. — The references to Behemoth, which will attack Leviathan with his horns, and to the hunting of Leviathan and Behemoth by the righteous are from the *Book of Psalms*, and follow the translation of Jastrow, op. cit. The quasi-religious rhetoric applied by Hobbes in writing of the State was expressed by Hegel likewise, who wrote, "The State stands above the physical life just as high as the Spirit stands over Nature. One must therefore venerate the State as a Secular Deity." (G. W. F. Hegel. *Philosophy of Right*, 1821. § 272, Addition.)

- 6 *The Secret History of the Mongols* gives the following account of the betrothal of Temujin-Chingis Khan. When Temujin was nine years old, his father, Yesugei, declared, I am going to ask his maternal uncles, the Olkhonut, for a wife for him. They are kin of his mother, Hoelun-ujin. (§ 61). This is repeated (§ 62): Dai Sečen of the Olkonut asks, Brother-in-law Yesugei, where are you going? Yesugei replies, I come to the Olkhonut, who are my wife's kin, to ask for a wife for my son. Dai Sečen answers, "It has long been the custom of our people that you come to us for your wives. Our women belong to your marriage community. Our daughters become the wives of your people." (§ 64). See Erich Haenisch. *Die geheime Geschichte der Mongolen*. 2nd ed. Leipzig 1948. Paul Pelliot. *Histoire secrète des Mongols*. Paris 1949. The wife's kin is the same as the mother's kin in this case, which is the marriage preference. The custom therefore is matrilateral cross (or opposite sex) cousin marriage. Further, the betrothed of Temujin is a descendent of the Olkhonut, who are a clan or people of the Torgut. Torgut is the name of a people; the word *torgut* also means wife's kin, which is the same as mother's kin, according to N. N. Poppe. Further cf. Rinchen. *Zum Kult Tschinggis Khans bei den Mongolen, Opuscula Ethnologica Memoriae Ludovici Biro Sacra*, 1959. Idem., White, Black and Yellow Shamans among the Mongols. See further, Lawrence Krader. Qan-Qagan and the Beginnings of Mongol Kingship. *Central Asian Journal*. vol. 1, 1955. Idem., Feudalism and the Tatar Polity. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. vol. 1, 1958. J.-P. Roux. *La Religion des Turcs et des Mongols*. Paris 1984.
- 7 The background for this idea is found in J. A. Soggin and G. E. Mendenhall, whose works are cited elsewhere in the book, in reference to the ancient Near East; on ancient Mongols see the preceding note.

Sacred and Secular Myth

Sin and Crime

The theory of myth as the spoken part of the religious world, of which the cult is the action or doing, has been discussed by W. Robertson Smith, Jane Harrison, Francis M. Cornford, Robert Graves, Clyde Kluckhohn, Samuel H. Hooke, Edmund R. Leach, and many others. We have seen that among the Pawnee bands some myths are part of the cult, some are interstitial, being recounted during pauses or rests in the performance of the ritual, and some have no relation to the ritual at all. The relation of myth to cult restricts its discussion to the religious field, to the sacred myth, or to myth in the service of the holy. This view of myth is narrower than that of myth as any kind of traditional tale, which may be sacred or secular, and it is narrower than the view of myth as any narrative about the supernatural, which are the definitions of myth most recently advanced. These perspectives add much to the discussion, but they all focus it on limited, indeed very limited aspects of myth.

It is recognized by some of the participants in the discussion of myth and ritual that many myths have little or no relation to the latter, and that some rituals are without mythic representation. Such loosening of the terms of reference to myth and ritual notwithstanding, the discussion of myth in relation to ritual

and of myth as a sacred tale have currency even at present. This definition of myth is useful but raises several questions which have till now been insufficiently discussed. One of these is the question of what is sacred; another pertains to the opposition between the sacred and the profane. Both of these questions concern the pervasiveness, or supposed pervasiveness, of the sacred in a given social tradition. The sacred is the essential part of the religious field, but it is highly variable. To the first question we say that the sacred in ancient Greek and Latin was part of a polarity, at the other end of which was the accursed, the execrated. This polarity within the field of the sacred has since vanished. The sacred now denotes but one of the two poles of olden times. We may say that the polarization has disappeared; this is to be qualified, as we shall see.

Regarding the second question, we notice that ancient Greek ἅγιος, *hagios* meant sacred or holy, and also accursed. Ancient Greek ἄγιος, *hagos* had the opposed meanings of reverence and of pollution and guilt; it had to do with piacular, sacrifice, a thing or person accursed, or any act requiring expiation. Sacred, execration and consecration have a common derivation; Latin *sacer* meant at once holy, venerated and impious, execrated; the guilty were held to be *sacer*, consecrated to the infernal gods. In more modern times, in Europe, the damned are not in the ordinary way held to be consecrated; Dante's Inferno was not a sacred or hallowed place. *Hagios*, moreover, retains only its positive meaning today (e.g. hagiolatry, hagiography, hagiocracy).

In sum, the histories of Greek *hagios*, *hagos*, and Latin *sacer* are not simple but complex, having combined at one time opposite meanings, whereas the meaning of holy, hallow is only positive and beneficial, in the Germanic tongues, bearing on the state of being hale, healthy, *heil* and saved (*Heiland* means savior in modern German). Antoine Meillet proposed that Latin *sacer* and Greek *hagos*, *hagios* have common etymology. The Greek words, *hagios*, *hagos*, Old Indic *yajas*, reverence, sacrifice, and Avestan *yesnya-*, sacrificial, are related.¹

In ancient Hebrew, קדוש (*kadosh*), sacred, holy was opposed to the profane; it denoted places, persons and objects withdrawn or separate from everyday life; they were either ceremonially purified, or were the pure, such as the Ark of the Covenant, by which others were cleansed, purified.

The extent and kinds of denotations of what we call the sacred are exceedingly complex. Thus, in certain modern European languages of the Romance family, sacred is said of certain mental or nervous ailments which were once attributed to a supernatural source, and whose cure was sought by exorcism, consider that, moreover, sacred (*sacré*, *sagrado*, etc.) intends a blasphemy in curses, insults, and the like, whereby the standard usage is inverted. The inversion may

well have proceeded step for step with the meaning of sacred as holy, but is understood as a vulgar, non-standard practice in defiance or antithesis of the standard. The point remains that the sacred is not polarized in a single field with the demand or execrated, but is separated from it, opposed to it, and is divided from the profane.

Sin is defined and opposed by the religious authorities, crime by the temporal. Sin is the destruction or derogation of the sacred, by thought or act against it. Crime, on the other hand, is in many modern juridical systems considered to be not a matter of thought, but only of an act. This act includes the utterance of words, in spoken or written form, in cases of *lèse majesté*; in private law the distinction is often made between the spoken act of slander and the written publication of a libel. Both sin and crime are antisocial, but in these modern juridical systems, sin is not illegal, crime alone is, as an act of the profane world. From its own standpoint, the sacred is the superior of the two, and is all-pervasive. The profane world and law make no such claims but exclude the sacred realm from their midst. Clearly, these conceptions are not general, and there is even less reason to regard them as universal. The division between sin and crime is relatively recent in European history, Otto Gierke² having traced it from the time of its inception in the fourteenth century. Canon law is opposed to civil law and the notion of legality came to be at once extended and restricted. On the one hand, canon law is law, and acts against it are illegal; civil law is law and acts against it are illegal in another way, which each law defines. Law in this case translates *jus*; in other contexts, it does not. Law has to do with the sacred in canon law, but secular law does not, or else it does only through canon law in the doctrines of medieval law which Gierke examined.

By canon law in European history is generally meant law given on ecclesiastical authority. If the authority of the religious body extends over the secular power of the state, then the distinction between canon and civil law is weak. The distinction between canon and civil or secular law has become profound in recent centuries and canon law sharply circumscribed in its authority.

Religion is a word having a root in Latin, which is interpreted as a re-binding, or linking again. If this interpretation of the earlier meaning of *religio* is correct, then it can scarcely be a general concept, for many peoples would hold that their sacred tradition and religion was and is an original linkage and not a reconstitution of some process which had been mystically or otherwise disrupted and then recombined. Further consideration of this point leads to speculation. What emerges is the variability of the concept, religion, in history, ethnology, and etymology.

The origins of the separation of the sacred and the secular or profane are found earlier than the fourteenth century juridical dictum: they are adumbrated in the New Testament in which the saying, render unto the Caesar the things that are Caesar's, is found.

The myths of the law refer both to sacred and secular law. Martin Noth³ analyzed the sacred law in the Old Testament, the law being understood as the Law of Moses, the Ten Commandments. But also, the equation is drawn, The Bible = The Law, The Bible is in this case held to be the whole or the first five books, the Pentateuch. Sacred law includes the secular applications within it, basing the validity of both on the mythic covenants between Noah, Abraham, Moses and the Lord. They are validated by the patriarchs and by the people of Israel together with Moses at his descent from Mount Sinai, and, on the establishment of the state of Israel, in ancient times.⁴

The book of Genesis contains parts which are mythic, for which there is no corroboration, but which are believed by many peoples, in several religions, as part of their transitions, over thousands of years. Other parts of the book are non-mythic, for which there is objective linguistic, ethnographic, archaeological, and other historical evidence. The opening lines of Genesis constitute a myth of creation. It is narrative in form, recounting the sequence of deeds and judgments of a supernatural being, whose spirit moved on the face of the waters, creating day and night, land and sea, the humankind. But in Genesis 9, a covenant is set down between God and Noah, which is not a tale or recounting, but an act, which has the force of law. There is a further covenant in Genesis 17, between God and Abraham, which likewise is in form an enactment and not a narration. There are many other covenants in the book, the best known being the Decalogue. All of these are treated as juridical acts, and are compared to others of the same form, which are historically attested. Those in Genesis are mythic contracts, with the statement of obligations and rights. The covenant of Abraham is not Israelitic but Hebrew and may only be called Israelitic *ex post facto*. Only the covenant of Moses, of those mentioned, is Israelitic in the strict sense. The Old Testament is in fact a web of covenants which bind not only the children of Israel by an oath but more broadly the Hebrews, and more broadly still, Noah and his offspring, which include, among others, the Hebrews. These covenants are juridical acts: they are law in themselves and are the basis for further juridical judgments and acts. The earliest covenants are as such mythic, the narratives pertaining to them are myths of another kind. The law based on the covenants is in part mythic, in part it is not. With respect to the commandments at Sinai, Moses is the lawgiver: the law is in this sense a sacred law in an immediate sense and

secular in a mediate sense. The Biblical covenants, in particular the Mosaic, have formal links to contracts of the Hittites and therewith to legal practices of the ancient Near East three to four thousand years ago. George E. Mendenhall's further point is that the Mosaic Covenant is the foundation of religious obligation; it is moreover an expression of the foundation of social obligation. The Covenant of the Patriarchs was incorporated into the law of the later kingship of the Jews; the Mosaic law was subsequently developed in non-mythic law.⁵

Myth, we have seen, has been defined by many as a narrative of some kind, whether sacred, supernatural, traditional, or simply prose. Before leaving the problem of myth as law, we will discuss a related problem of the law as non-narrative myth, for the problem of myth as narrative is distinct from that of myth as sacred, supernatural or traditional. The question of narrative has been linked to that of the sacred in many definitions of myth, but they are separate in an important sense. We first consider the question whether myth is narrative alone, observing that in Biblical tradition, myth takes the form of law as well as narrative. Not only are the covenantal, decretal and legislative acts given prominence in this mythic tradition, but the mythic figures of Abraham the covenantor and Moses the lawgiver are preeminent therein.

Many students of myth have refused to think of the Bible in this way, and conversely, many students of the Bible have avoided consideration of their subject as myth. The consequence of this twofold decision has been that the powerful contribution to the theory of myth which the Bible makes in respect of law as well as narrative is vacated. The further result has been that myth was relegated for centuries to the pagan traditions; thus, the Greek myth, which is principally narrative, has served as a model for many theories of myth.

The law of the Bible is of several kinds; the Mosaic law, both in its original form and in its reception, bears on sacred law, and on the secular insofar as it is not separate from the sacred. The Ten Commandments contain elements which later came to be treated as sacred and secular; the laws against stealing and killing are crimes of the secular kind in modern practice, and sins as well as crimes in sacred law.

No less complex is the discussion of the laws of the Twelve Tables of ancient Rome, which have both mythic and non-mythic origins. In Roman historical usage, the term *jus* later came to be restricted to secular law. Roman law was conceived also to have a mythic source in the person of Romulus, the founder of the city, who also was its lawgiver.

A review of what is mythic in the origin and history of the Roman law of the Twelve Tables and what is not is found in Herbert F. Jolowicz.⁶ The mythic origins

of the Roman law have been discussed by Edward Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. He called their kings, Romulus, Numa and Servius, their most ancient legislators; they are either wholly or in major part mythic figures, and their legislation mythic acts.⁷ There is little to change in Gibbon's judgment on this point. Whereas the acts of the ancient Babylonian, Chinese and Hebrew lawgivers have come down to us; in the cases of the ancient Roman kings, it is otherwise.

According to a Roman tradition, their ancient legislators sent to Greece and received instruction in the law of Gortyn, which had an influence in the composition of the Roman Law of the Twelve Tables. The Greek deities, Dike and Nomos, are personifications of Justice or Vengeance, and figure in many mythic tales; we may say that they are famous through the tales about them, which have been repeated by Hesiod, Parmenides, Sophocles, and Euripides, not through their own dicta; Dike is prominent in the Orphic cult but only through tales in which she figures as a goddess, not through laws or decrees attributed to her.⁸ Theseus was yet another mythic nomothete of the Greeks, famed no less in this respect than for his feats of arms and courage.

Harrison pointed out that the figure of Dike, or Justice, is another contradictory figure. Dike is the mythic symbol of the fixed order of the world, and the Way of Nature. But she is also represented as Vengeance, with a drawn sword in her hand, and has Orpheus as a musician or priest of Thrace in her attendance. Justice is temperate and calm, whereas vengeance is emotional and imbalanced. Sophocles said of Dike that she shared the seat of Zeus. Harrison thinks Dike was upgraded as the symbol of justice and downgraded as the avenger of those who overstep the order of the world. Dike was thus bound to Fortune's (Tyche's) wheel; this is yet another wheel than the Great Wheel of the sky (see de Santillana and von Dechen, op. cit.).

Important as the mythic narrative is to the theory of myth, nevertheless any such theory which fails to include the mythic origins of the law in covenants, legislation, legal judgments and decrees overlooks a vast and elementary aspect of myth; this applies to the Hebrew and Israelitic covenants and legislative acts, the Babylonian law, sources of Roman law, the ancient Greek law of Gortyn, Islamic, Indic, Chinese law, and many others. These laws are not narrative accounts of anything but are mythic with respect to their origins and to the social force with which they have been expressed and received. They are sometimes embedded in or accompanied by narrative accounts of their divine inspiration, but these mythic narrative accounts are not the same as the law itself. The law as myth is in opposition to its sources in historical reality in the social processes of the state, government and contract; this is an opposition between myth and reality of one

kind. In another, a developing relation between the Biblical accounts and historical reality, in the demythologizing of the former in the Bible itself, was engendered. The covenants of the patriarchs and the covenant and commandments of Moses were converted into socially real processes. The later law of the Bible and its interpretation by the schools ceased to be a myth. The demythologizing process in this case is not a secularizing one, however; the Biblical law remained a religious text in its concept and application. The first opposition mentioned may be a secularizing one.

One of the chief functions of the law is to bind us to it and make us obey it. The myths of the law, its origin and reception express, intensify and reinforce this binding power over the members of the society. With the later secularization of the law and its myth, the two binding powers are separate, whereas they were once one, as in the Biblical, Roman and other traditions. Through the law and its myth, we are bound to the society and to one another. But more than that, the myth of the law binds us to the society, to one another, and to the law. This holds in several well-known cases, but how generally this is the practice remains to be explored, a task I leave to others.

The secularization of social life, the alteration of the role of the clergy in the political life of Europe in the capitalist and bourgeois period, and the development of new social and political creeds, in contrast to the medieval practices, were conducive to the secularization of myth.

The secularization of politics and the law in various parts of Europe and Asia has proceeded from ancient times to present day. The idea of close involvement of the sacred kings of old in the national life, of the Roman emperors with religion, national, political and juridical institutions, the same involvement of the lamas of Tibet and Mongolia in the national life of their countries in traditional times, the dual meaning of the caliphate as the supreme religious and temporal authority of the Venetian doges, the Florentine dukes, and the English kings of the renaissance; the authority of Mongolia is temporal at present and not at all religious. A decreasing number of heads of state are of a religious character, and the example of Iran, which replaced a secular shah by an ayatollah, runs counter to the general trend; but myths of the nations, and of political and juridical institutions have been created under conditions of close involvement, distant involvement, and non-involvement of the secular with the religious powers. [An argument can be made that developments over the course of the last twenty years—in Afghanistan, Iran, India, in the Middle East and elsewhere—have not born out this trend cited by Krader, but it may be too early to tell whether these are aberrations.—eds.]

Mythic expression may lead to religion, or it may lead away, and to a secular representation of society, feelings and thoughts of social unity and feelings and thoughts of social division. It is presupposed that no religion is without a divine, spiritual or other supernatural element, and that no religion is without myth. But myth is also an element of national life, political life and life of the social classes and parties; these have in some cases a religious manifestation, and in other cases they have not; to an increasing extent, the cases of the latter kind have come to be preponderant in our history. Moreover, we consider that both the religious and the secular kinds of myth have been among us for centuries, thus have durative and strong traditions, and are the representations of social forces by which people live and die.

Myth is the means whereby the collectivity represents itself to itself and to others; yet myth is variable, as sacred or secular, and accordingly as the collectivity expresses its social bonds as supernatural or temporal. The unity of the collectivity is not the only representative aspect or function of myth, but it is an important one. Some collectivities represent their unity to themselves by other means than the myths; or we may think of the representation of unity of the United States as a myth of pragmatism, utilitarianism, and interest, which is a paradox of myth. The myth is variable because the collectivity, group or nation is variable.

The reference to myth in a secular context is manifold, praiseworthy, neutral and derogatory, visionary and in this sense either hopeful or fearful, threatening or encouraging. Let us set aside the notion of myth as a synonym for error or fallacy. William Barrett regards the hope of solutions to our problems by technological means as a myth in a pejorative sense, and Lewis Mumford has written in a like vein of the myth of the machine; they say that we err if we think of the machine or of technics as the answer to our woes or problems: further, the machine, technics and technology, far from helping us in our time of need, produce further social problems, creating anxiety, alienation, care and disaffection in society; but that is the very society which holds the myth that machine and technics are the means to resolve our social ills.

The Absurd and the Irrational. Tertullian, Unamuno, H. A. Murray

Myth in both sacred and secular usage is both narrative and picturesque. In figurative mythography, such as painting and sculpture, we may read a mythic

story into the visual depiction; this was done by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in his treatment of the Laocoon statue. But other mythic representations are not connected with a narrative in any immediate sense. They are symbols which represent our hopes or arouse our indignation and call for our social and political action. The differences between the myth as narrative and as icon, image, or symbol, are both formal and substantial. The narrative is sequential in form, proceeding from one event to another, having a beginning and an end which are in a system of difference and nexus of the one to the other. The mythic narrative takes place in time, whether in great amounts of time or small, and has a temporal process, before and after, earlier and later; the time of myth may be that of our concrete experience or some other bridging time, leaping time, lateral time, looping time, or branching time. These metaphors, icons and images of time are taken from other fields of our concrete experience of rivers, wheels and trees; they are found in myth and in physical, chemical and biological theory in ancient and modern eras alike.

The myths are figurative and prosopographic; as such they enter into religious thought and feeling, and into the visual, literary and musical arts, which once were closely bound to religion in the western tradition, as well as others. Modern art, visual and graphic, literary and musical, has loosened its bond to religion, but has retained the myth, both as an abstract idea and concrete affect, and as a concrete embodiment of the abstractions in myths. Literary artists, as well as historians and psychologists who treat of literature, have introduced myths into their works both with and without reference to religion or the sacred. They have reference to images, icons, and symbols, as well as to narratives; they speak of psychic needs, drives, motives, and beliefs which, they find, are expressed in myth.

Myth, again, has been identified as a declaration of an ideal, a goal, or a program of political or state ideology, or of a utopia; these are secular acts of myth. Secular again are the religious expression and institution in the service of the state power, and the political institution in the service of the religious establishment. Ideology is in this sense both sacred and secular, and myth as the ideological expression of the programmatic evocation of our social desire and will, hope and fear, is likewise both sacred and secular. Henry A. Murray and Jerome Bruner among the psychologists, Thomas Mann, William B. Yeats and D. H. Lawrence as novelists and essayists have referred to myth in this twofold way. Mann and others cited, who treat myth in this dual capacity, are brought in as witnesses to the usage. The writings of these authors are a part of the evidence as well as a part of the argument from the evidence that myth is commonly regarded as secular as well as sacred. Henry A. Murray⁹ has referred to both sacred and secular myths

of Christ and Caesar, as well as to exemplar myths which serve as a model for the orientation of self-development.

Secular myths are popular and general, in some cases of anonymous origin, but in others are attributed to a well-known author or a like personage. In being transformed into a myth, regardless of origin, it is shared by a multitude of people, whereby they endow it with a customary expression of their own, such as the vision of the way things ought to be, or the goal of the popular will and desire. We will call this the *orectic* myth. The author of the original expression, whether political, literary or historical, is then transformed into the figure representing the achievement of the vision, whether of will or desire. Revolutionaries, and “fathers of their country” are transformed, whether by their will or against it, into figures of myth; others, who knew them well, are conscious of the mythic transposition which revolutionary figures undergo. Georges Sorel¹⁰ looked into secular myths of a variety of political descriptions.

