MYTH AND METAPHOR
An Exploration of the Ground and Principle of Knowing

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1. Introduction

In the Greek heritage of the West, myth or mythos has always been in tension with reason or logos, which signified the rational and analytic modes of arriving at a true account of reality. In general, myth is a narrative that describes and portrays in symbolic language the origin of the basic elements and assumptions of a culture. Mythic narrative relates, for example, how the world began, how human beings and animals were created, and how certain customs, gestures, or forms of human activities originated. As myth is a narrative, many attempts to understand it have focused on its linguistic structure; for example, the meaning of myth is sought in the history and structure of the language itself.

One of the most famous proponents of myth as an example of the historical development of language was Friedrich Max Müller, a German scholar, whose major studies dealt with the religions and myths of India. For him, the mythical world was essentially a world of illusion and fantasy arising from ambiguities of language, signifying a mental defect. This reveals two common presuppositions: that 'right' language must be univocal and that reality must be restricted to that which immediately and tangibly given. "From this point of view," says Cassirer, "all artistic creation becomes a mere imitation ... [and] idealization itself is nothing but subjective misconception and falsification."[1] Recent approaches tend to treat myth more gently:

> ... after being declared a disease of language, a naïve animistic creation, a playful and debasing fancy, a projection of astral phenomena, a verbalization of ritual, or a fantasy related to a

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[1]Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, trans. Suzzanne K. Langer, New York: Dover Publications Inc., republished from Harper & Bros., 1946, 6.

primordial parricide or to the collective unconscious – myth has begun to be understood in a more positive way. That is, myth has been seen either as a sacred story, model, and justification of a meaningful and creative human life; or as the expression of "primitive" but no less valid logical processes.[2]

For Claude Lévi-Strauss, myth represented a special case of linguistic usage, a third level beyond surface narrative and underlying structure. In myth, he discovered certain clusters of relationships that, although expressed in the narrative and dramatic content, obey the systematic order of the language's structure. He contended that the same logical form is at work in all languages and cultures, in scientific works and tribal myths alike. Provisionally, at the simplest level, mythical thought always progresses from the awareness of oppositions toward their resolution: contradictory relationships are identical inasmuch as they are self-contradictory in a similar way.[3] Lévi-Strauss believed that the human mind thinks fundamentally in these oppositions and their unification (the Hegelian thesis, antithesis, synthesis triad), and that these are what make meaning possible. Indeed, for Cassirer, opposition is not discovered in a domain but is seen everywhere as its "roots run deep into the subsoil of perception."[4]

Two orientations may be discerned in theories formulating the relation between myth and knowledge. In the first, myth is examined as an intellectual and logical concern (logos of mythos, that is, mythology). In the second, which is followed in this essay, myth is studied in its imaginative, intuitive meaning – either as a *mode* of perception distinguishable from the rational mode, or as one that *preceded* rational knowledge in human intellectual evolution, thus mythos as the ground of logos.

For Cassirer, the mythical view gives rise to the first manifestation of "symbolic form" in the dawn of human consciousness. "In particular, [symbolic forms] lie at a deeper, autonomous level of spiritual life which then gives rise to the more sophisticated forms by a dialectical developmental process. From mythical thought, religion and art develop;

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[2] Mircea Eliade, "Myth in the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" [online].

[3] Levi Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth" (abridged version), (30 May 2009), http://courses.essex.ac.uk/lt/lt204/strauss.htm [online].

[4] Ernst Cassirer, *The Logic of the Humanities*, trans. Clarence Smith Howe, London: Yale University Press, 1960, 140.

from natural language, theoretical science develops."[5] Usener's "initial and portentous" work is quoted by Cassirer as follows:

> There have been long periods in mental evolution when the human mind was slowly labouring toward thought and conception and was following quite different laws of ideation and speech. Our epistemology will not have any real foundation until philology and mythology have revealed the processes of involuntary and unconscious conception. The chasm between specific perception and general concepts is far greater than our academic notions, and a language which does our thinking for us, lead us to suppose. It is so great that I cannot imagine how it could have been bridged, had not language itself, without man's conscious awareness, prepared and induced the process.[6]