The myth is a representation of something by something else; the representation may be figurative, iconic, symbolic, prosopographic, metaphoric, or other; some of these divisions overlap or overarch one another, for myth is often striking, amazing, leaping. The representation is a figure if we can identify some trope in it, whether literary, visual or musical; the tropes are of various kinds, of which perhaps the most important is the metaphor. The symbol is defined as a representation of one object by another, given that there is similitude of the one to the other; but a symbol may also depend on dissimilarity between them. Myths not only tell a plausible story, or present a convincing and effective picture, image or icon of the world, they not only lay down the law in form of commands and covenants, they also tell a lie, represent the implausible, fantastic, absurd and unbelievable. Many have risen to the defense of myth, pointing out how true it may be, and that it contains a secret cipher or a code which lies behind or hidden in its overt aspect, however blatant and morally insufferable that aspect may seem. It recounts the possible and the impossible.

Several thoughts are to be separated in this connection. First, the notion of a cipher or a code, an esoteric message or wisdom belongs not to the world of myth but to the myth of myth. Myth belongs to the world in which a human group expresses thoughts and feelings in a way it finds to be valid. We express what we think and feel, which our myth brings out for us, and their myth for them. Ciphers and codes are not of myth but of its interpretation. They are of the intellect alone, whereas myth is intellectual and emotional. Whereas all versions of a myth are valid, it does not follow that all interpretations of a myth are equally valid. Thus, if a political party or a religious sect accepts a myth, and makes that

myth its own, and if that party or sect has a collegium presiding over it, then it will happen that only one interpretation of the myth will prevail, and that will be the interpretation of the collegiums. That is the inward fate of the myth and its interpretation. Now the outsider comes to that myth, and studies it, which is its external fate. The interpretation of the myth by the outsider is made and understood in a different sense from the interpretation by the insiders, and the criteria for validity of the interpretation or exegesis are different when viewed from within or from without. For the outsiders' lack of commitment to the myth or belief in it, they do not love or value it in their capacity as outsiders. It is the same whether the myth is a sacred myth of the Creation, or a secular myth such as the myth of the Revolution. The outsider can be indifferent to the Creator and His works, or to the outcome of the Revolution, those who are committed to the one or to the other are not.

Next, we consider that the outsider sees the myth from the viewpoint of its exegetes, who have made it harmonious, or have rationalized it, or poeticized it. Neither the outsiders nor the insiders can see the myth pure and whole, for it has no original pristine form; the belief that there was an Ur-myth belongs to the myth of myth, taken up by the romanticists of the past and perhaps their followers in our time. We cannot get back to the pure myth of the Homeric Greeks or the Australian Arandas, nor can we get back to the pure, original form of the Bible, for it is inseparable from the Halakhah of the Jews and the Council of Nicaea, and other Councils of the Christians, or the ulamas of Islam. These judgments, councils and colleges are further divided, ever more finely. But each college, whether political or sectary, will defend to the death the purity and integrity of its myths, and of its grasp of its myths. There is no separation, in the actions, expressions and thoughts of these colleges, between the founding myth of the nation, party or sect, and the interpretation thereof. If there is no pristine form of myth, yet there is its repristination. Some sects have no colleges, and in these cases each true believer has the right to interpret the myth in his or her own way. But the outsider has no such right. The act of interpretation and control over it is a source of political power; it is no different in the case of a religious sect, faith or cult, a nation, or a political party. In each case a myth is regulated and controlled in order to affirm a power over the people who believe, love, value, or are otherwise committed to the group and its myth. The myth is a source of political power, in these cases, whether the group holding it is secular, national, partisan, or sectary and religious.

The esoteric doctrine is found in some mythic traditions, not in others. Franz Boas began the work of parsing the traditions of myth into those with and those

without an esoteric doctrine, message or expression. It would be false to say, as some Structuralists have, that myth is, or has, or contains a code. We might look for such a code in the case of myth which has been treated, harmonized or rationalized by a college of priests, the initiates of a sect or a party; but this quest would bear on certain bodies of myth, and only lose itself in speculations as to whether the esoteric message or wisdom was wittingly or unwittingly left for subsequent discovery. It does not bear on all bodies of myth.

The last point we shall deal with in this connection will be the consideration of myth as a lie, and in what sense it is the representation of a knowingly implausible figment of the imagination, whether as a symbol, a tale or any other utterance. Is there in all myths an effort at similitude, at the mimesis of nature, or is there, in at least certain myths, a feature of dissimilitude or of dissemblance? The similitude or the quest for it in myth is the striving toward a plausible representation of the world, or of some part of it. However, one takes note of numerous myths, in various parts of the world, of Pawnee Coyote, Winnebago Trickster, Chukchi Raven, and the European Devil, the Father of Lies, and the Dissembler. If there is mimesis in these cases then it is the copy not of nature but of art; the Devil, Trickster, Raven and Coyote are human creations. To think of the fox as tricky is to attribute our motivations and behavior to that animal, in an anthropomorphic conceptual scheme.

The visual arts, painting, sculpture, architecture, have made use of figures of myth, either representing them statically, in an immobile form, or in a narrative. The musical representation and the literary are usually of the latter kind. The figure moves in narrative; the representation, whether static or mobile, is eventful. The difference between the static and the mobile in mythic representation is not that the one is uneventful and the other eventful. On the contrary, both are eventful, but the static has but one event. David stands alone, upright, poised and calm in Michelangelo's figurative mythology, representing none other than David himself (or perhaps Michelangelo's self-portrait); the prisoners (or slaves) in the same gallery in Florence represent men who, with twisting and torsion of the body, limbs, head, and facial features, struggle for their self-liberation; Michelangelo's "Creation," in the Vatican, tells the story of the birth of Adam by the touch of God; all are eventful narrations in the visual, not verbal representation of myth. The narrative is the representation of a sequence of different events which are bound together, the one leading to another; it is not the same event, over and over. Michelangelo's "David" is self-sufficient but is not the same again and again. We see changes in it, which we bear to it, and thereupon they are the changes which the figure and its event bear to us. The prisoners in the Gallery

are variations of a theme which is the liberating struggle; they are one, other, and many others and many events. They bring their theme and variations, sameness and change to us, the order of the inception of the changes being the inverse of the order in regard to the David; therewith we bring our sense of the sameness and change to the statues, bringing forth at the same time our consciousness of the struggle, together with the variations on the theme of the struggle and its meaning to us. We discover in their struggle for freedom our own effort in self-emancipation.

If we say that myth is a representation of one subject or object by another, we are conscious of the past history of this term. Myth is a tradition in respect of its origin and the origin of the world, of the laws of the group, its utopian vision, its passions, devotions and commitments. A representation is made of the substance of the myth by those who speak for and to the others in the collectivity. There may be a particular individual who is known to have given the mythic expression a certain form or put it to a certain use. It becomes a myth, and therewith, a mythic representation of something, whatever initiation or inspiration it may have, only if it is taken up by a collectivity. The collectivity, its myths and representations of all kinds, have no existence apart from the members thereof, who are human individuals, and who are formed by their experience as such, in the relations of a group. The collectivity is of various kinds, such as a nation or a community. The mythic or other representation is not made by the collective mind, collective consciousness, a collective conscious or spirit; these are all speculative, and, in the extreme case, mystical notions.

Much has been written on the subject of the collective or group mind, on the collective representations, the collective consciousness and collective unconscious. Myth has had a major part to play in these discussions. They were taken up by many, at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth in the context of the group mind of William McDougall, and of the collective representations by Durkheim and certain members of his school, but for the most part they did not make clear what or who the collective agent was, which was thinking or feeling, representing or expressing the myth, thought, sentiment, tale, or vision. The matter of class consciousness was raised by Marxists and by anti-Marxists at that time.¹¹

The myth is a collective representation and is an expression of a group in that its members act together, sharing cognitions and sentiments, visions, symbols, laws, which they bring forth as narrative accounts, dialogs, explanations and commandments, poems and pictures or other graven images. The collectivity, through and not apart from its members, thinks and feels a sentiment which is

variously profound or weak, faithful or distanced, to these mythic representations; they are the objects of traditional, popular, uncritical, but also at times innovative, commitment to them by the group. The strength of the commitment to the representation by its adherents, its uncritical acceptance by them and its popular appeal in their midst, make it into a myth. At one time the sense of commitment and that of belief were unseparated; at present we note that myths are of various kinds, sacred and secular, or mixtures thereof. The commitment we hold to the myth is a sacred or a secular matter, whereas the belief in the myth is a sacred or religious one. The myth is adopted and adapted by the collectivity and made its own. Or it remains the work of the individual and is adopted by the group. The mythic representation is the expression of the collectivity and made into a part of its tradition. The myth is not subject to scientific experiment or logical reasoning; harmonious structure, whether of a theological or philosophical variety, is not excluded from myth, but is not a necessary part of it.

The collectivity, having adopted the myth, or created it, has made it over, and made the resultant its own; it applies its myth to the sense of shared experience and consciousness in the myth doubly. First, it has the myth for its own, a static possession of the group or collective; second, those who share the myth, have an active relation to it, and through shared experience of the myth, to one another. Suppose the myth is absurd. In that case we are as one in sharing it. Its value to us lies in the sharing, which is a positive virtue, even if the myth we share is absurd. The others reject our myth for its absurdity, which is an external and negative judgment. Let them do so. Our strength lies in our unity against them, precisely because its foundation in absurdity makes it inaccessible to the outsiders. Our oneness is promulgated in the face of their ridicule. Tertullian declared "I believe because it is absurd."¹² Miguel de Unamuno placed a different construction on Tertullian's phrase. To him it meant "I believe because it consoles me." Unamuno agreed with Dante that the ineffable and irrational truth is expressed in myth and dream; they are the domain of the apocalypse and of the indemonstrable.¹³ The very absurdity of which Tertullian spoke is a test of our loyalty and faith, the acceptance of the absurdity a sign of our uniqueness, inner unity, or identity.

The unity of the group does not come from the individual, nor is it a super-organism of the individuals who make it up. The consciousness does not exist apart from the individual human beings, but the unity and the consciousness of the group exist only by virtue of the relations of the individuals to one another in the social entity of whatever kind, whether a band, a village, a community of kin, a social class, or a nation, a party or sect. These are the thoughts with which Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim and William McDougall

wrestled, without coming to a conclusion which was convincing to the following generation. There is neither representation nor consciousness nor myth created by the collectivity, these being transformed into collective representations by the interactions of the individuals through their membership in the class, nation, community or clan.

The myth is a representation of human individuals in a collectivity, which is of several kinds, tribal, national, partisan, sectarian, and many others. The anthropologists, historians, psychologists, classical scholars, and philosophers have mainly taken up myths of antiquity, of provenience in the lives of peoples without writing, social classes and the state, or generally of the ethnographic subject; the sociologists and political scientists, literary writers and historians of art have found mythic representations of like kind in the subjects of their study. Representation is made by projection of the one into the other, or the other into the one. Plato spoke of the projection by Homer of his psyche into the psyche of, say, Achilles. This is an extrojection, which is paired with the introjection of the psyche of an individual, real or imaginary, into one's own. The projection outward or inward is made by recognizing a resemblance between subjects or objects, by establishing an opposition between them, by seeking harmony between concordant and discordant parts in others and in ourselves.

Myths of Utopia, Technics and the Machine. Myths of the *Angst* of Our Time. Frankenstein, Juggernaut

At one time it was held that myths are the words accompanying ritual, or are derived from ritual; this is partly, not entirely the case with sacred myth. But there are many sacred myths apart from ritual, and many myths apart from the sacred, from religion and from ritual, having to do with secular myth. Myth has been in many ways secularized, divorced from tradition and from the supernatural in our time, but in other ways has retained its link to the sacred and divine, and to past traditions. The secular myth no longer has a daimonic link, but has demons of another kind, as we shall see, which are found in our lives. Ritual has some parallels to myth in these processes but departs from myth in others. Ritual has been somewhat secularized in the law and politics, as well as in other social institutions; it is or tends to be in its secular aspect distanced from the supernatural, but not entirely so. Political officials who are elected to their posts often take their oath, or swear to uphold the constitution, and the state, and those who are not elected but appointed to office, in the civil and government service, as well

as lawyers, medical and other professionals are often required to do so. There is some vestige of religious ceremony in the rituals of countries with and without royalty; ritual is not as far removed from traditional and sacred spheres as is myth in the secular aspect of either. Religious ritual and myth remain as we have seen steadfastly linked to the sacred sphere throughout.

Sacred narrative is an important part of myth, which has other, non-sacred, non-narrative parts. Figurative representation, both narrative and not, is also found in myth, particularly in representations in the visual arts and in music, but also in the arts of the word.

Political myths, which are widely held, are anonymous, popular and uncritical; they may be esoteric or exoteric. Some political myths are traced back to a known author or representative, but that person is then transformed into a figure personifying the aim or vision of the political myth, the representation of its attainment or fulfillment, or else of the struggle toward the aim or vision, the utopia or dream. Utopian and political myths are secular; this is not an absolute judgment but a general one; visionary myths may be secular and utopian or sacred; the sacred vision is an element of the secular myth, in many cases, and the secular is in the service of the sacred myth. In this case we distinguish between matters of faith, such as a religious doctrine, and the tenets of a political entity, such as a party, a movement, or a nation. Matters of religious doctrine, faith or belief are of a sacred nature, the political tenets secular. Some political tenets are also sacred, however, for a church or a sect often is a political institution or plays a role in politics, and a political party may function as an ecclesiastical institution as well. Myths are both emotional and intellectual in their form and content or substance. This is clear when we examine the political myths.

Early writers on utopias, such as Thomas More and Thomas Campanella, had a secular ideal before them, or a parody of such an ideal as in the writings of Jonathan Swift. But Auguste Comte sought to found the religion of humanity under the device Order and Progress. Robert Owen, Constantin Pecqueur, Étienne Cabet and Charles Fourier wrote myths of the future which were understood to be secular by their followers in the New World and the Old; there were at that time many religious utopian communities, which had been founded by them as well as by others. The secular utopias and the religious alike were strong in their vision and driven to initiate a communal life, but weaker in their command of the means to realize it and make their realization last. Their sense of an ideal community has been described in detail by Charles Nordhoff, John H. Noyes, Frank Manuel, Roger Mucchielli, Martin Buber and Jean Servier. Mucchielli has thought of utopia not as an ideal community in the sense of the

nineteenth century utopians, but as an ideal city, or polis. His vision therefore takes him back to antiquity, to Plato. There is no contradiction to this, for in an ideal world, the forms are not concrete and definite, but are what we make them out to be in the imagination, and according to our hopes and desires. This is the Sorelian notion of myth. Mucchielli justifies his naming the ideal city a myth, first, because it is founded on a constellation of collective aspirations, which are positive and absolute in essence; next, because it is the prime mover of masses of people; it is, in this connection, not the substratum of the collective forces but those very forces at work; third, because it is a utopia which is a vision of revolt; the rebellious are moved by their vision, which is their myth; fourth, because it engages the commitment of the rebellious people who are willing to die for their ideal, in an altruistic motivation. The myth is a dynamic causality. Mucchielli deals only with the myth of revolt, because he is concerned with the motivations of thinking which have created utopias. His treatment of the ideal city as a utopia is throughout a secular myth, which he traces in part back to Sorel. In keeping with this usage, he writes, "Nothing resembles the mythic thought more than the political ideology."¹⁴ This resemblance occurs in the transposition of the myth from the sacred to the secular realm; ideology is an active factor in this process.¹⁵

Frank E. and Fritzie P. Manuel¹⁶ deal with the myth of paradise as a sacred belief which is then secularized, at which point their treatment eschews all reference to the mythic. If, however, we consider that myth is both sacred and secular, then the utopia is a myth side by side with the myth of paradise and may be in part derived from the latter. The factors of hope and desire in the utopian myth are emotional; they become intellectual. The utopian myth is symbolic and ideological. It is not practical, nomothetic or narrative.

Lewis Mumford¹⁷ has taken up yet another secular myth, which he compares to the myth of the divine kingship. The myth of the machine in Mumford's treatment is a devilish creation and moves over from the myth to reality; like Mucchielli he transposes the myth from the sacred to the secular realm. The myths are considered by both as great abstractions, in the same way that the word magic is represented in Mumford's depiction. Mumford further considers that the machine spawns diseases of society, such as the mechanization of the market place and its personification as Mammon. [Cf. the poem *Howl* by Alan Ginsberg—eds.]. The disease of myth is meant literally by Mumford, who thinks that myth is as F. Max Müller described it, a disease of language. But one can only treat myth in this way if one thinks of language, art, myth and disease as so many great, global, abstract entities. This is what Schelling and Müller did in the nineteenth century, and it has been the method of Lévy-Bruhl, Bergson, Cassirer

and Mumford in the twentieth. It is an excellent method if one conceives of the field of myth as a unity, having the attributes of completeness and totality. It is implied that myth at all times has been a whole which can be treated harmoniously. But if one considers that this field has many diverse parts, which vary even as they are examined, then the approach to myth as a global, unitary entity is a dubious one. It is even more dubious at present in view of the proliferation of various forms of myth, both sacred and secular. Moreover, in the earlier traditional myths, which were sacred in form, and were in this sense a unity, there was but little internal concordance, rationalization or harmony of parts. In the later myths, both secular and sacred, the effort toward harmony, reason and concord is very great, myths being compared, judged and selected or rejected on these very grounds, as well as others. The other grounds relate to their conformity to our wishes, hopes, will and desire. These grounds are abstract, concrete, and variable; they are not fixed, and they are not abstract alone, nor are they sacred alone. The secular myths, such as the utopian myths and the myth of the machine are modern myths, relating our actions in the present to our hopes, fears, and desires and programs for the future. They are all abstractions, their appeal and strength being concrete in that they are abstract.

The myth of the machine is not the invention of one man but has had many representatives. Descartes had propounded a mechanical philosophy, in which man and beast were considered as machines. Descartes was not opposed to the machine, for it was to him a useful tool in his philosophy as it is in life. But the opposition to the machine was begun by others, who transformed their antagonism to it from the word to the deed, as did the Luddites at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and some rebellious student groups, together with some environmentalists in the twentieth. A variant of this mythic expression was uttered by Ralph Waldo Emerson, who wrote, "Things are in the saddle and ride mankind." [Cf. Marx on the fetishism of commodities in Section 4, *Capital I*—eds.]. Martin Heidegger deplored the technical side of the development of European civilization and found a disciple in William Barrett.¹⁸ Barrett found the suspicion of technology to be so widespread that it has become the dominant myth of our time, which is represented by Frankenstein's monster, by horror movies and science fiction. Our age, he declared, has only seemingly lost its capacity for myth, whereas in reality it has created the one very big myth of technology. The irony of this myth is that while technology is pointed to the future, it has been able nevertheless to stir up in the modern audience the unconscious primeval fears. This is not a straightforward conflict between the future and the past, but a struggle in the present, whereby a primitive emotion rising from the unconscious turns us

against technology which was once viewed as our savior. In fact, it is our disillusionment with the technology which arouses the unconscious primeval fears, in Barrett's argument.

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley published the novel *Frankenstein* in 1818, there recounting the tale of a medical student who has created a monster out of the decaying parts of corpses; the monster then destroys its creator. The novel bears the subtitle *The New Prometheus* in an explicit allusion to its myth-connected themes. Frankenstein's monster is atrocious: it resembles a human being, which it is not; its individual parts are dead, and were stolen from the dead, that which a human being created then comes to "life," turns on us and crushes us. David Urquhart translated the theme of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's novel from an individual to a social and economic theater of conflict; it is a different redaction of the same myth. David Urquhart (1855) wrote, "(t)he subdivision of labour is the assassination of a people; for to subdivide a man is to execute him, if he deserves the sentence, to assassinate him if he does not."¹⁹ G. W. F. Hegel deplored the division of labor in industry, which makes a worker dull and stupid. According to this view, the machine, techniques, industry, and the division of labor have a deleterious and ignoble effect on us. They are externalities of our lives and are not any more human than the cadaverous parts of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's monster.²⁰

There is a problem of the era and its sensibility. In the century before her, Bernard Mandeville and Adam Smith were more favorably disposed toward the industrial process, the division of labor, machines and technics. Machines, Adam Smith wrote, are useful for facilitating mechanical operations, and the division of labor is advantageous to all the persons employed. Plainly at one time the technical, mechanical and external divisive processes were not considered to be deleterious in themselves. Moreover, in the light of Descartes' favorable judgment of the machine, many people in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries thought of god as the great mechanization, and of the world as a great machine.²¹ The machine is external to us in one sense, but we are like a machine in another. The analogy to the machine was not meant in a pejorative sense, for machines, while external, are useful. The reflection of the beneficial effect of the externalities of our lives was expressed in the tales of Ali Baba and Aladdin.

Aladdin works his magic lamp which produces for him the wealth of his dreams. The tale of Aladdin and the lamp is a magical re-creation of machines, illusory means of satisfying our needs. Machines, mechanical inventions, factories and laboratories are real in practice meeting real human wants and needs. At the same time, they give rise to imaginary and fantastic wishes which are met by

their representations in magic and in myth. [Cf. Freud's discussion of magic and the omnipotence of thoughts in *Totem and Taboo*, ch. III: Animism, Magic and the Omnipotence of Thoughts, Standard Edition, Vol. XIII, pp. 75–99—eds.].

These cases are magical, mythical and scientific, uncritical and critical. Their burden is complex because the critics of technology and the machines have focused their attention on the external instrumentalities of human life and have called up some myths to bear witness to their arguments. But other myths can be evoked to make the opposite point. Machines in myth are also means for the fulfillment of our human, all too human, earthly desires. The magic wealth in Ali Baba's cave and Aladdin's lamp act in the imagination, as the machine in the myth. But unlike the tale of Aladdin, Mumford's mythic version is of a machine which has gotten out of control, by analogy to the symbol of Frankenstein. [Krader might well have referenced Goethe's 1797 poem "*Der Zauberlehrling*"—"The Sorcerer's Apprentice," whose use of magic to have his implements do his chores leads to his implements running on out of his control—eds.].

The anonymous tellers of tales of Ali Baba and Aladdin externalize our hopes as well as our fears, projecting them onto some object which is then internalized in the imagination. The wish, whether hopeful or fearful, is a subjective process; the object to which it is projected is supposed to be in the world, outside and apart from us, but is in fact subjectively there, within us. Subjectively, these tales recount what we would like the external world to do for us: the mechanism or instrument has its analog in the imaginary objects. The worlds of reality and of the fantasy are, however, not hooked up in parallel; the latter does not accompany the former in a simple correlative way; in the cases mentioned, there is no illusory practice which is then replaced by an actual one: nor is there a simple series proceeding from fantasy to reality, or from reality to the fantasy, but an interaction of each on the other. Being human is a mixture of subjectivity and objectivity, rationality and irrationality, abstraction and concretion. We are not all that we may become and express at times in utopian myths what we would like our lives and selves to be. The utopia is a dreamworld which may serve as a goal and guide, and which has, under given circumstances, concrete and practical measures associated with it. The utopia becomes the objective of our endeavor, or that toward which we strive. It has a twofold effect, giving purpose to our life's goals, as a representation of the aim of our social struggles, and it gives a quality of conation, striving, to the processes and actions of our lives. If we have a vision of utopia, we are not contented but restless in our movement toward it.

The technological utopia and the vision of the machine which will solve all our social problems and meet all our wants and needs are creations of myth. If

we rely on them, we live in a fool's paradise. It is clear to us that the implicit estimations and myths of the machine and of technology of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century writers have been replaced by modern myths of anxiety about the machine.

The machine and techniques are both human products and processes, and the myths pertaining to them are variations of a common theme, which is a secular myth. The wishes and desires which are satisfied in the fantasy by myth are generally the same wishes and desires which are satisfied in concrete actuality by the machines and technics. It is not the case that the wishes and desires in the one case are illusory and in the other are real. Mumford and Barrett wrote cogently and pertinently of secular myth, the one on the myth of the machine, and the other on the myth of technology. Together with those who have written on the myth of the state, or on social and political myths, they have established that in modern usage there are in existence profane myths of several kinds, which are widespread. The myths and the reality which formerly had been appraised, either explicitly or implicitly, in a positive manner were appraised in our era, by Mumford and Barrett, negatively; the externalization of our wishes and desires in myth, in the fantasy, in instruments, objects, machines and technology is not deplorable *per se*; the machines and technology are not in themselves evil or wicked, but it is what we make of them and with them that is bad and undesirable. Eliminate exploitation of one group by another, or of an entire people by another, eliminate the unjust distribution of great wealth to the few, but miserable pittance to the many, and the machines and technics will cease to present a source of horror, for our relations to one another and to the machines and technics will change.²² To pursue this thought further would take us away from our subject. By the consideration of the myths of the state, the mythic aspect of the state ideology, the myth of the machine and of technics, enough evidence has been adduced to conclude that myths are both sacred and secular. The same myths change and have different meanings in history.

At this point we will consider a procedural matter. We cannot develop a theory of myth by referring to its form, as prose or poetry, or as a tale of one kind or another. The consideration of myth as a tale covers a part of myth, but omits another part, both parts being important to the study of myth. The traditional elements in myth, the sacred and the supernatural, are important parts of myth but that is not all there is to it. To restrict the study of myth to these matters alone would be an oversimplification of our subject, eliminating without good reason another body of literature of myth and about myth which is as significant as the sacred, traditional and supernatural. The forms and themes of myth are too

varied to provide a sure guide to the understanding of myth by themselves. The myths, moreover, display a great diversity of functions. Some explain the origin of the world, of things, customs and rites: some depict the end of the world; some represent a drastic foreboding of things to come, others a joyous and hopeful shape thereof; they bind a group together by a common belief in them if they are sacred, or by a commitment to them by other means if they are secular. They have other functions, emotional and intellectual, beside these, some of which have been mentioned in this work.

Joseph de Maistre and Max Scheler considered that myth surprises us, for we find truth there where we would not expect it; having exhausted the pages of history in our search for truth, we then turn to myth to find it, but only after some astute thinker has turned our attention away from the daylight to the hidden, dark, mysterious, mythic world. Or it is only by resolutely reversing the habits of experience that we discover the priceless pearl in myth. These men did not come easily to myth, nor did myth come readily to them.

The myth is not only the bizarre, the colorful, the extraordinary which recreates the fairy tales, such as those which caused our sleepless nights in childhood, or which first awakened our infant imaginations, but which only provoke our indulgent smiles of maturity. Schlegel had thought of myth as the realm of the bizarre, and so did Pierre Chompré. While this aspect of myth is undeniable, it is not all there is to myth. Myth in another aspect has great actuality and a profound effect in our adult social world. It is the expression of the creed on which a sect rests, or the bond which links a social group or the members of a political movement to one another. This is the point which follows from what Georges Sorel, Vilfredo Pareto, Karl Mannheim, and others have had to say about myth. Myth is in this sense a manifestation of a deeply felt current need and motivation in our lives. Durkheim, Lévi-Strauss and Leach, Cassirer and de Santillana, von Dechend, Joseph Fontenrose and George S. Kirk, Jane Harrison, Barrington Moore and William Barrett have written appositely about myth; they appear to have written in opposition to one another, but this is only a superficial view of the subject. They all have different myths in mind, or else have taken up different aspects of the realm of myth, or they have dealt with the same myth in different periods of its history.

The myths of the machine, of techniques, and the state come to us at the hands of skilled writers who have retold and analyzed them. They have gathered several popular attitudes, symbols, figures, or tales, about which there is a deep affect, and have put them together in a coherent account, whereby they draw some lesson, moral, political, or educational from them. The hand of the

individual thinkers and writers in these secular myths is apparent, but it is not essential to them. The myths they have treated are matters of importance, to which we feel a deep commitment, whose subjects have a serious influence on our lives, as matters about which we become not seldom emotional. The public creates and reacts to these myths, is large and responsive, being convinced beforehand of the vitality of the theme, whether or not of the author's solution to it. Cassirer, Barrett and Mumford, as well as others who write in the same vein, have denoted their themes as myths. These are, in few of their versions, narrative, but chiefly, and in principle, they are not. They may be treated as sacred themes, but again in the main, and in principle, they are not. They are potentially traditional; that is not an important or essential aspect about them; if there is a supernatural element in these myths that again is not a central consideration with regard to them.

Many myths in works of art and philosophy are then abstracted from their original settings and appear as great mythic symbols in themselves. Gargantua is a monumental symbol of the appetite for words, for deeds, and for the gratification of our senses. Don Quixote is the symbol of us who are tilers at windmills and slayers of armies of sheep. Iago symbolizes absolute remorseless wickedness; Robinson Crusoe is the mythic symbol of the isolated individual, the self-made man. Nechaev symbolizes the terrorist destroyer who binds his collaborators to him by a horrible act. Kafka's K is the mythic symbol of those who are caught in a bureaucratic process without knowing the charge, the accuser, the judge or the law. Frankenstein, Juggernaut and Leviathan are mythic symbols of like kind which fill our vocabularies. These are powerful mythic symbols of our time which we believe, or to which we otherwise commit ourselves, and hold to be true. They often become myths of national character. Miguel de Unamuno depicted Don Quixote as the symbol of a mythic Spanish character in this way.

Myth at the hands of the ethnologists, Biblical exegetes and classical scholars is chiefly sacred myth, whether of our own or of others. The myth at the hands of the sociologists, political scientists and political philosophers is the myth of our own; it is socially useful, politically useful, or useful in discovery of the laws of the mind, that the myth is not merely a mental, cognitive, conscious, unconscious or affective process, but is also an act of union, whether of the community which believes it and which binds itself together again through the myth and the belief in it, or of the party or sect which creates, avows and forms itself around the myth. The myth is the attestation of the existence of the social group and of membership in it. The expression of the myth is a great stroke on behalf of the group, its meaning, its ideals, vision and right. The myth in this sense is not once upon a time and far away, but here and now. We will consider the treatment of

this aspect of myth in history. The utopian myth is of two kinds; on the one hand it is now but elsewhere. This is the utopia of Thomas More and Tommaso Campanella. Or it is a vision of the utopia of the communities established in the American west during the nineteenth century by the followers of Robert Owen and Charles Fourier. Other utopian visions of the future are not now but elsewhere.

Myths of Science. Archimedes, Galileo, Laplace. Kapitza's Crocodile

A prevalent myth of our time is the myth of science. This widely held myth teaches us that there is such a thing as science, that it is entrenched in an establishment, that this establishment is governed by rules, and that obedience to these rules will assure to one and all a successful career, wealth and fame. But, so this myth continues, we also observe that these rules are not always followed, that falsehood and even imposture are practiced; this is the ignoble myth of science. Indeed, a recent book by two journalists bears the subtitle, *Fraud and Deceit in Science* [William Broad and Nicholas Wade. *Betrayers of the Truth* (1985)]. Contrast this with the picture held forth by Peter Kapitza, who likened science to a crocodile, for both are unswerving, moving straight forward, bending neither to the right or the left. This is the noble myth of science which serves no master but the truth; it is represented in the figure of the aged Archimedes defending his mathematical table against a military intruder, of Galileo on his retreat before the Inquisition, who exclaimed, "And yet it moves!" and of Pierre-Simon Laplace, who, when Napoleon noticed the absence of any mention of God in the great mathematician's *Celestial Mechanics*, replied, "Sire, I had no need of that hypothesis." Archimedes, Galileo, Laplace, and Pjotr Kapitza stand to us as an ideal of the scientist who humbles himself to no one; they take their place in the ranks of the selfless devotees of learning. Evidently there are two mythic pictures of science which conflict with one another, in one sense; but in another they are two versions of the same myth. The authors of the book about fraud and deceit in science are engaged in recalling the scientists to their proper task, and to desist from falsifications and misrepresentations. They adumbrate a general myth of the scientific ideal from which the perpetrators of fraud have fallen. But more than that, they seem to say, science has lost its way, and the scientists instead of seeking fearlessly for the truth have been lured from it by the fleshpots. To be sure, we may reply that if the practice in question is fraudulent or deceitful, then it is not

science. Thus, we are being lectured about the non-scientific behavior practiced by those who call themselves scientists. The noble ideal of both sides, the Kapitzas of our time and those who raise the charge of fraudulence, is part of a common secular myth of science, which is as complex, as is science itself, of many parts. The myth of science is more than these narrations of heroic deeds and more than the moral lessons drawn from the fates of perpetrators of the frauds. It is above all a vision which motivates the scientists in their endeavors. Another element in this mythic complex therefore is the distinction between the great, abstract image of science and the behaviors of certain individuals, who, while making some claim to that title, are in fact mere dissemblers, opportunists and self-seekers. Still others hold that there is a scientific establishment which seldom conforms to the ideal of science in the myth, but acts as a royal court, playing favorites, rejecting them, now granting, now withholding recognition of a theory on political or subjective grounds.

In this representation of the myth of science, various rules of behavior pertaining to the quest for truth, together with a sense of fearlessness and selflessness in the quest, were mentioned. There are in fact two sets of rules, one governing the success, fame and fortune, the other governing the conduct of science. This myth in the positive form in which it is given bears on the cognitive aspect of myth; in the negative, the affective aspect of the myth is brought out as the work of the Tempter who leads the scientist away from science and into deceit in the vain quest for fame or money.

But this is not all there is to the myth of science. The thesis of James G. Frazer, who thought of myth as primitive science, was revived in much the same form by Karl Popper.²³ Both had the noble myth of the ideal science in mind, from which fraudulence and cheating are forever banned. We observe in all of these usages a triple myth: one, the myth of the primitive stage of the history of science; two, the myth of the scientific ideal from which some have been seduced away, or else have fallen; three, the myth which represents the progress of the humankind toward science, reason, and truth. It may be that the first and third myths are two phases of the same myth.

Friedrich Engels and the Myth of the Dialectic of Nature. Hertz and Nagel on the Myths of Science

Not in but in reference to scientific practice and theories, there are further images, visions, methods, insights and great manifestations of the human spirit at work.

There are at the same time local myths, which the de-mythologizing analysts have laid bare. Within the powerful theory of evolution, a teleological notion is often introduced.²⁴ Sometimes this teleology is formulated as teleonomy, which is the introduction of a goal according to a law. Telos presupposes a purpose with respect to a goal, and this purposive activity implies a design. The designer is either chance or else it is personified in a great nomothete. Chance is a myth of one kind, and the personification of the lawgiver is a myth of another kind, the one profane, the other holy or tending to the holy.

We go further. There is a theory of nature which introduces the process from thesis to antithesis to synthesis, or from position to opposition to composition; this theory has the laws: 1. the negation of the negation, 2. the interpenetration of the opposites, 3. the conversion of quantity into quality, and vice versa: thus, at a certain point, quantitative changes convert into qualitative differences.²⁵ We will concern ourselves with the laws of the dialectic of nature, not with the process from thesis to antithesis to synthesis, which appears to be a kind of myth of myth, which Hegel had not pronounced (even though this dialectic is sometimes attributed to him). As to the dialectical laws themselves, they imply a direction and movement, together with a directing agency and mover in the process of conversion of opposites, and a teleology in nature of quantitative and qualitative changes. Contradiction is imputed to the non-human parts of nature, as it is to the human parts thereof. A theory of nature which attributes contradiction, oppositions, antitheses or antagonisms to non-human parts of nature ascribes to them a plan or telos. Now we have purposes in human affairs, if not a grand plan or design; those purposes are human processes and of no other kind. We have particular goals in our undertakings, which are often achieved, but as often their achievement is frustrated. A theory of nature which proceeds by introducing the conversion of opposites into one another, of quantity into quality and vice versa, is a theory of design; mystery is introduced into natural reality, a design without god, a telos without a guiding spirit. This theory is a subtle way of leading to god, but the designing agency has not yet been generated within it. It will lead to a god eventually, for the question remains: if there is a purpose and design in nature, who or what has introduced it? Thus, an erstwhile anti-theological doctrine has been converted into its opposite by a human hand. Dialectical materialism generated mystery where no mystery existed.

Teleology and design are mythic conceptions when they are attributed to nature; the dialectic of nature is a part of that myth. Teleology, design, and the dialectic are neither in nor of nature save insofar as human beings have put them there. There they are, in the human parts of nature, in the human world, and are

then introduced into the non-human parts of nature by an act of anthropomorphism, which is a feature of myth. [Cf. Krader's theory of the different orders of nature—the material, quantum and human—in *Noetics*—eds.] Teleology and design in nature have little to do with scientific theory and practice as such but serve as a myth of orientation in our human concerns. Negation and contradiction themselves, as well as opposition, are human acts of judgment, and of statement, and are in some cases objective; in others, they are a mixture of objective and subjective activities, and in yet others, they are purely subjective. One of Engels' aims was to trace the development of socialism from utopia to science.²⁶

It is possible to give further support to the idea of the dialectic of nature as a myth. The dialectic of anything, of history, of society, or of any other process, is an interrelation of theory and practice. There is no dialectic without theory, but that theory is in an immediate relation to practice, and there is no practice apart from theory. This is the materialist doctrine of the dialectic; the idealist doctrine is not at issue. Now theory in relation to practice, or apart from it, is a human process, according to the materialist dialectic. It is a human undertaking, and we ourselves are the theoretical and practical parts of our own social and historical processes. Given that there is natural *praxis*, if there is a dialectic of nature, then there ought to be a natural *theoria*. But then there ought to be a theorist who has generated the *theoria*. Who or what is that theoretical agency of nature? The grand theoretician of nature, if there is a dialectic of nature, must be god. The materialist has restored god to the universe.

There is yet another anthropomorphic concept, which is a myth of the dialectic of nature; according to this myth, we attribute human processes to chemical, physical and other non-human relations of nature.

Scientific theories are, in a certain sense, systems of symbols, and in nineteenth century physics it was conceived that these systems have elements in them bearing on the data for which the theory was designed, but other elements which tell us rather about the character and presuppositions of the scientist; the latter were called the mythic elements in the theory. Carrying this thought forward, Ernest Nagel argued that science has been compared to a myth, for scientific theories, like many myths, are attempts to account for what happens in various parts of nature; and also, like myths, they are works of the imagination which are shaped by general and particular human conditions. Ernest Nagel thought that there is an enduring condition, as opposed to variable special circumstances; this thought is yet another myth. He went on to say that a properly conducted scientific inquiry can arrive at explanatory theories which are not wholly mythical. This is demythologizing of science, for accordingly, science and myth are not

comparable but also stand in contrast to one another. Nagel finally adverted to the belief that the truth about things can be found out by inquiry, a belief which “inspired the creators of modern science.”²⁷ Doubts have been raised about this by some commentators on the logic of science, who hold such a belief to be itself a myth. Nagel himself considered that the doubts are not warranted, and that the belief is still tenable.

He had a mythic vision of science before him, whereas he spurned those doubters who thought that scientific theories can be equated with old wives’ tales. He spoke in a derogatory way of myths invoked by the doubting voices and thought of the orientational value in a positive sense of myth for science. The myth in his conception was brought out in its cognitive and secular aspect.

Nagel, a philosopher of science, conceived of several myths of science, one of which he shared with physicist Heinrich Hertz. Science, according to the Hertz-Nagel understanding of the field, is a corpus of symbols, containing mutually disparate elements, some bearing on the scientific data and theories, and others not, but telling us something about the scientists themselves, their dispositions and presuppositions. Yet, the data and theories of science are not apart from the interpretations thereof, and the character, disposition, presuppositions, and prejudices of the scientists intervene in the theories, the problems, the choice of problem, and the choice of data of science immediately, and into the theories and their relations to the data thereof mediately. Scientists often make explicit statements regarding their presuppositions and judgments; Newton declared that he did not make (or feign) hypotheses; Laplace averred that he maintained hypotheses, but that hypothesis of god was not among them; and Einstein held that god did not play dice or other tricks with the cosmos; that science is like a crocodile is a mythic element in Kapitza’s thought; the conceptions of hypotheses and of god, according to the view of Hertz and Nagel, are mythic elements in the thought of Newton, Laplace and Einstein.

Nagel, who performed a notable service to scientific theory by revealing the mythic element in the idea of teleology of evolution, alluded to a myth of his own. He thought that some human conditions are enduring, as opposed to others which are variable, special, circumstantial. Yet all human conditions are variable, some more rapidly than others, some more slowly, some changing more radically than others. The circumstances under which we live and work are all general and special, with varying proportions of both in their make-up. There is a myth of the invariants of human nature, such as the faith beyond understanding.

Nagel held that those who cast doubt on the belief that the truth about things can be found by our scientific inquiry were maintaining an old wives’ tale

about science. However, this notion about science, which he made into the object of his scorn, is yet another myth; it is the myth of the other and is opposed to the myth upheld by Nagel in common with Hertz.

The myth of science as it was conceived by Hertz and Nagel bears on its symbolic, non-narrative aspect; it does not tell a tale, but constructs a view, or a mythic vision. This aspect of myth is opposed to the aspect in the account of Archimedes' act, which is a narrative; we may construe it as a didactic, moral or symbolic representation of science in myth.

The idea of science as a myth which was propounded by Nagel has nothing to do with questions of truth and falsehood in science. The two kinds of activities of the scientific community set forth by Hertz, the one bearing on the character and presuppositions of the scientists, and the other on the data of science in their relation to scientific theory. Together they constitute a great mode of orientation to the world, which is comparable to other such modes, whether metaphysical, fictional, theological, or legal. The part of this orientational mode of science which has to do with the personality and mental background of the scientist is not in an immediate sense part of the operations leading to verification or falsification of scientific hypotheses. We do not for a moment deny their mediate part in these operations.

There are two notions of myth at work, one bearing on the whole of science, which was adumbrated by Nagel, and the other on the ideational and ideological burden of the scientist, which was adumbrated by Heinrich Hertz.²⁸ Both concepts are separate from the practice of science as such, but both have to do with the commitment of the scientific community through the members thereof to their quests and acts; thus, they have an immediate relation to the field of myth, and to the operations with myth. In all these myths, there is one common factor, which is the conception of science as a great whole, as a figure or gestalt.

The great Myth of Science to which the rational mind is committed states that our scientific world picture is the good one, that it is beneficial for humanity, that it is progressive, and that it has but a few rough places which remain to be smoothed. Have we not progressed from Newton and Laplace to Planck and Einstein, to Quantum physics and to Evolutionary theory?

Myths of Infinitesimals in Mathematics

The infinitely large and small are beyond our reach, but our calculations tend to infinity and to the infinitesimal, or the limit of the small in calculation of a certain kind. We act as though we reach it, this behavior is based on a myth.

The logician, Willard Van Orman Quine, discusses myths of the notion of limit and of Newtonian laws of physics. Quine's reference to myth in this regard raises an exceedingly complex problem, which will be set forth in outline. At the time that Quine wrote, infinitesimals were held by many thinkers to be a myth, without existence; yet they were brought to bear on our world of everyday experience.

The notion of the infinitesimal belongs, according to Quine, to the limit myths. The idea of infinitesimals, he declares, is absurd; yet the differential calculus, in which the infinitesimals were reckoned as values of the variables of space, time and motion by the inventors of the calculus, Newton and Leibniz, "gave true and valuable results."²⁹

The infinitesimals, being absurd, do not exist, yet we operate with them. They are mythic objects which do not exist in our world of everyday experience. Whether they exist in some other world is a different question. It is the same, Quine avers, with Newton's laws of physics, which refer to ideal objects. They are convenient myths, symbolic of truths other than their manifest content.³⁰

The infinitesimals therefore had a mythic existence both in our everyday world and in mathematical operations; yet Quine pointed out that they have helped and still help to solve real problems. The arch of a bridge and the amount of weight it will bear have been analyzed with the aid of infinitesimals in the differential and integral calculus, and we walk safely across the bridge; even though the infinitesimals in the analysis are myths, the calculations made with them are valid. The calculations are made in standard analysis, in which the infinitesimals are considered to be invalid. Yet, there is a kind of mathematics, called non-standard analysis, in which infinitesimals are valid. The myth bears on (1) infinitesimals in standard analysis, (2) infinitesimals which are thought to exist in everyday life, and (3) infinitesimals which are applied from the first to the second sense. Bridges are not designed by non-standard analysis.

Alfred N. Whitehead asserted, "In mathematics, all phraseology about infinitesimals is merely disguised statement about a class of finites."³¹ This disguise is taken by Quine to be the expression of a myth which is, as he puts it, deliberate, "useful for its vividness, beauty, and substantial correctness with which it portrays certain aspects of nature even while, on a literal reading, it falsifies nature in other respects."³² In this connection Bertrand Russell wrote, "A man, a moment, a number, a class [. . .] is sure to be a term." He then added, "[. . .] every term has being, *is* in some sense."³³ He later changed his opinion, rejecting his earlier "belief in the Platonic reality of numbers which, in my imagination, peopled the timeless realm of Being." But, Russell continued, "Dr. Whitehead [. . .] persuaded

me to abandon points of space, instants of time and particles of matter [. . .]³⁴
The points and instants in question are infinitesimally small.

Shortly after Quine wrote on limit myths, Abraham Robinson developed a branch of mathematics in which one can indeed speak of the infinitesimal or the infinitely small, and not as myths. In this mathematical language, 0 is infinitesimal, and two numbers can be expressed as being infinitely close to each other.³⁵ Thus, we have a rational, non-absurd formulation with respect to Leibniz's phraseology about infinitesimals.

The myth is an absurdity, which we may believe because it is absurd, but is absurd only when applied to the world of matter. It is made into an objective expression without absurdity in another context. The theory and practice of the infinitesimal analysis are not absurd when applied to the world of matter.

The myths Quine deals with are true in some respects, but false in that they pretend to be in our concrete experience of visible and tangible bodies moving about in the space and time of the world of matter. That world and the space-time of that world are not exhaustive of nature, natural being and being in space-time. There is, therefore, a sense in which Russell need not have abandoned the terms of reference which he had put forward in his early work. Whitehead had in mind the space and time of the world of our senses and the mathematical measurements bearing on that world. Neither the one nor the other is mythical. The idea of the infinitesimal therefore is not a myth in Robinson's system of infinitesimals but is a myth in another. Moreover, instants of time and points of space are infinitely small and infinitely close to one another. They do not exist in our imagination alone, nor do they inhabit the timeless realm of Being, which, it may be supposed, is mystical, but are concepts in valid theories of science. Their character as myth arises from the application to a world for which they are ill-adapted.

Quine's reference to the limit myths bears on their secular quality, which Russell had made into a credo later abandoned; moreover, these myths are symbolic, non-narrative expressions, which have been held at one time or another by many and were transmitted in an uncritical way. They have been applied on certain occasions deliberately, but at others unintentionally, as part of a traditional, implicit theory and practice. They are in part false in their conception and application, but Robinson has shown how they are suitably expressed in the theory of infinitesimal numbers. A theory of instants of time and points of space, not of extensionless particles of matter, has been developed, but to expound it in the present context would lead us away from the theory of myth.

What made the infinitesimals into a myth was a strong commitment to them by Newton, Leibniz and others. There followed the critique by Karl Weierstrass

and Alfred N. Whitehead. The validation of the concept of infinitesimals by Robinson in non-standard analysis leads their problem in another direction, away from myth. It does not return the infinitesimals to the problem area of Weierstrass et al.

The limit myths to which Quine had reference are not fictions. They are, in certain aspects, absurd, and in others they falsify a part of nature; in a third aspect they provide solutions which are in substance correct, to real problems of the real world. They are myths, and not mere fictions, for they are matters of conviction, commitment and belief by the people, but these relations to them do not make them true or useful. They are in one sense ideal objects, having symbolic significance, value and existence. In the short term, the infinitesimals as they have been applied to the building of bridges and other objects of our world of matter are useful; they are also beautiful symbols having the appeal of their simplicity. In the long term, Quine predicted, they are going to complicate our thinking about the world of nature. Quine's predication about complexity has already been borne out. The myth of the infinitesimal still exists in its symbolic beauty.

We observe that in applied physics and engineering, mythic symbols help in a practical way to manipulate material objects, transform them and stabilize them. The myths, symbols, infinitesimals and mathematical ideals are in nature, space and time, but not in the space and time of the material universe. The question before us is further complex, for some of the notions of the infinitesimals are myths, and some are not; some of the myths concern the infinitesimals, and some do not. The theory of nature, space, and time will take up these several worlds, both the material world and the non-material worlds; the theory of myth is an important part of the theory of nature in this respect.

There is the paradox therefore that we build the bridge which bears our weight in the world of our senses in reality, but in building it we calculate with the mythic entities of the infinitesimals, which are the limits of the very small. The calculations with the mythic infinitesimals are made in standard analysis in mathematics. In non-standard analysis the infinitesimals are not mythic, but no bridge has yet been built with their aid.

Further Discussion on Infinitesimals

In Robinson's *Non-Standard Analysis*, Kurt Gödel wrote, "In coming centuries it will be considered a great oddity in the history of mathematics that the first exact theory of infinitesimals was developed 300 years after the invention of the

differential calculus (Preface) . . .”. Quine and Gödel refer in different ways to the same myth of the infinitesimals. We will take up two myths of the infinitesimals, together with the distinction between myth and fiction.

The first of these myths was discussed by Quine. It is of great historic interest, not only because of the names associated with it, but above all because it is full of paradoxes. The infinitesimals of Newton and those of Leibniz do not exist, yet they work, and many practical problems of the real world were solved by their application over the centuries. They had a lasting value, many people believed in them, and like all great myths, the infinitesimals as they were conceived at the time, are things of beauty. We do not say that infinitesimals of Newton are the same as those of Leibniz. But which ever concept was at issue, yet there were many people in the centuries after their time who held that the infinitesimals actually existed. Some of those who upheld their existence did so as a matter of faith; other pointed to the fact that they worked but did not believe in them. If they worked without our understanding how they worked, then this is a source of wonder, which Aristotle held to be the source of myth.

Prior to the development of the theory of infinitesimals in 1966 by Robinson, Ernest W. Hobson, *The Theory of Functions of a Real Variable*, 3rd ed., 1927, vol. 1, § 35, The Non-Existence of Infinitesimals, wrote, “*In Arithmetical Analysis the conception of the actually infinitesimal has no place. When the expression ‘infinitesimal’ is used at all, it is to describe the process by which a variable to which the numbers of a sequence converging to zero are successively ascribed, as values, approaches the limit zero; thus, an infinitesimal is a variable in a state of flux, never a number.*” Bertrand Russell, in 1903, adhered to the notion of the notion of points in space, instants of time and particles of matter which are without dimension until Whitehead persuaded him to give it up. Karl Weierstrass, in the middle of the nineteenth century, defined a limit in mathematics as an approximation by ratios of finite increments; thus, $1/2, 1/3, 1/4 \dots 1/n$. The measurement of the speed at which a body moves and of the distance separating it from a wall is expressed by such a limit. Whitehead and Russell agreed with Weierstrass, and Quine summed up the doctrine opposed to theirs as a myth. (Cf. Pierre Dugac. *Éléments d’analyse de Karl Weierstrass. Archive Hist. Exact Sciences*, vol. 10, 1973.)

There is another problem concerning infinitesimals. Whitehead averred that all statements about infinitesimals are disguised statements about finites, or that infinitesimals do not exist. The limits are the infinitesimally small quantities which we get by computing distances by a series of fractions, which, however small they become, are never zero. The infinitesimally small does not

exist in the world of our senses, of metal objects and their measure. There are other conceptions of measure and of space than this, and if we hold that the doctrine of Weierstrass, Whitehead and Russell excludes the infinitesimals from all of them, then this is a tenet of faith. Whitehead referred to “the things that are counted in inches on a straight metal rod.” Metal rods are visible and otherwise accessible to our senses; we use them to measure other things or objects of the same kind, the measures being counted in inches and yards, all having reference to a material world of reality. But there are other systems of space and time than the system of the world of our senses. We do not say that reality is exhausted by our sensible, material world; yet all these worlds have some system of space and time or other, and are in this sense natural, not super- or extra-natural. If points are dimensionless, then, however many there are, they remain invisible.

The idea of actual infinitesimals is erroneous and “non-existent” in one theory of mathematics but is well-founded in another; if a variable (in a state of flux) is not a number in Hobson’s arithmetical analysis, yet it is a number in another kind of arithmetic. Other kinds of mathematical analysis than that of Weierstrass and Whitehead are practiced. We return to the question of myth and faith. If one were to write today, in the light of analytic number theory and of non-standard analysis in mathematics, about limits and infinitesimals, one could do without an act of faith and the continuation or regeneration of a myth. Jean le Rond d’Alembert, the mathematician and editor of the *Encyclopédie* in the eighteenth century is supposed to have told a doubting mathematician, “Just go on, and faith will soon return.” (Philip J. Davis and Reuben Hersh. *The Mathematical Experience*, 1981).³⁶ The faith of d’Alembert also is shown by Pierre Costabel, *Leibniz and Dynamics* (1973, p.12). Costabel remarks to a learned mathematician, (p.12), “If the student does not understand how it is possible to reason and calculate with quantities that are essentially variable and indeterminate, and which are neither nothing or something, then he must have faith.” Now before Costabel wrote, it was possible to reason and to calculate with variable and indeterminate quantities without recourse to faith; this part of his remark is therefore irrelevant to the question before us. If, as he says, one reasons and calculates with neither nothing nor something in the differential calculus, then one was constrained to resort to faith. Under given circumstances, the faith has an expression which is in the form of a myth.

There are further distinctions to be made. Instants of time and points of space, together with the actual infinitesimal in “standard” analysis and limits of

an actual zero reached in that analysis, are one kind of fiction which has become a myth. The usefulness of these concepts is evident.

There is another myth regarding infinitesimals. A different question is raised when we consider the concept of the infinitesimally small particles of matter, which were once held to be actually existent. It was supposed that when there are “enough” of these particles we can touch and see them. Points of space, and instants of time, the infinitesimally small in actual existence and the actual limits of these kinds are concepts of space and time, but not those of our material universe; they bear on other problems of nature, space and time than those of cosmos which is accessible to our senses.

Regarding myths in their relation to fictions: Russell (see note 28) called classes “logical fictions.” Moreover, Robinson, referring to Leibniz’ pronouncement on infinitely small and large numbers, added, “they are only fictions, but useful fictions.” But Robinson said of his own theory that it “appears to affirm the existence of all sorts of infinitary entities.” (Robinson, *op. cit.*, at the end.)

The fiction of the classes differs from that of the instants of time and points of space; both differ from the fiction of the infinitely small particles of matter. Some of these fictions become myths of a secular sort, and some become subjects of belief and in this sense of religion to Jean de Rond d’Alembert and Martin Costabel. Our concern is not with mathematics but with myths, some of which are made out of mathematical concepts. Limits, classes, and infinitesimals have been treated in comparable ways by Alfred N. Whitehead, Bertrand Russell, Willard Van Orman Quine, and Ernest Hobson; classes are treated as logical fictions by Russell; limits are treated as myths by Quine; infinitesimals were considered to be non-existent by Hobson; Whitehead held that there are no infinitesimals, and that all statements about them are disguised statements about finites in mathematics. There is a theory of myth in which we say that it is a statement about something non-existent, treated as existent. According to our theory, this is a fiction, not a myth. The fiction is transformed into a myth by gaining the commitment to it on the part of the people who constitute a social group having cohesion and duration. The mathematicians and logicians mentioned, together with their followers, constituted such a group, bound by their commitment to the infinitesimals, from Leibniz to Russell. The hold of a myth over us is greater and more intense than the hold of a fiction.

Compare the meaning of myth by Quine with that of Alexandre Dumas and Hans Vaihinger, and that which was mentioned by Emile Littré, above. Dumas and Vaihinger had a fiction in mind, not a myth. Quine’s report of limit myths

and infinitesimals does not treat them as fictions but bears on the meaning of myth which is here set forth. If the standard analysis of the future is the non-standard analysis of the present, as Kurt Gödel predicted, then weights and distances in building bridges in the world of our senses will be measured in this way. The myth of the infinitesimal will disappear from mathematics. Gödel's prediction was made from the standpoint of a Platonist in mathematics, who holds that numbers and other mathematical objects are real independently of our minds. Or else they are real in our minds. The point is the same point, and the line is the same line to all our minds and have the same reality themselves and the same reality to us. Gödel's prediction is the more remarkable, insofar as Robinson was opposed to the Platonist philosophy of mathematics.

Salomon Bochner, mathematician and historian of mathematics, wrote in *From Myth to Mathematics to Knowledge*³⁷: "Myth and mathematics are both symbolic expressions, albeit of different kinds. The symbol in both fields is clear and incisive, but whereas in mathematics it is cognitively rational and operationally fertile, in myth it is ambivalent. Myths in antiquity were 'always backward-directed, and their symbolizations were always reminiscingly anthropological and operationally inert.'" (pp. 17–18). Bochner holds that in the treatment of infinitesimals from Newton and Leibniz to d'Alembert and Leonhard Euler there was an anomaly and mathematical rigor, but he also considers that there is no prospect of a mathematical foundation that will be satisfactory forever (pp. 141–142). The "rigorization" of the infinitesimal analysis in mathematics was carried forward by Karl Weierstrass and others in the nineteenth century, and by Abraham Robinson in the twentieth. If there is an anomaly and lack of rigor, then the infinitesimal and limits connected to it are myth-like. They are not completely rational, cognitively speaking, but yet they are operationally fertile, as Salomon Bochner shows. Their anomaly may be likened to the ambivalence of myth, without thereby losing clarity or incisiveness. Quine holds that if we use the infinitesimals or limits without knowing what they are, then we are operating with a myth.

By committing ourselves to the infinitesimals and limits, and by believing in them, even when it is shown that they are anomalous, then we enter the domain of myth. Suppose we build a bridge. Our feeling of confidence in it, our belief that it will support us as we step onto it, and the commitment to the infinitesimals and limits with which it was first built, differ little from the feelings, beliefs and commitments of those who hold that the stars are visible embodiments of their ancestors or guide their destinies. Yet we have crossed many bridges, and all have borne our weight.

Notes

- 1 Pokorny. *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. op. cit. Lewis and Short. *A Latin Dictionary*. op. cit. Liddell, Scott, Jones. *Greek-English Lexicon*. op. cit. A. Ernout, A. Meillet. *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*. Paris 1959. F. Kluge and W. Mitzka. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*. Berlin 1967.
- 2 Otto Gierke. *Das deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht*. Berlin 1868 ff. Serious crimes (whatever they might have been) were tried before juries of various kinds and judges in the common law system in England from the early thirteenth century and on. The Church withdrew at that time from participation in a great part of the proceedings, particularly in the administration of ordeal in the trials for crimes. See T. A. Green. *Verdict According to Conscience*. Chicago 1985.
- 3 Martin Noth. *Die Gesetze im Pentateuch*. [Eng. *The Laws in the Pentateuch*]. *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia 1960.
- 4 Albrecht Alt. *Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts*. [The Origins of Israelite Law. In *Essays on Old Testament Religion*. Oxford 1966] Leipzig 1934.
- 5 See G. E. Mendenhall. Ancient Oriental and Biblical Law. *Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. 17, 1954, pts. 2–3. Idem., *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, Pittsburgh 1955.
- 6 H. Jolowicz. *Historical Introduction to Roman Law*. op. cit., ch. 7.
- 7 Edward Gibbon. *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Ch. 44: “Romulus, Numa, and Servius Tullius are celebrated as the most ancient legislators.” “The laws of marriage, the education of children, and the authority of the parents, which seem to draw their origin from *nature* itself, are ascribed to the untutored wisdom of Romulus. The law of *nations* and of religious worship, which Numa introduced, was derived from his nocturnal converse with the nymph Egeria.” Gibbon described the threefold jurisprudence, the law of nature, the law of nations, and the civil law, of these three kings, and averred that the threefold division of the law was applied to them by Justus Lipsius. This division can stand only if we allow the law of religious worship to fall within the law of nations. The threefold division is found in the Institutes of Justinian, Lib. I, Tit. II; the myths of the law of nature and of the nymph Egeria are in Gibbon’s account.
- 8 J. E. Harrison. *Themis*. Cambridge 1927, ch. 11, near the end. F. M. Cornford. *From Religion to Philosophy*. op. cit. J. P. Vernant. *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs*. vol. 1, ch. 1, Paris 1971. W. K. C. Guthrie. *Orpheus and Greek Religion*. New York 1966.

Orpheus is called a hero, not a god, by Guthrie, who explains the terms as follows: A hero could claim close kinship with the gods, in virtue of which he had certain superhuman powers, but he had to live the ordinary span of life. Orpheus was the son of a mortal kind of Thrace and divine Calliope, the muse who presided over eloquence and heroic poetry. Orpheus married Euridyce, who, fleeing from an attempted rape, was bitten by a snake, and died. Orpheus was a gifted lyre player

and entranced the judges of the realm of the dead, who controlled Eurydice's fate, by his music. They decreed that he might lead his wife back to the living world, provided he did not look back until they were safely returned to life. He looked back, and so lost her forever. The river is Lethe, or forgetfulness. Orpheus was the founder of the Orphic religion, but was not its deity; Dionysus, the god of wine and forgetfulness, was worshipped by the followers of the Orphic cult. Orpheus was torn to pieces, just as Dionysus was torn to pieces by the Titans, and as his symbol was torn by his worshippers during the orgies of his religion.

Orpheus was a contradictory figure of the cult which bore his name, for whereas the god Dionysus presided over wine, drunken orgies and forgetfulness, Orpheus had certain traits of the sun-god, Apollo, through the music of the lyre, balance and calm of mind. (See Guthrie, op. cit., ch. 3.)

It is a further contradiction in the Orpheus myth that while Eurydice crossed the river of forgetting into the realm of the dead, Orpheus crossed the river twice, forgetting neither the one side of it nor the other. In the Biblical myth, the wife, not the husband, looks back, and is turned to a pillar of salt. In either case, it is the wife who is lost by the backward look.

- 9 H. A. Murray (ed.). *Myth and Mythmaking*. New York 1960. See his Introduction and the article: "The Possible Nature of a 'Mythology' to Come" in op. cit. ch. 17, pp. 300–353.
- 10 Georges Sorel. *Reflections on Violence*, op. cit.
- 11 During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was much discussion of the group mind, the reality of the group person, the social organism, the super-organic, and the myths of this mind, person and organism. Shakespeare put this myth, or a version of it, into poetic form in *Coriolanus*. There, Menenius Agrippa made out Rome to be as a living body, and the patricians its belly. According to widespread versions of a myth which was made out of the body politic, and the group mind, it was conceived that the nation was a sentient being, that human groups had minds of their own, that the collectivity performed the act of representation, and that consciousness was an act of a social class. T. G. Masaryk conducted an attack on Marxism on this head, ridiculing the idea that a class is capable of consciousness. William McDougall wrote *The Group Mind*; of that mind he later wrote, "a highly organized, enduring group, such as a true nation, possesses an organization which is mental." He held that such an organization resides not only in one individual but is an organized system of interacting energies. Cf. Jerome Bruner. Preface to William McDougall. *Body and Mind* (1911). Boston 1961.
- 12 Scholars have not been able to locate the words "credo quia absurdam" in the writings of Tertullian. For an interesting discussion of the history of the saying see: Peter Harrison, "I Believe because it is Absurd: Christianity's First Meme" in *Aeon.co*, April 9, 2018. <https://aeon.co/ideas/i-believe-because-it-is-absurd-christianitys-first-meme—eds>.

- 13 Miguel de Unamuno. *Del sentimiento tragico de la vida*. [On the Tragic Sense of Life]. Ch. 5. 4th ed. Buenos Aires-Mexico 1941; cf. ch. 10.
- 14 The editors have been unable to trace this citation. Others suggest the citation is from Lévi-Strauss.
- 15 Roger Mucchielli. *Le mythe de la cité idéale*. Paris 1960.
- 16 F. E. and F. P. Manuel. *Utopian Thought in the Western World*. Harvard 1979.
- 17 Lewis Mumford. *The Myth of the Machine*. New York 1969.
- 18 William Barrett. *The Illusion of Technique*. New York 1979. The points made by Mumford and Barrett are in reaction to the great hopes invested in the utopias of technology at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. In that period, dozens of books were published which promised progress through the machine and technics. Cf. H. P. Segal. *Technological Utopianism in American Culture*. Chicago 1985.
- 19 David Urquart. *Familiar Words as Affecting the Character of Englishmen and the Fate of England* (1855). p. 119 [This was cited by Marx in Kapital I, *MEW Bd. 23*, Berlin 1972, p. 385 in reference to the ill effects of the division of labor—eds.].
- 20 Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. *Frankenstein* 1818. David Urquhart. *Familiar Words*. 1855. G. W. F. Hegel, Jena Lectures, 1805–1806. *Jenaer Realphilosophie*. Hamburg 1969.
- 21 Bernard Mandeville. *The Fable of the Bees*, and *A Search into the Nature of Society*, 1754. Adam Smith. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. 1776. J. O. de La Mettrie. *L'homme machine*. 1748. When and where Ali Baba and the cave, and Aladdin and the lamp were conceived I know not, but they are popular today, and appear to be counter to the myths of Angst of the machine and technics, for they place a naïve worth on lamps and jars and caves.—Late in the nineteenth century, Offenbach thought of a mechanical doll in *The Tales of Hoffman* which wreaks destruction and destroys itself. The power of music cannot save it, as it saves Tamino, in Mozart's Magic Flute. [Cf. Freud's (1919) interpretation of the mechanical doll in „Das Unheimliche,“ *Gesammelte Werke*: XII, 229–268—eds.].
- 22 This might be considered a utopian myth on Krader's part. Cf. the discussion of the elimination of disparities of wealth and property under communism by Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Standard Edition, Vol. XXI, 1930, pp. 112–114. There, Freud argued that human conflict, robbed of one of its powerful motivations, would still continue to exist on the basis of sexual jealousy, envy, and the like. Implied were also differences of talent and achievement as further grounds for enmity among people—eds.
- 23 Karl Popper. *Unended Quest*. Glasgow 1980. He thinks of three worlds; first, the world of things, second, the world of subjective experiences, such as thought processes, and third, the world of statements in themselves. In that third world, myths

- are products of our imagination, and theories are products of the criticism of myth. On Frazer, see above, Part II, *incipit*.
- 24 Ernest Nagel. *Teleology Revisited*. New York 1979. Ch. 12, on goal-directed processes in biology.
- 25 Friedrich Engels. *Dialectics of Nature*. Written 1873–1883, 1885–1886, C. Dutt, J. B. S. Haldane ed. New York 1940. Karl Marx. *Das Kapital*. 2nd ed., ch. 9. Marx noticed the correctness of Hegel’s law of transformation of merely quantitative changes into qualitative difference in respect of money and commodities as in respect of natural science. A footnote by Engels to Marx’s formulation of this “law” has to do with the sources and Marx’s knowledge of chemistry, not with Marx’s command of the dialectical laws of nature.
- 26 F. Engels. *Anti-Dühring*. 3rd ed. 1894. Three chapters of this work appeared with the title, *The Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science*.
- 27 Ernest Nagel. Theory and Observation, in Ernest Nagel, Sylvain Bromberger and Adolf Grünbaum (eds.). *Observation and Theory in Science*. Baltimore 1971.
- 28 Nagel. *Teleology Revisited*, op. cit., ch. 2, On Myth and Science. There he refers to Heinrich Hertz. *The Principles of Mechanics* (1894). London 1899.
- 29 W. V. Quine. *Word and Object*. MIT Press 1964, p. 229.
- 30 op. cit. § 51. Limit Myths.
- 31 A. N. Whitehead. *Process and Reality*. New York 1957, Pt. 4, ch. 5, sect. 4.
- 32 Quine, op. cit.
- 33 Bertrand Russell. *Principles of Mathematics*. 1st ed. 1903, ch. 4, § 46. Moments are without extension, being infinitely small.
- 34 Russell, op. cit. 2nd ed. Introduction. New York 1937. The particles of matter which are referred to in this case are without extension. Russell, “Introduction” to *Mathematical Philosophy*. London 1919, called classes “logical fictions.”
- 35 Abraham Robinson. *Non-Standard Analysis*. Amsterdam, 2nd ed. 1974.
- 36 Martin Davis and R. Hersh. Nonstandard Analysis, *Scientific American*. Vol. 226, No. 6, June 1972, pp. 78–89. They cite Weierstrass on speed as a limit.
- 37 In *The Role of Mathematics in the Rise of Science* (1981).

Myth in the Making

The Transition from One Myth to Another.
Benedetto Croce, Barrington Moore,
Karl Popper

Another way to look at the treatments of myths of the state, of the machine, technology and science is to regard them as myths in the making. In order to examine what is meant by this, we will turn back to the myth of the state in the hands of Thomas Hobbes and G. W. F. Hegel. There we see two powerful thinkers faced with a mighty force in history. The state and the concept of the state are old, but the word for the state, and the form of the state as we now know it are new. Niccolò Machiavelli in the sixteenth century had much to do with formulating the term for the state in the meaning we now give it. He did no more than set the modern minds to work. In seeking to formulate his own ideas about the state, Hobbes drew on a highly charged rhetoric, borrowed from religion, calling the state Leviathan, the mortal god, of which there is no greater power on earth. Hegel acted in the same way, his rhetoric being no less highly charged, summing up his attitude toward the supreme secular power by a number of religious metaphors. Now these are not analytic devices, but expressions of awe before the forces of life and death. They had no explanation for how the state came to be, or underwent historical change, and they had no theory of its passing out of being, whether or if this is to occur, or the conditions under which it will do so. The state as such did not come into being for the first time in the period of Machiavelli and Hobbes; its beginning lies thousands of years before their time. But the problem

of conceptualizing the state in its relation to the people, to the sovereignty, to the law, and to history was faced in a distinctive way in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when these thinkers flourished. Both Machiavelli and Hobbes recognized that human beings, under certain conditions, live without the state; Hegel converted the state from a variable in history to a universal category, timeless, eternal in the mind or spirit.

The state was conceptualized and at the same time mysticized by Hegel, who developed one side of the theory as it had been brought out by predecessors. Machiavelli dealt with the state in a straightforward, practical and non-mystic way, for which he was hated. Hobbes had a like attitude but drew from myth for his rhetoric in his treatment of the state, and thus mysticized it. Hegel went further than Hobbes in mystifying the state. Both men summarized a popular orientation to the absolute power of the state. The state was something mystical, in part known, in part unknown, and in part something which our critical intelligence kept back from probing too deeply, for reasons of loyalty, patriotism, a link to a particular interest, fear of arrest, or a general antipathy to the state. Hegel's followers took their orientation to the state seriously, the right wing committing themselves to the fierce support of the state, the left wing committing itself to attack against it.

The myths of the state are secular but have not been purged of the quasi-religious rhetoric which Hobbes, Hegel, and others had bestowed on them. The authors came upon these myths, but did not invent them; they embellished them, dramatized them, and speculated on them; others have mysticized them further. The popular awe of the state, its personification in the sovereign, and its magnification in the law were well summed up by the theorists from Hobbes to Hegel; they were expressed in beautiful words, but they were neither objectively, critically, nor analytically treated. The unease we feel in the face of the state, the industrial machinery and the technics which treat a human being as a thing, are well expressed by Machiavelli, Barrington Moore, Lewis Mumford, William Barrett, and others who thought about the social processes, and formulated secular myths, or recorded them, without posing a solution to their problems.

They refer to their subject as myths: we see in them a twofold process of a finished expression in myth, and as myths in the making. No mythic process is ever complete. Sometimes we are able to observe a myth in the process of its coming into being, which is the case in the recent treatments of the myths of the state, the machine, technics, and science. The part played in the formation of these myths by known authors is interesting, indeed important, but minor compared to the social forces of the attitudes and orientations to our political, juridical and

economic life which they express. These myths bear upon modern society and its problems, which the thinkers who treat of them have excogitated but have not resolved. These myths are our responses, both emotional and cognitive to social problems. Those whom we have cited have objectified these myths; they point to them at times critically, but more often with affect of anxiety and alarm. Their treatment of myths differs from Plato's for they neither invented them nor the popular attitudes and orientations which brought them forth but represent them. These myths are as such non- or anti-traditional.

Myths in the making are seen to have great power in utopian and eschatological visions. They foresee a glorious utopia, such as Francis Bacon held out in the seventeenth century, whereby our technology and discoveries will resolve all our problems; French, English and American utopian socialists and communists experienced visions of another kind in the nineteenth century. The decline of civilization has been a popular theme in Oswald Spengler's writings; the vision of a bleak fate has been modified into the myth of the end of the world as we know it. These visions are at once fantasies and guides, orientations, motives and ideological schemas for our individual and social action. The myth in the making is a potential myth, which we observe as it comes into being. It is also an actuality of myth, as myth in the world, for all myths, insofar as they are veritable expressions of our commitments and beliefs, are actually existent; myths of the ancients are dead and gone, whereas our myths of hope or dread are alive to us, worked on, and changed. We will treat of ideology in relation to myth in a separate section of this work.

Certain evidence has been set out regarding the sacred and the non-sacred myth; myth has been given in both narrative and non-narrative form in ancient as well as in modern times. With the development of the non-sacred myth in our time, the traditional element in myth has assumed a reduced importance. Myth is not static but changing and changed. We construct the theory of myth out of the constant and variable factors in its history.

Both sacred and secular myths have various modes or forms, as prose and poetic narrative, as image and symbol, figure, and personification, as political declaration, program or vision, as creed, belief, secular tenet, or as law.

We have not sought answers pertaining to myth negatively, by excluding some notions about myth which have been brought out in the past; but also, some ideas about myth which were set down in the past and perhaps wrongfully forgotten, have been resuscitated. Inquiry into myth has broadened out to include the well-known fields of ancient and modern myths of southern and northern Europe and the ancient East, written and oral mythic traditions of Africa, Asia,

the Americas, Oceania and the polar regions, as well as the sacred and secular myths of modern times in the literary and visual arts, and in politics. Myth is in this treatment not one but many; it is fantastic, practical, bizarre, colorful, variable, in form and substance. It was once traditional and still is so, in part; but in part, it is an expression of the desire for the new; there is a tradition of the new, of which myth is a part. New parts are ever being added to the old, whereby we express our thoughts and feelings about the world and our lives. The diffuse and general myth of ancient tradition has been divided into exoteric and esoteric myths, these moving into one another and away. It would be foolish to maintain that a final form of myth, hence a final formal definition thereof, can be found. There is, notwithstanding, a theory of myth which is unitary, and which is sought not in its ever-changing form and content, but in our relation to it. Whatever its form, content, subject or theme, it is popular, uncritical, and verbal; it is marked by a relatively great intensity of commitment to it by its holders, transmitters and hearers.

The discussions by the various fields, sides and parties dealing with myth have usually been conducted in avoidance or ignorance of one another. Thus, the classicists, ethnologists and folklorists have been in a mutual, fruitful interchange, but have set aside part of the sociological literature. The sociologists contributed mightily to the ethnological study of myth, and drew upon it in turn, as Durkheim attests. Philosophical writings about myth which have here been mentioned have related to the classical, ethnographic and folklorist literature, and to the sociological literature only as it is bore on the one or the other; the same is to be said of the psychological literature. The subject of myth as ideology is likewise conducted in a world of its own. There are always exceptions to these observations and no absolute judgments can be made. Yet, the study of myth calls for its investigation by the various fields, from their several viewpoints, and in their interactions, such as those which have been mentioned, and others, which have not, notably the interaction of psychology and literature in the study of myth, and the interaction of sociology and political science.

Myth was once thought to have its origins in our sense of wonder, and while this thought remains, it is not alone. Myth is also traced back to the unexplained and inexplicable, to that which arouses our fear or reverence, curiosity or sense of the fitness of things. By myths we express our orientation to the world, to nature, to human beings, to our history or our hopes for the future. By our myths we express our commitment to our social group, its traditions and its prospects. In ancient times, the myths of the gods and the cosmos expressed a human relation to natural processes, as orderly or as disorderly, awful or irreverent. The myths of

the Law arouse the awe of many peoples, and the myths of the Devil their dread; but the myths of Chukchi Raven, Pawnee Coyote, and Winnebago Trickster are, to those who believe them, neither awe-inspiring nor dreadful. Some myths are mystical, irrational and absurd; some have felt that behind the myths depicting the contemptible acts of the gods there must be a divine truth which the wise can discern.

Myth, once thought to be only verbal, is here broadened to include all kinds of expression. We define myth not by this form or that, but by our human relation to it. As the themes of myth and mythopoeics are the most variegated imaginable, some looking forward, and some backward, some inward and some outward, we do not bring them under one system. We also consider that if the motives and origins of myth are variable and disunited, then we cannot bring these aspects of myth into an integral and consistent theory. Platonists and Neoplatonists, Aristotelians, Neo-Kantians, Hegelians, ideologists, objectivists, subjectivists, cryptanalysts, philologists and Structuralists have all looked into myths according to their tenets; each of these schools of thought has fixed on one quality of myth, or a related set of qualities, to the exclusion of others. It is not our task to refute any of them, but rather to confront the different views to one another, to show what about them gives a good account of myth, and what falls short, what is living and what is dead.

The distinction has been made in this work between sacred and secular myths, therewith between religious and political myths. Some wish to consider political ideals, utopias and like visions as species of sacred myth, but there are several reasons to question this. 1. The notions of the political ideals and utopias as sacred would then be carried into a field in which they are not at home, together with other myths of like kind, such as the general myths of the machine, science, the state, and such local myths as "the American dream," "the Indian dream," etc. The notion fails to take into its account the secularization of many aspects of social life, including the secularization of morality, the law and education, which had once been inseparable from the religions of many peoples. The secularization of these fields is accompanied by the secularization of myth relative to them. The Leninists formulated a political ideology which contains mythic elements of the dialectic of nature and the utopian vision of the future of society. The mythic elements of the Leninist ideology are uncritical, and contain certain mystical notions, such as the idea of the dialectic of nature; in this case, the sacred and the secular, or the supernatural and the natural, are not kept apart. We do not identify the sacred and the supernatural, or the natural and the secular. (See the further discussion in points 2 and 3). The supernatural element of the dialectic of

nature is a part of the Leninist ideology; it derives from a notion of the dialectic originating in Friedrich Engels' work. This element is mythic, and as such is uncritical. Thus, the Leninist myth has both mystical and naturalistic elements in it. It is the object of a deep commitment to it which has had many peoples in its grasp. The vision of the future of society in that ideology is not a sacred one and is without a supernatural element. No myth is as such clear and distinct.

2. Some of those who think of utopian and other political ideals as a sacred myth have made a particular mythic tradition into a universal without freeing themselves of the ethnocentric bias of their model. 3. Religion, the sacred or holy, commonly has a supernatural element, and myth, insofar as it is an element of religion, therefore has a supernatural element. But it is false to speak of all myths in this way. Religion is monotheistic, polytheistic, or animistic, and the supernatural element in myth is variably divine, spiritual, soulful or ghostly. Secular myths are generally without supernatural elements, or there are versions in sufficient numbers of these myths without such elements; all versions of myth are valid. Myth is variable, as sacred or secular, ideological or not, and mixtures of several or all of these elements.

The distinction made above between mythic form and substance will now be further developed with regard to myth in the making. Myth is variable, having a certain form in a given era of its history. It is primarily a verbal act, whether oral or written; but that verbal act is of many kinds, narrative, symbolic, explicative or declarative, legislative, cosmogonic, ethnogenic, eschatological or utopian. It is secondarily a visual act and product. In its substance, which is the relation of the given people to it, and of the myth to the people, as sacred or profane, it is a matter of commitment on the part of the people or party, and of belief in it by a sect which takes it up. It is persuasive to those who are already persuaded of its validity by other means, the common substantive process of commitment or belief by a group being the consequence thereof. In the sacred myth that commitment is an act of faith, whereas in the secular myth, the bond to it is of another kind; whether with or without belief, it is a commitment to it. In either case people are guided in thought, feeling and action by the mythic statement, and its members are even ready to defend it with their lives. In view of this consideration, we turn the relation of persuasion as to the validity of the myth about: That the myth is persuasive to those that are already persuaded of its validity is the consequence; the fundamental factor at work is the uncritical commitment to it by a group, a sect, a party, a people or an entire nation. Myth does not need to be rationalized or harmonized to be persuasive. This is said of the Leninist, the religious, or any other myth.

We trace the history of myth from the time when it was sacred, or when the sacred and secular myth was without internal division, to the time of separation between the two. In this process the categories of the study of myth conform to this separation, for the ancient thinkers about myth conceived it to be sacred alone, and they were followed by most writers on the subject down to the twentieth century. At present, the distinction between sacred and secular myth has become evident, and the theory has followed. During this time, myth has been transformed from an undifferentiated body of representations set forth by a people, into a body of exoteric and esoteric doctrines, which is held on the one hand by the masses of a people, nation, sect or party, and on the other by specialist groups among them. The myths are undifferentiated into the sacred and the secular, and into the exoteric and esoteric, as the peoples are differentiated into social classes and specialist groups. Myth in the sense of the representation of the natural and human world, either as a whole or as parts of the one or the other, is the same in its substance throughout, but undergoes profound alterations of its form in these processes. Myth is throughout the expression of a popular, anonymous tradition in various forms, which are legal, symbolic, narrative, doctrinal or sloganizing utterances; these are uncritical in their reception, whether critical or not in their conception. Myth has been expressed in recent centuries in the human social agglomerations of all varieties.

Myth is ever in the process of its creation; the Leninist myth is a myth of society which is still being shaped and will probably undergo further rationalization and harmonization. It is still a myth in the making. Moreover, its origins in historical events, and in political and metaphysical thought are recent and fresh.

Benedetto Croce opposed myth to metaphysical thought; this opposition is on another plane which is divergent from Antonio Gramsci's opposition of myth and political ideology. Croce considered that myth at a certain stage in its development preceded metaphysics in history, but that, while metaphysics replaces myth, it also, under certain circumstances, lives side by side with it. Myth, as the truth which is revealed in religion, comes into conflict with historical and philosophical thought. In this conflict, history and philosophy tend to take on the quality of myths, from which the metaphysics has been extracted. In this process, the religious myths are translated into pseudo-rational categories. An example of this is given in Croce's representation of the myth of sensation. After examining several treatments of the phenomena of sensation of sight, touch and hearing by various schools of philosophy, he found that the notion of sensation dissipates as it is taken up, and what remains is its myth. This myth is, however, not religious but secular. Historically, we might interpose, the myth of sensation is the same

as the quintessence, the extraction of which from the material bodies was the great project of ancient and medieval alchemy. These alchemists also sought to fix phlogiston as the principle of inflammability, and the physical metaphysicians, even in the twentieth century, sought to account for the radiation of light by a luminiferous aether. The list of mythic explanations of the phenomena of nature can be extended. For Croce, thought is ever in a process of freeing itself from myth as from metaphysics. This emancipatory effort is not a progress from one stage of human history to another, but is ongoing, ideal, and present in all thought, living in it forever. In this way he opposed the historical schemas of Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot and Auguste Comte.¹ In the essay against “universal history,” Croce argued that transcendence in the philosophy of history and of nature takes two forms, of myth and of metaphysics. He did not separate these forms but considered that each has something of the other in it. Metaphysics has a mythic element, which is its representative element. Myth has a metaphysical element, which is its logical character, and is other than poetic fantasy. Myth and metaphysics stand to each other as religion to theology. Croce referred to the progression, in the historical schemas mentioned, from the theological to the metaphysical to the scientific epochs.

In Croce’s criticism, myth subsumes both theology and metaphysics within itself, and is opposed to the science and positivism of Turgot and Comte. Myth is not only an element in theology, for Croce has a role for secular myth as well in his critique of the philosophy of history, of metaphysics and of nature; myth accordingly is cognitive and not affective in its nature.

Barrington Moore² dealt with myth in connection with the orientations of the peoples, and not in its bearing on the past or future, but on the present. Myth is in this case understood not as sacred but as secular expression; it provides us with an orientation to the world, without which we would be helpless. Myth has an element of wishful thinking in it which is opposed to the processes of the real world; at the same time, it is the means whereby a society, at a given era in its history, puts together a meaningful picture of the physical and human world. [At the same time wishful thinking can be a spur to labor, to change the world to meet our wishes. The question will revolve around possibility of the available means of labor and of production to successfully produce what we wish to consume—eds.]

The picture of the world and the orientation to it are the means whereby we make sense of the known in its relation to the unknown, the myth being an instrument in this process of representation. The mythic factors taken up by Moore are those of its roles in social life, and its constituents, which are subjective and objective. A subjective constituent of myth is the element of wishful thinking

in it, an objective element is the picture of real, not fancied, problems which it offers. He analyzed the political system of the U.S.A. as a predatory democracy; myth is active in this system, serving both its critics and the defenders of the status quo. He did not dwell on the objective elements in this myth, but elsewhere in his work, by comparing the myth of medieval Catholic orthodoxy with that of the European Enlightenment, he judged the latter to have presented a more accurate picture of the physical world and of the human social world than the former. One may agree with his comparison of the two world pictures as they bear on the physical and mathematical sciences, for the eighteenth-century thinkers stood on the shoulders of Copernicus, Galileo and Newton; the cosmographic, geographic and ethnographic knowledge of the world of the Enlightenment was certainly greater than that of the Middle Ages in Europe. But whether the later epoch had a more accurate picture of human society and psychology than the earlier is questionable.

The picture of the world which is expressed in myth is subjective, even though shared by many, and it is uncritical. Further, in Moore's theory of myth, it is the mixture of world orientation and the quest after meaningfulness in life. The orientation and the quest are not only brought out in myth but in education, politics, religion, science. These, in their various combinations, provide us with a purpose in our movements, and keep us from being as weathervanes.

This thought is to be developed, for our sense of self-identity, by which is meant the answer to the question as to who we are, is expressed in myth, being related to our quest for meaning and to our world orientation. We hold fast to the myth and commit ourselves to it as members of a social group, reinforcing our sense of membership and of commitment to it and its myth, whether it be realistic, fantastic, mystical, or absurd. All these relations to the myth, and in it, are bound together and undergird one another. These factors of myth are both affective and cognitive, of the passions and intellect.

The myth is of practical use moreover, for, equipped thereby with our sense of self-identity in the group, with our will and purpose through the myth of the group, and with its shared orientation to the worlds of nature and of human society, we can then move toward a given end and realize its purpose. The directional, purposive movement is at first expressed in myth subjectively, uncritically, and traditionally. The myth is not the only expression of this kind, however, for there are others beside it, in poetry, philosophy, and science. Myth includes an orientation to the untried and new as well as the old and traditional.

The sense of self, of identity with one's group, and of one's self in and through the group, of directional and purposive movement in the society, however

rational or irrational any or all of these may be, are important sources of life's meaning. Whether of unconscious or conscious origin, they become conscious to us through myth. The subjective aspect of meaning is thus analyzed into these uncritically conceived elements, of which myth is constituted.

These elements, together with the objective ones which we have mastered, are then put together in a world picture which sums up our cosmographic, geographic and ethnographic knowledge; it has a moral element in it, which orients us, where possible, to the difference of right and wrong, and it has some notions of folk psychology, folk history and folk etymology in it. There is a myth of democracy. But now if we say that this democracy is of a predatory kind, then we leave the world of myth, and enter the world of social criticism. We then oppose the myth of the way things are to the myth of the way they are not but ought to be. We do not get at the idea of predation by means of myth but by means of its objective analysis and critique. But also, we desire democracy, and by wishful thinking, such as is expressed in myth, we may think and feel that we have achieved it. The strength of our commitment to the myth, whatever its substance may be, arises out of our need of a sense of self and a guide and direction in life, which are both cognitive and affective in our relations. The wish for democracy, if it is strongly felt, commits us to the myth, orients our course of action, and forms one of the subjective elements, which together with objective ones, conduces to the triumph over exploitation, and the achievement of democracy. This is to be sure a utopian myth; but if ever we achieve democracy, this myth will be one of the conditions of its attainment.

Both Croce and Moore focused their attention on the cognitive aspects of myth, Croce, having taken up the perennial questions of myth in relation to theology and metaphysics, Moore the mythic orientations of our time. The myths Moore discussed are chiefly the ideological expressions and visions which are secular in content, and non-narrative in form, without supernatural, daimonic, or other elements of that kind; they are both traditional and anti-traditional representations. Georges Sorel, Vilfredo Pareto and Karl Mannheim wrote in a like manner about myths, and so did Antonio Gramsci, to whom we will turn shortly.

It is a minor point to make in our work, but one that has a definite historical place, that the concern with myths of our own time and people is modern, not ancient. It was not even fashionable in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Vico thought that the ancient Romans had mythic conceptions in their religions, and Hegel held that myth was an attribute of the ancient Greeks and Egyptians, not of his own contemporary Germans. There are a few exceptions to this concept. Aristotle conceives that his own philosophy was the revival of an

ancient wisdom in the form of a myth that the essence are gods; he would not have said, I dare think that his own wisdom was mythic. But now we throw out myths everywhere in the criticisms of our own mental and emotional processes and those of our forebears. Moreover, we have myths which are no different in kind from those of the ancients on the one hand, and from the contemporary Chukchis, Eskimos*, Arandas and Winnebagos on the other. The myths themselves are never the same.

Just as the myths themselves have been changed as the social groups which hold them have undergone developmental changes, so the concept of myth has changed in the minds of those who study them; the latter change may be noticed in its beginnings in the deep antiquity of Chinese history, when myths of evidently popular origin were transformed into mythic doctrines in the service of the state. This is an early form of the transfiguration of myth for secular purposes, but to hold that this was the original secularization of the mythic processes would be a flagrant, speculative act which we eschew. At about the same time, the probings into the origins of myth, of a kind which is called Euhemerist, was begun by the Greeks; early forms of these profanements of myth will, I am convinced, be found elsewhere by others. The theory of myth in its various expressive modes has been formulated after centuries of discussion which has been no less vivid of late than it was in earlier times. Myth was once conceived to be the utterance of some other people, as the expression of credulous, gullible, unformed, or decrepit minds. The critical notion of ethnocentrism in belief and behavior had not yet taken hold, it was then maintained that one's own beliefs were valid, healthy, and normal, founded on the evidence of our senses and on our ancestors' strength of mind, internally harmonious and externally concordant with the order and shape of things. The myth in Greek had meant an utterance of any kind and came to be applied (in later antiquity) to matters in which Plato had ceased to believe, and which they took with a grain of salt. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the myths of others were gradually recognized to be no different to our own sayings, which were then to be treated in a like manner. In the nineteenth and especially in the early twentieth century, this recognition and self-recognition was slowly nurtured; the various strands making up these studies are here drawn together in a general theory of myth.

All mythic traditions are complex, having intellectual and non-intellectual elements in them, which are sometimes taken to be anti-intellectual; but this

* Please see the note on page 1 regarding the use of the term Eskimo.

anti-intellectualism is not often the case. To be sure, myths sometimes remind us of the fairy tales of our childhood, for the myths are matters of commitment, these being of several kinds. Thus, the belief of the child is immediate in the fairy tale or myth, whereas the commitment of the social group, whether the community, nation, or the people, the party or sect is mediate; it is a commitment not to the myth, or belief in it, but a commitment of belief through the myth to its social processes and their representation by its tenets, creeds, vision, or law, to that which holds it together, and ultimately to itself. The myth is in a mediate, instrumental relation to the social processes and their cognitive and affective expression.

Karl Popper holds that dogma, or myth, is man-made, and is used as a path along which we move into the unknown, exploring the world, creating regularities or rules and probing for existing regularities. Our theories begin with myths, which are an uncritical phase of thinking, and then proceed to a scientific or critical phase. Myths are not primitive science but a pre-scientific stage of thinking. We will set aside this projection of phases or stages onto the history of science and of thought, for it is not a part of the theory of myth, but of the myth of myth, science and thought.

The approach of Popper and Richard Rorty to the subject of myth is philosophical and bears on the relation of myth to mind and to the history of thought; it is an approach which concentrates the attention on the cognitive factors of myth, but not the emotional and affective factors of human life. But more than that, myth is not only an expression of a common notion shared by many; it is an uncritical sharing of the notion. Above all, what makes the common notion into a myth is the commitment to it which its holders share. The relation to the myth by its holders has its history; originally that commitment took the form of belief in it. The affective, emotional element of myth bears both on its content and in the commitment of the people to it. Thus, the emotion, heightened into a passion, which is expressed in the content of the myth, undergirds our commitment to it, and our commitment is both cognitive and emotional. The commitment is not an individual but a group process which is shared, reinforcing both our affective and cognitive relations to it.

The myth to those who take it up, commit themselves to it, and are guided by it in their life as a whole or in some particular aspect thereof, whether propaedeutic, moral, religious, or political, is a serious matter, however bizarre or absurd it may appear to the outsider. Indeed, the myth may appear absurd even to those who believe in it, because it is absurd, whatever the absurd is. The absurd has had meanings, in the ancient world as it has today. The belief in the absurd was

diffuse and general in ancient times; the secularization of life and of myth at present has had the partial effect of profanation, not destruction, of myth and of the absurd. In consequence, there are many today who are committed to the absurd, but do not believe it, or else believe in it faithfully. The commitment to the myth of the absurd, and to the absurd in myth is both ancient and modern and is a tradition in either case. Of the many relations to the absurd in myth we will mention three. Sallustius and many other ancients noticed that the myths are absurd in their contents. This is an inner substantive absurdity of myth. Second, those who believe the myth, or who are otherwise committed to it, put themselves in the place of the outsiders who look at them and their myth. This probably was the case of Tertullian, and of the modern doctrines of the absurd of Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Cage and Samuel Beckett; they assimilate themselves to the others who have taken notice of their myth. Finally, the myth is belief, and this is an alternative interpretation of Tertullian, because of its very absurdity, as a test of faith. This idea has its emotional and intellectual aspects. We love our myth for its very absurdity and defy those who do not. Those who love it with us are of our kind, but if they do not, then they are not.³

There remains a formal problem to be considered in respect of myth, whether of the sacred or secular variety. Myth is in general of the people, traditional and anonymous. It is sometimes led back to some great figure, Moses, Buddha, or Confucius, Jesus or Mohammed. In modern times, a secular myth may be associated with a great mythic figure, popular, honored, or loved. It often happens that such a figure is a known personage, as a living human being who founded the nation, served as the originator of a political movement, or composed its doctrine. We have the attestations to these historical processes at the hands of the close colleagues of that founder, or author, and of others who saw him plain. That figure is then elevated to a place of honor in the popular esteem and becomes a figure of myth. Many national heroes and founders of nations have undergone transfigurations of this kind, who nevertheless appear in the testimonies of ordinary civil documents showing their dates of birth, death, and other mortal events. Their transfigurations are natural, human, and serve as models of civic virtue. We are inculcated in our youth with the lessons of courage, steadfastness, and honesty, which they displayed in good times and bad, and are encouraged to mold our childish characters in the same way. There is no element of the superhuman in the myths which are told of these people. They differ from the sacred myths, for their lives have only natural elements in them. They are different from other folktales in view of the profound commitment of the people to them. If the tale of these figures is told without conviction, and without commitment to it by the people,

then it ceases to be a myth and becomes a mere saying. Similarly, if the sacred myth is recounted without believing what is told, then it too sinks to a mere fairy tale, etc. We will not examine further the classification of the popular tales but place some of them in a cluster which is opposed to myth, being without the element of commitment, conviction, belief and declaration of faith in the eyes of those who hold it, which is the specific character of myth. These categories are not static but variable, for patriotic myths and mythic figures are not presented or received at present as they were in the past century.

The secularization of many aspects of civil life in modern society, public and private, has brought with it a secularization of many cults. The idolization of many figures, and their transformation into the objects of cults is popular in both sacred and profane contexts at the present time. Thus, Euhemerism is not brought to an end, but is transformed into secular and religious processes, patriotic, political, and holy. Often the figure of the country's founder, or the ideological father or mother of a political movement is assimilated to the tenets, visions and ideals of the people and represents them; the figure represents the people to themselves and to others, not as they are, but as they ought to be. Their writings are transformed into a myth, with a secular doctrine, entering into the tradition of the group, party, folk or nation, or a creed in the case of a sect. A religious sect may also be a political movement, and generate secular myths, as others do. The mythic element in the secular doctrines has nothing to do with social criticisms of the movement, or of the writings by its founder, which works in a different direction. We take up only the non-critical element in respect of the myth of the doctrine. The doctrine, ideology and figure, in that they are parts of a profane myth, touch our feelings, sentiments and emotions, and through them our minds; the critical parts of the doctrine touch our minds in a more immediate way, but they also enter more mediately into the myth of myth, which has been mentioned.

The form of the myth frequently has a different history from its substance. Thus, the form of a myth may remain more or less unchanged, while it is given an ideological element which it did not have before, or it may be desacralized, and demystified. The myths of national heroes or founding fathers of their country were once profoundly religious, and this is said of their ideological content as well, but these myths are distinctly less religious today.

The myth has an emotive, affective aspect, in which our sentiment of oneness in the group, and with it, is shared and expressed by its members. The sentiment is shared inwardly, the expression outwardly. The expression is more than the outward manifestation of the inner sentiment of a common experience, for the expression in myth is itself a shared experience. We have seen that the Chukchis,

in telling the shamans' myths, participate in the telling, both the tellers and the hearers alike.

Apart from maintaining the purity and accuracy of the form of the myth, we also reinforce, by this sharing and participation in its telling, the unity of the group of tellers, hearers and believers, and the feeling of unity. Thereby we are together and seek our identity in the group.

The identity of the self thus arises through our commitment to the group and to its ideas about the origin of the world and its own origin, expressed in the cosmogonic and ethnogenic myth, or we identify with its vision of the future, either in heaven or on earth. The myth is the expression of the shared feeling of unity, of belief, or generally of commitment to the unity, which is rather a passive effect of the myth. In its active aspect the myth of unity with the movement, and of external and potential identification with all the humankind, serves as a rallying cry for the group, movement, party, sect, or nation which is committed to it, which generates it and lives by it. At the same time, the individual members of the movement achieve their social identity by participation in it. This inner identity of the individuals in the movement is then projected onto the external process of the identification of the movement with the humankind.

The future orientation of the myth is its visionary promise, which is variable, mystical and realistic as the case may be. The secular and the sacred symbols share in the prominence of the future orientation of the myths; the sacred aura of the vision is present, even in view of the increasing secularization of social life and of myth. The myth in the past was local or tribal, but at present looks beyond the particular folk and may fraternally embrace all the humankind or all of nature. The present is a variable category and goes back several thousand years in some myths. This is the case of the Bible as myth, whose representations are even real to its believers. But other myths are exclusively current and actual; these are, as a rule, secular myths.

Myth as Pastime Activity

Boas and others have written of the various functions of myth, among them the function of a pastime. Their observations are without doubt reliable, but I think that they had in mind the social ambience of the myths they heard and the occasion on which they were told, not the form and content of the myths themselves. The myths are told for many reasons, which is one of the several references to their function. They are told to provide or to sum up our orientation to the

world, to bind the group of tellers and hearers into a social unity, to reinforce the sentiment of that unity, to provide a rational or irrational explanation of the way things are, or how they have come to be the way they are, or an account of their outcome, according to our hopes and fears; myths are told as the part which is spoken in a holy rite; or they are told for no other purpose than their telling, to express them as such; they are told in order to transmit and preserve an ancient wisdom, or to express our wonder at how much or how little we know. They are told to perform an act of magic and to pass the time in an idle hour, night or season. The list of reasons for telling myths can be extended further.

Both Bogoraz and Boas heard the myths recounted in various places of the North Pacific at the turn of the century, interpreting the myth told to pass the time, and to entertain; Dorsey heard myths told in the pauses of the Pawnee rituals. This is not a central function of the myth, or a reason for telling it, but a marginal one, as we infer from their descriptions.

Myth is a highly variable subject, and is a pastime activity in some places, but is serious alone in others. The myths of the peoples whom Bogoraz and Boas studied had what we would call fable or ghost story elements intermingled in them; we tell these stories for our entertainment. There is an element of play in the accounts of Raven, Coyote and Trickster. But we, in another mythic tradition, have separated the ghost stories from the myths; the myth of the devil has little of playfulness about it, but is dreadful and serious in the history of civil society in the West. The myth in this sense is not apart from the culture history of the peoples; our devil myth has been shaped for us by the sacerdotal traditions, and the moral earnestness of their preachments. The sacerdotal traditions have been opposed to one another in antiquity, in the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, and on; each tradition has regarded the other as the devilish representation in and through its myth.

Any treatment of myth in the lives of human beings today recognized that profound changes have taken place in myth in the past. If myth then had any element of social criticism in it, such criticism was usually hidden, implicit or latent. The ideological or other political myths today may be or indeed often are uncritical as such, but they are just as often closely in conjunction with social criticism. Again, while recognizing the passage of myth from the domain of the sacred in the past to that of the secular and the sacred today, we distinguish the action of myth in all cases from the action of social criticism. It would be more accurate to say that myth was once indifferently sacred and secular, and that today, given the secularization of politics, morals, education, the law, and even of religion, the sacred myth is distinct in its act and effect from the profane.

The elements of the theory of myth which is here set forth are taken from many sources, and many different kinds of myth have been examined, yet for all the diversity of its origins and forms, our theory of myth is a unitary one. Myth is manifold in its forms but integral in its social substance. It is an uncritical representation of the world of a particular group.

If we consider myth as play or pastime, it is at once converted into its opposite. Now we consider that the play element in myth does not contradict the notion of the serious role of myth in social life but reinforces it. We may joke about what is most important to us, but that does not diminish its importance. Indeed, the joke simply relieves the tension of our embrace of the myth.

Myth is a social expression to which we feel a deep, common commitment; by "we" is meant a people, sect, party, social class, a community or any combination of these, such as a sect which becomes a political party, a people as a community, etc. The commitment to the myth has an important aspect in respect of sacred myth, which is belief in it. The notion of the sacred is variable, bearing at times on the beloved and holy, and others on the beloved, holy, hated and execrated. The idea of commitment bears on the form and content of the myth and is in this sense variable as well. We feel a commitment to the myth as a social expression of our participation in the group whose myth it is; these are formal and substantial matters of our social lives. We feel deeply about our social problems; their insolubility, and our anxiety about that insolubility, is our strongest concern, which the myth expresses; we feel a commitment to the future in which these problems will be solved; we hold that our group, sect, party, or people will reach the utopia, or the promised land, and the anxieties or fears laid to rest. These are matters not of the substance of myth but of our substantive commitment to it. If we joke about our myth, we allow no one else to do so; it is our myth, and not the butt of someone else's jokes. The play or pastime function of myth is thus an inclusive and an exclusive one. In all these respects the sacred and secular myths are as one.

Myth as Oecumenic Expression

By *oikoumene*, the ancient Greeks designated their own Greek world [οἰκουμένη], as opposed to the barbarian in Persia, Scythia, Ethiopia, India, etc.; the term also denoted the inhabited in contrast to the uninhabited parts of the earth. The Romans then took over the term to designate the Roman world, or the inhabited parts of the earth, and the Christians by *ecumene* signified the kingdom of Christ thereby. The term generally is applied to designate the world as it is known to any

given people. Thus, we speak of the Chukchi *oecumene*, or any other, meaning thereby the world they called their own, or the extent of their ethnographic, geographic and cosmographic knowledge; this was transposed into a mythic realm by their popular traditions; other peoples have done the same, and so do we.⁴

The ecumene is therefore twofold: first, it is the real world as the people, sect, or folk sees it; next, it is the implicit worldview and orientation, and their representation in myth. The latter is the mythic ecumene. Together, these concepts bear not only on what the social group sees and knows, but how it knows and sees the world, how it represents that which it seeks out and chooses to know, what makes sense to it, and how it orders the sensible world as it is known to the group.

There is an emotional as well as a knowledgeable aspect to our worldview. Beyond the known lies the unknown, which fills us with wonder or dread. There is a tale of the renaissance mapmakers who wrote on the edges of their maps, "Where unknown, there marks terrors." But Aristotle held that by wonder we are led beyond the known. Both these aspects bear on the cognitive aspect of myth, and on its affective element.

The vision of the humankind is variously expressed in myth, whether as a religious apocalypse, a fatality, a soteriology, an eschatology, or as a secular utopia, for which one actively proselytizes, or which one accepts more passively, as a member of the group. The vision of the humankind was made into a statement of universal appeal both in ancient times and at present by the groups which thus bind themselves to the power of the myth over them, and are exercised by the hopes or fears, as they bear on the past or the future. The visionary element is not found in all myths; it is, however, widespread at present in both its sacred and secular forms. For we acknowledge in our myths that the humankind is one, that all or nearly all the humankind is a mythmaker, and what is said of any part may be said of any other. The myth in all cases binds each member of the social group and partakes in its vision to the other by commitment to it, or by belief in it, and by self-identity in the group and its myth. The self-identity may lead to self-surrender and to self-sacrifice for them.

Our mythic tradition has many parts, some recent, and some lying deep in the past; in either case, objectivity and critique are not its strong points. Its strong point is its binding force on our minds and feelings in the group, and whether it is rational or irrational, harmonious or discordant and having little or no importance to the tenets of the myth; there are those who may even take pride in its very absurdity, holding it to be their peculiarity, from which they derive their identity. The power of the myth thus lies not in itself but in the power of the group bond and through it of the group which holds its myth to itself, cherishes

it, and strengthens the force of the law, the covenant, the narrative account, the symbol or vision which is expressed thereby. These are all matters of the social substance of the myth.

Myth as a means of orientation to the world, as an active element in political ideology, for the formulation of the popular attitudes toward the real or fancied sources of hopes, joys, and miseries, in our pastime activities and in our ecumenical expressions, is myth in the making. It is not of the past but now. It is pieced together out of elements of the past and out of our present concerns, ever in a new, creative and destructive way.

Notes

- 1 Benedetto Croce. *Filosofia, Poesia, Storia*. Ricciardi (ed.) Napoli Milano 1951. See there the essays, The concept of philosophy as absolute historicism; The myth of sensation; Against “universal history” and false universals — Encomium of individuality.
- 2 Barrington Moore. *Reflections on the Causes of Human Misery*. Boston 1972.
- 3 Sigmund Freud asks the question: are we to believe everything that is absurd? If not, by what criteria do we judge the absurdities which are to be believed from those which we choose not to believe? But Freud had already pointed to the infantile source of our beliefs in the regression to the nursery where we found the original prototypes of the gods in our parents whose protection, care and assurance we sought and cherished. See Freud’s *The Future of an Illusion*, *Standard Edition*, Volume XXI, London, pp. 3–56.
- 4 Friedrich Ratzel. *Anthropogeographie*, pt. 2. 1891 [republished Kessinger Publishing, Whitefish Mt 2010]. Alfred Kroeber. *Anthropology*. New York 1948.

Myth, the Known and the Unknown

The Myth of Theseus and Sciron

The problem of myth from ancient times down to the present has been taken up as a relation of what we know to what we do not know. This treatment of myth is supposed to be an intellectual matter, but a great amount of emotion is attached to it as well. For the unknown awakens our sense of hope as well as terror, joyful anticipation as it does gloomy forebodings. Sometimes the alternatives are a matter of the era in which we live, and sometimes of individual temperament. Francis Bacon and René Descartes appear to have been sanguine about the geographic and other scientific discoveries, and the mechanical and other inventions of their times, and this attitude was taken up by their followers, of whom there were many; but equally large numbers of people maintain a melancholic, atrabilious or choleric attitude at present toward the machine, technical advances and science, whether with good reason or without. These attitudes are often associated with myths, as we have seen. The notion that there are choleric, phlegmatic, melancholic and sanguine tempers is another myth, or body of myths. It was widely believed at one time that the body has four fluids, blood, phlegm, and two kinds of bile, yellow bile and black bile; these fluids were held, either by their harmony or by the superabundance of one among them, to rule our temperaments or dispositions; in a variation of this myth, it was believed that the four chief body

fluids or humors were phlegm, blood, bile and water. Each of these humors was believed to have a particular body organ for its seat, the blood in the heart, the water in the spleen, the phlegm in the head, the bile in the liver. To this body of beliefs, a myth of the sources of our ailments was attached, according to which we enjoy good health or suffer pain by virtue of the action of the humors. Thus, if an excessive amount of any one of these fluids leaves the body, the ejection causes pain. If the fluid does not leave the body but is simply displaced from one part of it to another, we suffer a twofold pain, in the place evacuated, and in the organ filled. This myth, which dominated European medicine from ancient times to the Renaissance, has been attributed to Hippocrates or to Polybus, his son-in-law; it may also be that it was the work of many others. But Morris R. Cohen and Israel E. Drabkin¹ contend that the Hippocratic collection is generally free of magic (or myth).

Hippocrates himself was not a mythopoeist, but certain ideas, notions, feelings, or dispositions have more of a likelihood to be made into myths than others, either at the time the idea or disposition was brought to expression or later. The idea of the humors had this potentiality to a degree.

Myth is conceived to be ongoing, in a given tradition. The tradition of myth is variable, for a myth of one kind may have a more immediate relation to the history of a given people than another. In this sense, it is more in keeping with its traditions. As a rule, sacred myths are more traditional than the secular, which are more recent or novel and bearing on more contemporary concerns. The myth does not stop merely with the telling, and its possibility is extended, not exhausted by the participation of the teller and the listeners in the recounting and the recounted. The myth is an account which is made by relating it to others; it is a relation between the maker of the account and the audience, and between their past and present in an ongoing tradition. The Chukchi myths are popular, anonymous, and of ancient origin; they deal with the beginnings of the world and of the humankind. The Chukchis' myths are of this kind for all their mythic traditions are common, and generally known in actuality; all is sacred in actuality in their worldview. They have no divisions of social classes and are without specialist traditions. There is little if any attempt to make their mythic corpus into a rational, harmonious, self-consistent system. Since the communal or collective life is so diverse, and since myths are likewise various in form and substance, it is impossible to draw a good correlation between the social life in bands or villages of the hunting, fishing and food gathering communities on the one hand, and the absence of a concordant and internally consistent system of myths on the other.

Myth as such, being without a system of its own, it is unlike any language, code or cipher. Such system, as the myths of the Chukchis, Yukagir, Koryaks or their neighbors in traditional times had, is taken from their respective social and linguistic systems. The relations of difference and nexus between the women and the men, between the generations, within and between the families, and within and between the settlements, further the relations of difference and nexus between the coastal and inland dwellers among the Chukchis, and between the Chukchis and their neighbors, were in part amicable, as they were conducted through economic and social exchanges, and in part bellicose ones; these systems are developed ad infinitum, but only as a potentiality.

The thought of specialists in the interpretation of myth was mentioned by Paul Radin; the distinction between esoteric and exoteric myths or elements thereof was proposed by Franz Boas. The Bible has elements within it which have been treated by specialists in theology, myth and ideology in an esoteric way, being opposed by them to the general myth which is transformed into an exoteric myth. This practice is also found in ancient Egypt, among the Pythagoreans, in the later myth of Hermes Trismegistus, and in many other times and places in Europe. The Buryats and Mongols had distinguished their esoteric doctrines and myths from their exoteric; these are all ensconced in the general myth and ideology of the peoples. If one thinks of myth as something esoteric alone, then the generality of myth is obscured or lost; if one thinks of myth as sacred alone, then the myth of the state is obscured. The secular myth of the state and of political systems in Asia, as it is in Europe, and in ancient and current historical times, is as central to the concept and theory of myth as any other part of it.

The myths of peoples without social classes, writing, or specialists in mythology strike the outside observer as bizarre, often without order or internal harmony, as colorful and picturesque but disorganized. The myths of peoples with social classes, writing, scribes and mythographers are often orderly, consistent and harmonious, hierarchized and structured; they appear to be more code-like and systematic. The myths of the latter sort are in many cases secular myths of the state and are indistinguishable from political, philosophical, juridical or religious ideologies. The latter bear within themselves seemingly insuperable contradictions. Ernst Topitsch led mythic thought, which he combined with metaphysics, forward from the ancient Greeks. He observed in the history of ideas certain ever recurring types and structures of the mythic understanding of the world; from those forms of thought at the dawn of our mental development we can trace down to the present the interpretation of the cosmos according to men's knowledge of the environment and according to their feeling and acts. He further

argued that we conceive of what is remote and unknown chiefly by means of what lies close at hand, and is well known, whereby he accounted for the practice of mythic explanation.²

This thought is pertinent to our common problem, but is incomplete, for surely, we also encounter in myth an explanation of the unknown by the unknown, or as it was encapsulated by the ancients in the phrase, *ignotum per ignotius*. Thus, we may explain the deeds of the distant, to us mythic king, whose motives are impenetrable, by adverting to those of the local tyrant, which are no more comprehensible. The Chukchis explained to themselves the actions of the Sun Chief (as they referred to the Russian Tsar) by comparing them with the decrees of the local governor, neither the former nor the latter being understandable.

The story is told by V. G. Borgoraz that once there was a governor of the Chukchi territory named Baron von Maydell, who had been appointed to his post by the Tsar. This governor took his responsibilities seriously, prepared himself for the task of governing his territory by general readings, and learned that whereas modern nations are ruled by kings, the primitive tribes are ruled by chiefs. He therefore called in the Chukchis so that he might speak to them through their chief, but as they had not such office they were puzzled by his act and could not explain it to themselves, nor could they explain themselves to the governor, whose argument proceeded from a known principle of government to the unknown. The Chukchi argued from a variation of the second principle of explanation which has just been mentioned, proceeding from the uncomprehended to the incomprehensible; this principle too is found in many parts of the world.

We find that the second principle applies to the study of myth, as in the case of Greek mythology. According to a Greek myth, Sciras, or Sciron sat beside a cliff, and kicked travelers into the sea below, where a giant turtle swam, waiting to devour the victims. But Theseus lifting Sciron from his seat hurled him into the sea instead. Robert Graves³ gathered together a number of versions of this myth, from written texts of the Greeks, and from a series of paintings; these versions date from early and late antiquity and do not coincide in detail. Graves, taking up several versions of the Sciron-Theseus myth, explained them as follows: According to one version of the myth, Sciron is seen floating, not hurtling down to the sea. Not only was he in no danger from a crushing impact with the waves, but a second danger, which had awaited the travelers whom he had hitherto destroyed was also spared him: No turtle was waiting to devour Sciron. The explanation given for this by Graves is that "there is no record of an Attic turtle cult."⁴ The turtle does not exist in this version of the myth. The implicit argument runs, that for every myth there is a cult, and, conversely, for every cult a myth.

But as there is no turtle cult, therefore there is no turtle myth. It is in another version of this myth that the turtle cult appears. Faced with the unknown, as to what happened to Sciron, one might account for this by adducing another unknown, for we know of no such cult to which a myth of this kind might be attached. Further, we often explain an obscure matter by speculating about it. Thus, Graves brought out a version of the Sciron myth recorded by the Second Vatican Mythographer: According to this account, Daedalus, not Theseus, killed Sciron, probably, Graves conjectures, "because of Daedalus's mythic connexion with the *pharmacos* ritual of the partridge king." Thus, one conjecture is brought in to explain another. The first principle of explanation, mentioned by Ernst Topitsch, had been brought forth by Bernard Fontenelle, at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who held that in fable one invents explanations of the known by allusion to the unknown.

To these a principle is added, which is that of non-explanation. In myth, as elsewhere in life, we seize on various means of explanation. But also, and not only in myth, we make bald declarations which explain nothing, and it is this latter practice which impressed Walter F. Otto and Adolf Ellegard Jensen, both of whom, on the basis of their ideas of mythic non-explanation, built up theories of true or genuine myth, which may be traced back in one way to Schelling's notion of the tautegorical in myth. The explanatory myth in Jensens's classification, we have seen, is not genuine myth, for the latter simply "is," and explains nought.

There are many other principles of explanation, as the principle of explanation of the known by the known; but this principle is not a central one in the case of the myth. Each of these principles has many variants; thus, for example, we proceed by wonder and marvel from the known to the unknown, and back again.

Henry A. Murray⁵ pointed to the determinants of myth which are internal to the psyche. Among these are the factors of wish fulfillment and psychological projection. David H. Lawrence and William. B. Yeats have referred to the "need" for myth, which is another endopsychic determinant thereof. Emile Durkheim brought out social factors which are determinants of myth; these are external and objective; likewise, the writers on myth in relation to ideology have referred to the external determinants of both.

Myth is an utterance which is of many kinds. It is in some cases a narrative, in others a symbol, in yet others a law; it is not often what it appears to be. It is an abstraction which is taken for a concretion, or a concretion which is taken for an abstraction. The symbols of myth are of various kinds, some fantastic, and in this

respect, we call Friedrich Schlegel and Pierre Chompré to witness, some realistic, as Robert Graves pointed out.

So rich is the field of myth that no list of categories could exhaust it; most such listings begin with some ethnic model and expend much energy in making it out to be a universal or in overcoming it. In the European, generally Western tradition, with sources in the Biblical and Greek mythic worlds, the myth is in the form of a narrative, whether cosmogonic, theogonic, or eschatological; these myths are moral, providing guides for social conduct, or a theodicy justifying the ways of god to man, or else a sociodicy, justifying the ways of society to its members; they are as often an apocalypse or revelation, which may be of an imminent doom. The very meanings of myths, and of words in myths are changeable in the telling. Thus, the term apocalypse is sometimes used to refer not to a revelation of doom, or of some other fate, but to any tale of doom, and to doom itself.

Myths are figurative, personifying and eventful, having all sorts of casual sequences, aetiological and teleological, jumping to conclusions, or moving laterally, without reaching a conclusion. They take the macrocosm for the microcosm, or conversely, the microcosm for the macrocosm; they are holophrastic and anachronistic, rational and irrational, anacoluthic and apocatastic, harmonious and discordant. Therefore, we do not look for a specific characteristic of the mythic form or the mythic substance as opposed to all other characteristic forms and substances of human thought and feeling, their representation and expression; for the theory of myth, we look instead to the relations of groups of human beings to them.

Beyond the known lies the unknown, which to some is the cause of wonder, and to others of dread; but this side of the unknown is the world of comfort to those who have, and of desperation to those who have not. Francis Bacon sailed his ships into a world of hopeful discovery; but that world belonged to the Indians, who were conquered. All these feelings are represented in myth; they begin in a positive sense, in exceptions of marvels, and hope, but give way to myths of doubt and *Angst*. Although this has been the history of the myths of technics and the machine from the seventeenth century to the twentieth, in the lands of the occident, yet the opposite course, which leads from despair to hope again, is not excluded from our myths. For who is to affirm that the visions of Bacon and of Descartes with respect to mechanical invention and discovery are dispelled?

Forces holding society together and tearing it apart are studied together with the forces stabilizing our history and those which generate change in it. The investigation of myth bears on all of these inquiries. There has been a vivid

discussion of myth as the representation by a collectivity of itself as a collectivity, that is, how the act of self-representation becomes a force holding the collectivity, community or society together; the discussion is a beginning. The representation is made by the group through the individuals in the group; these individuals act collectively, and their representations in their collectivity are not reducible to their individual acts but are of another kind. The representations, individual and collective, are expressions of various kinds, having cognitive and effective, emotional and sentimental content. The expressions are made by word and deed, and are practical, theoretical, concrete and abstract in their process and in their effect.

Whereas the discussion of the collectivity was conducted chiefly with regard to the forms of the religious life, whether elementary or other, it is possible to conduct this discussion with regard to secular social relations as well, and to place them in relation to myth. Among the products of myth is the establishment and deepening of the sense of collectivity; another is the institution of social division. The myths are both words and acts, the one expressing, the other producing, promulgating and furthering these processes and their effects. Lévi-Strauss has regarded myth as an improvisation or patchwork, which bears on the cognitive process of how we put together the picture of the world in which we live. The non-cognitive side of myth is no less important than the cognitive, and its discordant not less important than its harmonious aspect. The myth is a medium of dissemblance as much as it is one of resemblance by copying; it is a sacred as well as a secular medium, and any theory of myth either looks into all of these complexities, or else it is oversimplified, imbalanced, one-sided. Patchwork is an important part of myth, but not all of it. Myth is harmonious and concordant, as well as slapdash and patchwork.

In order to grasp something, we consider what it is not, or look at it from another viewpoint. Leonardo da Vinci had much to say about representation in art, holding that the painter deals with the similitude proper to the forms of things in order to represent them. Further he wrote that painting is the “only imitator of all the visible works of nature.” By painting a man, he continued, we bring out similitude, or the likeness of the painting to him, and the pictures we see conform so well to the subject of the painting that “they deceive men.” Leonardo touched on the capacity of a likeness to deceive us, so that we take the representation in art for the original. Representation in this sense has the same meaning as representation in myth, for it is the human act of having one thing stand for another. If we so desire, we may achieve deception or dissemblance by means of the representative powers, but chiefly, by representation, we affirm some

position thereby, either individually or in the group. Similitude toward which we strive come to us by mastery of an art.

We distinguish between similitude and resemblance, the former having much to do with the representation, the latter but little. Resemblance may be the outcome of a natural process of biological inheritance, or it may result from an accident, as an unintentional human act. Thus, by inheritance, family members may resemble one another, without having similitude between them. Suppose a man in anger hacks away at a tree. The result of this hacking may resemble a cow but bears no similitude to it. James Joyce poked fun at the learned discourse about the image of the cow resulting from the hack work, which may be beautiful, but may not be art. We leave this question and the mockery of the learned discourses to the admirers of Joyce. The similitude in this case will not deceive a dog; it is the representation in that it is the product of the human capacity to reproduce what we have perceived visually. It is a kind of labor which is intentional. Imitation is a striving or conation toward similitude, which may be purposive or not. The mimicry of animals is a striving of another kind, for it is without consciousness of purpose.

Myth is a striving toward an expression, sometimes in imitation, seeking resemblance in the mythic expression to the object of our storytelling, symbolization, legislation or description, but as often it is in defiance of any resemblance, Myth is so varied that we cannot define it, or delimit its content, but define only our relation to it. Myth is the expression to which we commit ourselves uncritically, as part of a social group.

Notes

- 1 M. R. Cohen and I. E. Drabkin (eds.) *A Source Book in Greek Science*. Harvard 1969.
- 2 Ernst Topitsch. *Vom Ursprung und Ende der Metaphysik*. Wien 1958. See further his contribution to: *Myth and Mythmaking*, H. A. Murray ed. New York 1960.
- 3 Robert Graves. *The Greek Myths*. Vol. 1. New York 1980. Graves added to the speculative element in his report of the Sciron-Theseus myth by reflecting on the resemblance between turtles and parasols; he thought that Sciron might have floated down from the cliff to the sea while suspended from a parasol. Similarly, we may speculate that the myth of the magic carpet may have occurred to ones who take note of a bubble of air trapped between the carpet and the floor on which it is spread. Such conjectures may be carried on ad infinitum. Thus the carpet appears to float on the bubble of air, and the magic carpet floats through the air, carrying men, women, and things. These conjectures bear on, but do not explain myth.

4 op. cit.

5 H. A. Murray. *Myth and Mythmaking*, op. cit., Introduction. Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), made a great point of absurdity of the myth and of its representation of the absurdity of life. We know the absurd immediately, recognize it and acknowledge it. It is thus part of the known. But we do not comprehend it, explain it or otherwise account for it; it is thus part of the unknown. Rudolf Otto, *The Holy*, op. cit., sought to parse this question out with respect to the sacred alone. There are two sorts of mystery, he wrote, the one the *mysterium tremendum*, which is immediate and overwhelming in our experience; the other is the *mysterium fascinans*, the mystery, which is not lecherous, priapic or phallic, nor bewitching in an evil sense, but enchanting. The mystery is esoteric, secret, and hidden from all but the initiates; it presupposes the social order and its division into two groups, the initiates and the outsiders; further it presupposes the division of knowledge into esoteric and generally accessible knowledge.

Myth and Ideology

Ideology is a social expression which is negative and positive, whereby we represent to ourselves and to outsiders what we eschew and hate or what we seek and desire. The ideology is the expression of a community, a clan, a group of kin, or a band; it is also the expression of a political party, a religious sect, the state, the social classes and juridical institutions of civil society. The ideology of the communal groups, villages, sibs and clans is but little differentiated from their myths and is usually implicit and unstated in them. The ideology as the expression of the communal life and relations gives a conative form to the social substance representing the desires, hopes and fears of the group to themselves and to others. The expression hidden in the representation of the desires, hopes and fears of the group in the myth may then be dug out and interpreted. We then infer how the band or village views the world, how the villagers wish it would be. The ideology is in this case a formulation by the outsider, hermeneut as ethnologist; it is a superstructure built on the mythic base. The mythic representations are explanatory, declarative, descriptive, imperative, narrative or symbolic. The ideological interpretation in this case is a construct, in part objective, in part subjective, of the way we the outsiders view the villagers' worldview, moral view, their feelings about their world within and the world outside. The construct, if it is made by the outsider, as the ethnologist, gives a form to something which may or may

not have a form, or may endow it with a form which is other than the form of its own. In the cases of the Chukchis, Bella Coolas, Winnebagos, and Pawnees, the ideological expressions have been interpreted from their myths. All is not peaceful in this world of communal groups; their myths tell of wars with other peoples, enslavement, devastating winter storms, cold and famine. The ideological expressions one derives from these myths are the hope of mildness and order in society and in nature, the fear of defeat, capture or death in war, the wish for ample resources of food, clothing, and shelter, and the desire for good friends and companions.

Turning to the question of ideology in civil society, we observe that it is expressed in part mediately, as sacred or as secular myth, and in part as non-mythic statements of programs, political, juridical, religious, educational, moral, or various combinations thereof. These myths and straightforward programmatic declarations are ideologies of the social classes, nations, sects and political parties of various kinds. The ideologies are public expressions of the ways the representatives of the groups, classes, and collectivities see themselves, or wish others to see them, how they see the world, their future and past.

The increasing secularization of the processes of life in civil society has contributed to the increasing separation of myth and ideology; the ideology implicit in the myth is made explicit. Ideology is still the expression of the same matter as it had been in the past, which is contained in myth; it is traditional, popular, uncritical, together with certain localized elements at work in particular societies, which have been mentioned. The ideological concerns in the expressions of this kind have tended in civil society to bear not so much upon the worldview, moral law, aetiology and eschatology, or on general troublesome problems such as the mechanization, specialization, and industrialization of civil life, its subordination to technology, and its formalization, bureaucratization and facelessness in the state. Instead, these expressions have been concerned with questions of power, political, legal, moral, military or religious. It has, at the same time, become the expression of powerlessness, and of retention, loss or gain of power, of its sale, purchase, perversion and corruption: of resentment on the part of those without power against those having such power.

Myth and ideology have their history, proceeding from their combination to their separation. They have their history apart from one another. Both have had a negative aura when they were viewed in the past from the standpoints of science and reason. They are expressions and effects of our hopes and fears, faith, the remnants of the past, of emotion and passion. Sorel held that the social myths express the strongest inclinations of a people, a party, or a class, that these

inclinations come to the mind with the strength of instincts in all conditions of life, and that they endow our hopes for the reform of our mental acts, desires and passions with the aspect of complete reality. The myths come from the past and present, but they bear on the present and the future. Sorel had reference to the preachments of Christ, the apocalyptic myth, the hopes of Luther and Calvin, and the Utopias of the revolutionary myth. Whatever their provenience, the myths are to be judged as means of orientation and action in and on the present conditions of our lives.¹

Sorel's concept of myth is different from those of Durkheim, Boas, Malinowski, or Radin; the usages of myth in Mumford and Moore are consonant with Sorel's. One of the tasks of this work is to show what is common to all these usages and meanings of myth; for it is our thesis that there is a fundamental relation which the various peoples of the world have maintained through the different eras of history to their myths. Having examined this relation in several contexts of traditional mythic narrative of the Gilgamesh poem, of the Chukchi creation story, of Genesis and of the ancient Egyptian story of the drunken goddess, in the context of law as myth, and in the context of the state, the machine, science and technics in their mythic aspects, we turn to the relation of the same kind in ideology as myth.

A theory of ideology which is widespread at present makes it out to be a separate entity from myth. This is a mechanical separation of the two, creating a false dichotomy between them; what is worse, it proposes a trichotomy between ideology, myth, and life. A variant of this theory places the ideology between the work of art and the artist, and between the same work and the viewer, as though it were a screen through which we "see" the painting or one through which the painter conceives it. This thought will not be pursued, but simply propounded. It should be evident from the examples given, and from those which will be further added, that myth and ideology are aspects of one another at present as they were in the past. There is an ideological tenor or burden of myth in the modern religious, political and legal spheres, and a mythic burden of ideology. Thus, the positive ideology of nationhood, national heroes and national ideals is given a mythic form and substance; the negative ideology of the enemy is given form and substance in the same myth of the forces of good and evil, light and darkness. The myth is secular or religious, whereas in the past, it was secular and religious. Ideology in its extreme expression is a program of political battle. In its origin it was the "science of ideas," and still retains this aura in the treatment of ideology in the sociology of knowledge. To know something is to know its social roots, which in the last analysis is its root in the class conflict. Social knowledge and

ideological expression thus come to be intertwined, and as caricatures come to be inseparable.

Antonio Gramsci wrote his *Prison Notebooks* while he was incarcerated by Mussolini; taking up the theme of myth in modern life, he distinguished mythology from religion. He referred to a popular myth of a secular variety, bringing out the interrelation of myth and ideology. In particular, he referred to the myth of America, which many in southern Italy believed at the end of the nineteenth century, and which connected to the emigration to the United States at the time. This myth and its ideology were new and contrasted to the older peasant ideology of the usurpation of the soil by the lords of the south Italian land. The older ideology expressed the quest by the peasants to regain by invasion the land of which they had been unjustly deprived.² The ideology and the myth are both related to social action of one kind or another, whether the use of force to assert the rights to them which had been wrongfully taken from them, or the emigration from the native soil. The myth is carried out in the ideology and in the social action, in an unbroken line, whether in its older or its more modern form. The substance of the myth and the ideology is the feeling of a wrong in either case.

Ideology and the Development of Marxist and Anti-Marxist Thought

Ernst Bloch brought the ideological factor in myth to bear on the socialist doctrine, which he perceived to be an expression of the principle of hope. He thereby reversed the path of Friedrich Engels, who described the path of socialism from utopia to science. For Bloch, the process is to the utopia of our hope, and from the past and present to the orientation to the future, and not back to the deceased ancestor of modern socialism. That the principle of hope is a driving force in history and is a utopian element in the thought of the Marxist movement was adumbrated earlier by Bloch (*The Spirit of Utopia*), who called attention to an apocalyptic element in Marx. Hope, eschatology, utopia, revelation and dream-landscape were Bloch's themes. He sought out the religious element in the secular ideology, which is subjective in its origin and no less subjective in its outcome, even though it may be given an objective disguise. The style of Bloch, which is inseparable from his substantive theme, is that of serious play. He saw the paradox of an unattainable objectivity and profanation of social movements which claimed to have suppressed the religion of the stars, of Hermes Trismegistos, of the Man-fish, and the Moon-clerk. Moses represented to Bloch the consciousness

of utopia in religion and of religion in utopia. Thus, Bloch represented a twofold myth through Moses. The utopia in question, if the paradox is apt, can only be understood as a secular ideal; but the myth was originally religious, and was only later made profane. The method applied in this relation of myth and ideology is systematic in opposition to the chronological method which he applied in the historic investigation into the origin of myth; in the latter, Bloch traced the secular form of myth, which is current in ideology, back to a religious form in the most ancient past.

Bloch raised the question of the relation between myth, ideology, the social forces of political action, and the goals of such action. He posed these questions in East Germany and in the West, to which he fled. The same questions were posed by Leszek Kolakowski, *Der Mensch ohne Alternative* (1960). He conceived that in Marxism, science becomes a myth: the ideological myth is forced to bear the load of science on its back: That very doctrine “which reveals how the social consciousness is mystified while proclaiming its total emancipation from myth, itself becomes the victim of such emancipation.”

Louis Althusser in *Sur la Pensée* (1970) was struggling with the same questions as Bloch and Kolakowski, which are: to account for the existence of the state, the myths and ideology of the state; they left in an implicit and unspoken form of the question of the existence of the state in the capitalist and the Soviet (including the East German and the Polish) systems. The state and the ideology of the state apparatus exist in both systems; all three writers have taken up the problems of the relations of the state, myth and ideology.

Althusser solved the problem of accounting for the existence of the state and ideology in both systems, the capitalist and the Soviet, by treating the state and the state apparatus as real and ideology as a myth. There are, he wrote, real conditions of existence and imaginary relations to them. One may postulate as the real conditions the presence of food, health, clothing and housing, transportation and communication systems. In the absence of these, there is suffering, hunger, disease, cold, fatigue; the state apparatus administers both sorts of conditions and is a real condition of existence as such.

Next, we consider that the existence of the state, state apparatus and state ideology, presupposing the existence of the social classes and of the opposition between them in the capitalist and Soviet systems. Louis Althusser's solution to the problem of the state ideology was the following: The imaginary relations of individuals to the real conditions of existence are the religious, ethical, juridical and political ideologies, to name no more than these. In the religious ideology there is belief in God, in the ethical belief in Duty, in the juridical belief

in Justice. (We add in the political ideology “Equality.”) These are imaginary relations, or illusions, which are expressions of the worldviews of the individuals. Althusser proposed to treat these imaginary relations, or illusory worldviews critically, in the same way as the myths of “primitive societies” are examined by ethnologists. The ideologies are themselves unreal, being imaginary and illusory; but they allude to reality. The ideology takes up the concrete individual as the concrete subject.

In the Marxist tradition after the First, and especially after the Second World War, the concept of ideology lost its original meaning. Friedrich Engels placed it on the side of false consciousness, in the world of seeming. “Ideology,” he wrote, “is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, it is true, but with a false consciousness. The real motive forces impelling him remain unknown to him; otherwise, it would simply not be an ideological process. Hence he imagines false or seeming motive forces.”³ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (1929), in an evident if distorted reflection of this tradition, placed ideology on the side of the ruling class in society, and utopia on the side of the underclass.

Georg Lukács, in *The Change of Function of Historical Materialism* (1919) and in his *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (1923), thought of ideology as openly uttered thoughts of class struggle of the bourgeoisie and of the proletariat, writing of the ideological crisis within the proletariat. The correctness of historical materialism as a doctrine is presupposed by him in that the various so-called ideological constructions represent functions of economic relations; the ideology of the struggling proletariat is a function of the capitalist society. Ideology is here considered to be not as a seeming, nor yet as a false consciousness, but as an expression of class antagonism of both sides, capitalist and proletarian.

Antonio Gramsci (op. cit., vol. 2, p. 143) considered ideology to be a phase intermediate between philosophy and daily practice; it is not a theoretical but a more immediate question, together with politics. The ideology of the masses was in opposition to that of the ruling class; at the same time, he sought the liberation from ideological fanaticism. The change of the meaning of ideology in Lukács and Gramsci has been completed by Bloch and Althusser. The conflicts of revisionist with left-wing Marxism before the First World War, later between the Socialist, Communist and Trotskyist Internationals, and between Marxists and others of the left, as well as the traditional class conflicts, have made a virtue of the necessity of ideology in politics. Engels thought that a good political cause has no ideology but needs only the objective and unfalsified consciousness of the working class, just as a good wine needs no bush. This is no longer the case.

The false consciousness to which Engels alluded is a part of the ideological issue, and indeed its less important part. The thinker who imagines false or seeming motive forces while the real motive forces remain unknown to him suffers false consciousness. But beyond this, those who knowingly argue against the objective interest of one class, their own, and replace it by another, operate with false consciousness. They also operate with false consciousness upon themselves. These are matters of the social classes, not of the thinking or so-called thinking individuals.⁴

Our concern is not with the individual, but with myth and its relations to ideology. Myths and ideologies are not individual but social, the products of groups, societies and classes of individuals. The ethnologist does not examine an expression as a myth unless it issues forth from a collectivity which has a mythopoeist as its representative. Unless you examine the myths and ideologies in this way, you will merely create a myth of ideology, or an ideology of myth, for the ideology does nothing but what we make it do as the expression of our attitudes, thoughts, and feelings. The myth and the ideology are expressions of groups, societies, and classes of people. They bear upon the worldviews, cognitions and affections of the people in relation to the state under all kinds of historical conditions, theocratic, bureaucratic, and other. If they apply to the state, state bureaucracy and social classes in the modern world of capitalism and the Soviet system, then one should say so. Myths and ideologies, mythic ideologies and ideological myths are in part imaginary and illusory, and in part realistic; in the latter case they represent real conditions of existence more accurately than in the former, or their relation to reality is more transparent. Althusser went far, but he did not go far enough. At the time that he wrote, there was considerable difficulty on the part of certain segments of the European left to examine the existence of social classes in the Soviet Union, and what the historical significance of the question of these social classes might be. The existence of the state was acknowledged, but whereas the state presupposes the social classes and the antagonism between them, this line of thought was not traced as far as the Soviet Union or its homologues in the various parts of the world. The problem of the myths and ideologies which is raised by Althusser avoids the question of the social classes, but proceeds directly to the individual, and then to the state apparatus, without touching on the relation of the social classes to both. However, the social classes have, he avers, their place among the collectivities of the nations and communal organisms, sects, clans and tribes whose expression has been in myth and ideology. The individual takes up the myth or the ideology as a member of the collectivity of the several kinds mentioned. Without the social classes, however, there is no state.

Yet myth has other elements in it than those of ideology, which in turn has other elements in it than those of myths. Yet they have a common origin, and common ground insofar as they retain their original forms, substance and functions or reminiscences thereof, which are expended in civil society in the formation and conflicts of social classes, and political parties, and in the bureaucracies of the state, the religious, economic, and educational spheres. Thus, ideology, both mythic and non-mythic, tends to be closely interwoven with the various forms of social power, such as rest in the institutions and bureaucracies of civil society, which have just been mentioned.

Whereas myth and ideology in the history of civil society are concerned with the various means of representing the fears and joys in the worldview of a given people, on the one hand, and of expressing the relations of social power on the other, they represent them in markedly differing ways. Power of the undifferentiated social group and of particular classes and interests has been examined in the course of this book. We have seen that, on the contrary, the ancient Chinese, Egyptian, Biblical, Roman, Greek and modern myths have been applied in the service of social power, its representation and in protest against its monopoly. Myths and ideologies are both expressions of power, their application in oppression and relief therefrom.

Ideology is taken up chiefly, although not always, as a programmatic expression, whether mediately or immediately, generally or particularly, for civil, political, juridical, or other social action. The ideology of such programs is at present explicit, but this was not always the case in the past. As a rule, we must dig out the ideological expression in past statements of myths, and their representations in stories or in the law. The opening phrases of the *Institutes of Justinian* express the belief in an original state of freedom of all the humankind. The myth of a natural liberty is proclaimed in that initial statement, but is nowhere spelled out, and is in blunt contradiction to later parts of the *Institutes* dealing with the practices of slavery in ancient Rome. Both parts adhere to myths of one kind or another, the one upholding freedom, the other the contrary.

The myth as ideology often represents a justification of the ways of the society to its members. Certain sociologists have gone so far as to hold that their science is a sociodicy, or justification of this kind. If that is the case, then they are evoking not a science but a myth.

In the Chinese, Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Biblical and other traditions, a powerful figure came forth who represented the unity of the social whole. In the Chinese myths, the social unity was already broken up, for the sovereign, the

ministers and bureaucracy were put on one side, and the peasants and artisans on the other; the leader of the artisans was not on their side but on the opposing one; he appears, however, to have gone over to the rebels. In the early Biblical myths, the social unity was not broken up, but later came to be so; the patriarchs were not a ruling class. The ideological expressions of a later time then came to be projected backward onto the earlier. It is the same with the myths of ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome as with the myths of ancient China.

Questions of truth and falsity, of reality and artificiality, have been raised with respect to both myth and ideology. From the myths we have examined we infer that some are naïve, “genuine,” without a quest for harmony or concord among seemingly disparate elements, whether intellectual, rational and aetiological in their content or not. Some are, on the contrary, sophisticated, harmonious, seeking to bring together otherwise antagonistic and discordant features in their form and substance. The romanticists once held that the naïve myth is the genuine one, having no impediment of thought or gray theory.

In the Occidental myth of good and evil, exegetes and moralists seek to explain how it is that God, who is good, can create injustice and wickedness. The explanation is part of the myth. A disharmony is then attributed to the world and is variously accounted for by a secondary hermeneutic. In a corresponding social ideology, moralists, whether secular or religious, explain that in a society of justice and right there is exploitation and oppression, and that this is the way things are; some ideologists then say that this is the way they ought to be, for, whereas there is indeed an alternative, that alternative is even worse.

Myth is by definition and application thereof uncritical; it is naïvely and unintentionally true or false; its truth or falsity is involuntary, whether we are dealing with myths emanating immediately from the people, or with those which are filtered through the writings of the hermeneuts to us.

Ideology has naïve and uncritical elements in it, as the myth in the ideology. The ideology of a people, of a class, a political party, or a religious sect is, in this way, no more false or true, and no less so, than myth. These categories are in fact irrelevant to myth and the judgment of myth, as they are to ideology and the judgment thereof. Yet, the citizen of civil society is confronted with a plurality of ideologies, and overtly or covertly chooses among them, but does not pick and choose among the myths. Ideological expressions have within them a bearing on our experiences, and an unintentional or intentional falsification or justification of the past and present, and visions of the future, as they represent the struggles for power in society; the ideologists use the myths of the society for these

purposes. Myth and ideology neither express nor represent social reality; but we may dig out that reality, our problems and cares, their resolution, where possible, or their frustration, by the interpretation of the social, political, religious, juridical, moral and educational processes, and their representation in myth and ideology. The representational modes are various, as personification, wish fulfillment, utopian dreams of future bliss, dreams of a golden age in the past or apocalyptic vision of impending disaster; there are other representational modes beside these, some of which have been mentioned in the preceding pages. Mythic expressions are traditional, concrete in their representations, and more often than not immediate in their relations of their contents; the ideological expressions may have any or all of these attributes, but are, besides, innovative and non-traditional, abstract as well as concrete, with some elements of social criticism; these are contradictory attributes of the ideologies, not of the myths.

Myths are the data of an internal social process which we assimilate as members of the social whole, or a social group of whatever kind, secular or religious, political or communal. The assimilation is twofold, for we assimilate ourselves to the action, command, story or symbol, personae and poetry of the myth and mythic world, and we assimilate the myth, in its form and substance, to ourselves. It serves in the latter case as a guide in our life's conduct. If we are good and loyal members of society, or social group, we commit ourselves to its myth utterly; if the group is a religious sect, then we believe in its myth with devotion. This is not always the case in respect of the ideologies, for they are not given to us in the same way as the myths. The former are given in an increasingly explicit way in modern bourgeois society; they are present, although usually implicit, in the past expressions of religious, juridical and other myths, and must in almost all cases be interpreted out of them, as we have seen.

An election is a matter of judgment and choice, whether it is based on subjective or objective factors in our lives. We may elect one ideology over another, out of wish to keep things as they are, to change them modestly and cautiously, by reforms, or change them radically. The element of election is a process of civil society in which we live and is applied not only to the choice of one ideology over another, but even to the election of one part of an ideological expression or program, and the rejection of another, as it involves our commitment to it. Our relations to the myth are not matters of election, but of tradition and inheritance, being handed down and imposed on us; or else we commit ourselves to the myth, submit ourselves to it, and impose it on ourselves, as an ideology. In all these cases, we live the myth which expresses and represents our innermost feelings and thoughts, cares, anxieties and hopes.

Ideology as the Activation of the Myth

A myth coming to us from the past tells us that the righteous will be rewarded in heaven, and the wicked will be damned to hell forever, that the poor who work by the sweat of their brow will inherit the earth, and the rich who live without toil will be justly deprived of their wealth and privilege. These simple myths live side by side with the complex myths; they contain an ideological element, whereby we express our resentment of a wrong which has been worked on us. The myth is an instrument for the expression of our resentment. Raven, the Chukchi Trickster is a mythic expression of the just opprobrium of the foreign enemies, ancient and modern. Its ideological representation is the myth in action in society.

The myth is not only complicated by ideology, but may be complicated in itself; thus, machines and technology prior to 1800 in Europe were regarded as the way to our earthly bliss; their partisans so regard them still, but they are to many the means to our certain destruction and are loaded in this sense with our feelings of *Angst* and grim foreboding. The myth of the machine and technics has two sides, as opposed aspects of one and the same myth, which in action and reaction, seeks for a balance between overconfidence and despair. More generally, the utopian glory which will arise from our present action is one side of the ideological myth, the other side of which is a gloomy prophecy of what is to come. The sanguine aspect of this myth advises us that action is better than inaction. Intellectuals, non-intellectuals and anti-intellectuals hold to one side or the other of this ideological myth. But myth is not only active as ideology.

Tertullian, Unamuno and their heirs speak of the absurdity of belief and of life. This is a complex matter enough, which is rendered more complex by the myth that life is meaningless. For the absurd has a preposterous or irrational meaning and is opposed to the meaningless. The absurd and the meaningless are two sides of the same myth, but they are not the same. For if the absurd is irrational, then it is meaningless to reason, but meaningful perhaps to our emotional life; and if life and belief, commitment to the myth and convictions of its meaning are irrational and absurd, then we make and act on it through our feelings, not our reason. If life, belief, commitment and myth are preposterous then they are meaningful if we hold that disorder, chaos and the inchoate are the order of existence. These are all complications of myth and are especially widespread and tenacious at present. The myth of the absurd makes inaction into a form of action, both of the individual and of the group. The myth of the meaninglessness of existence withdraws all significance from life, action, belief, conviction, or commitments to any of these. The myth of the absurd therefore has in actuality

an ideological burden and application, but myths of the meaninglessness of existence have none. Myths of the meaningless conduce to meaningless activity.

We make the myths into ideologies, and complicate them further, as we complicate the simple myths by providing them with an ideological burden and fighting for them in the group. The complex myths are moved by their internal make-up to an ideological and fighting action; the simple myths, such as the myth of the meaninglessness of existence, or the myth of solipsism, are given an ideological burden and an activation in society only as an afterthought, in an external relation to them. But the simple myth of the injustice of poverty is often coupled with other simple myths: that good works are their own reward, that we return evil for evil and good for good, that work is the only way to an equitable and just reward. These myths are made first complicated by their interrelation with one another. They are formulated as mythic moralities and political judgments on the strength of our commitment to them and belief in them; there is no intrinsic truth in them. They are culturally variable, and often, not always, related to a hope that the reward will be vouchsafed unto us for our work on earth, in heaven, or both, on earth as in heaven. These mythic statements are profound in their appeal and have the strongest ideological burden of all others placed on them. The simple myth is made complicated, and thereupon is given an ideological burden, as a subjective spur to social action. The objective side of matters leads away from the realm of ideology and myth.

A myth is in the conception of many modern thinkers a tale of the supernatural, or of a sacred or traditional kind, and is thought to concern the deeds of some non-existent figure who is yet like us. Adam and Eve, Raven the Trickster, Asdiwal, Gilgamesh and Romulus are such mythic figures. Their tales are in this conception rounded, entire, wholes, with a beginning, middle and end. Sometimes these tales are poetic, sometimes prosaic, and sometimes tragic, ending with the death of the mythic figure whose exploits and psychological motives are recounted; but the Winnebagos' myths could not end in a tragic death, for their chief figures were immortals.

This concept of myth is a good one but is inadequate for all the fields of myth. It does not account for a great part of contemporary myth and its uses. For myths are given in some cases as tales, but they are, most importantly, symbols and visions, some glorious, some ill-boding. We have seen that the myth as law and the law as myth are central concepts in any theory of myth. Any particular concept of myth, whether as a tale, as a law, symbol or vision is in some way culture-bound. A tale, as the myth of Creation of the Bible or of the Chukchis or the Greeks, may not serve as a universal model of myth. A general theory of

a cultural phenomenon is false if it is culture-bound. The myth is not false, but a theory of myth which restricts it to a given form is false. Myth is both formed and formless.

Myth is not only a whole as a tale but is above all an aspect of our thought and feeling about the world. It is the uncritical aspect which we express in some symbol, vision, tale, or law, and to which we commit ourselves in the group. Myth is at once the formless uncritical idea or sentiment in an anti-mythic, or non-mythic expression, as a poem, a scientific theory, a holy text or political ideology. The Bible, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and the utopia all have mythic elements in them, as have scientific theories. Indeed, the demythologizing element of the Bible has been pointed out and can be considered to be the beginning of critical, anti-mythic thinking, at least in the West. Another source of anti-mythic thinking is represented by Plato, who made his own myths. Many strands of myth are alive in our forms and varieties of expression, and anti-mythic strands as well. The ancient Chinese, we have seen, had this same inner tension between myth and anti-myth in ideology. One may predict with confidence that the same oppositions will be discovered among other peoples as well. In order to make these discoveries, we begin not with the form or content of myth, but with a sense of what a people, sect or party may uncritically commit itself to.

Notes

- 1 See Georges Sorel. *Reflections on Violence* (1908). Ben Halpern. 'Myth' and 'Ideology' in Modern Usage, *History and Theory*, vol. 1, 1961. George Lichtheim. *The Concept of Ideology*. New York 1967, ch. 1. Ernst Cassirer. *The Myth of the State*. New York 1946. Ernst Bloch. *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*. 3 vols., Frankfurt a. M. 1971 (The Principle of Hope).
- 2 Antonio Gramsci. *Cuaderni del Carcere*. Einaudi 1975. Vol. 1, notebook 5: vol. 3, notebook 13.
- 3 Letter to Franz Mehring, 14 July 1893, Marx Engels *Werke*, vol. 39. Marx and Engels. *Selected Correspondence*, 2nd ed. 1965.
- 4 The question of false consciousness is complicated and Krader has only touched on those aspects here related to his concern with myth and ideology. Marx's critique of and break with the Young Hegelians in the mid-1840s had to do with their theory of false consciousness. In *The German Ideology* in particular, which Marx and Engels wrote for self-clarification leaving it in the drawer to the 'gnawing criticism of the mice' set out the notion that people's consciousness are expressions of and related to their material conditions of life. The Young Hegelians pleaded with people

to exchange their false consciousness for true consciousness. For Marx, people's consciousness was bound up with their true conditions. Approaching an individual languishing in prison who was an artist or composer but who was possessed by a fixed idea of freedom which prevented him or her from creating great art or music, the Young Hegelians would beseech this person to change his or her fixed idea for a different consciousness which might liberate the talent. To which Marx would have replied that the fixed idea of freedom is a function of the incarceration and that if the person is to be restored to vitality the only way to accomplish this is to open the door of the cell and let the individual out. And several decades later in his analysis of the commodity in the first chapter of *Kapital* Marx took pains to argue that the fetishism of commodities was not a matter of false consciousness since in the world of commodities the relations among the producers of commodities appear "as what they really are, material relations between persons, and social relations between things." In the twentieth century the theory of false consciousness was increasingly used to explain away the failure of the working classes in the West to bring about a world revolution. Perhaps this is an illustration of a saying by Goethe of which Marx was particularly fond: *Wo Begriffe fehlen, da stellt ein Wort zur rechten Zeit sich ein*. Where concepts are lacking, a word inserts itself just at the right time.—eds.

References

*Note: Asterisked entries are the editors' references for the introduction and preface.

**The editors regret that some of the references below are incomplete. Krader did not prepare the document for publication and some of the references were lacking publisher and location. The editors tried to remedy this below but not all reference information could be provided, as some of the books were published in different years, editions and publishing houses, and it was not clear in a number of cases with which edition Krader worked. The reader may find the references below helpful in relation to their own relevant research.

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