Therefore, "all theoretical cognition takes its departure from a world already preformed by language."[7] This echoes Heidegger's dictum that it is not man who is the master of language but language remains the master of man,[8] while the 'chasm' between the specific and the general recalls Kant's schematism:

> This schematism of our understanding, in its application to appearances and their mere form, is an art concealed in the depths of the human soul, whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover, and to have open to our gaze (A141-2/B 180-1).[9]

In fact, Cassirer expands this 'schematism' into a much more comprehensive dialectical process, with applications in the wider fields of (practical) human life, culture. But how can we explore these depths, this inner dark ground? For it is not merely that it is dark, that is, inaccessible to the light of knowledge, it is, according to Cassirer, the very ground of

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[5]*The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Ernst Cassirer," by Michael Friedman, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/cassirer/.

[6]Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 15-16, quoting Usener, *Götternamen, Versuch einer Lehre von der religiösen Begriffsbildung* (Bonn, 1896), 32.

[7]Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 28.

[8]Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," (25 May 2009), http://mysite.pratt.edu/~arch543p/readings/Heidegger.html.

[9]Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965, 183.

knowledge itself. But Usener advances an intriguing method, as it is summed up in his preface.

> Only through devoted preoccupation with the spiritual traces of vanished times ... can we train ourselves to feel with the past; then gradually sympathetic strains may be set in motion within us so that we find in our own consciousness the threads that link ancient and modern times... It would be a sad case for human knowledge if detailed research ipso facto fettered the mind and prevented it from seeking a synoptic vision. The deeper you delve, the more you may expect to be rewarded by general insight.[10]

Two remarkable points of interest emerge in this short passage. First, the implication that what is not accessible to 'abstract' knowledge could be 'extracted' from the depths by means of *sympathetic feeling*, and second that an increase in depth also results in an increase in width, that is, such feeling is not opposed to abstraction but aids it.

2. In the Beginning

According to Schelling, the meaning of mythology can only be the meaning of the *process* by which it emerges into being.[11] This process is independent of individual thought or will – it is not for the person to accept or reject the explosive and shocking series of representations. Mythological ideas are products of a consciousness subjected to the inmost process as an urgent and compelling new reality.

> It is not at all the things with which man deals in the mythological process by which the consciousness is moved, but rather it is the *powers arising in the interior of consciousness itself*... The contents of the process are not merely *imagined* potencies but rather the *potencies themselves* – which create consciousness and which create nature (because consciousness is only the end of nature) and for this reason are also actual powers. The mythological process does not have to do with natural *objects*, but rather with the pure creating potencies whose original product is consciousness itself.[12]

For Schelling, this emergence of mythology as the first manifestation of human consciousness marks the momentous event whereby the 'absolutely

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[10]Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 21.

[11]F. W. J. Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, trans. Mason Richey and Markus Zisselsberger, New York: State University of New York Press, 2007, 135.

[12]Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 144.

pre-historical' age (evolution as natural history), transitions into the relatively prehistorical (where a plethora of events occurred which were not recorded except in the depths of human consciousness, and orally handed down through the spiritual energies of the Word), and thence into what is known as the historical age. In the transitional middle period where myths flourished and language developed, only language and consciousness commemorate the event recognized through crisis. Eric Gans proposes an "originary hypothesis" for the co-originality of language and human consciousness.

> ... the linguistic sign, unlike all previous modes of information transfer, from the persistence of subatomic structures through the genetic code to the evolution of signal systems among mammals, depends neither on hard-wired connections nor on learned associations but on the memory of a *historically specific* founding event. Animals learn from the past and plan for the future, but only humans experience *events*... If human monogenesis seems uncomfortably close to the biblical creation of man, it is because the biblical narrative expresses, in however unscientific a form, a truth of human origin that science has not yet faced up to: that it must have taken place in and as an event. The origin of the sign is the origin of a new symbolic consciousness, and this consciousness, even in its most rudimentary form, could not have emerged unconsciously... [13]

From now on, the event itself 'exists' only insofar as it is 'captured in a permanent re-presentation in human memory' (in an immaterial form which nevertheless persists, that is, it can be 're-called' if 'forgotten'). Consciousness is no more an unformed chaos of transient impressions. But the first impression of reality, the first self-consciousness awakening of 'I am' with the 'there is' appears to be a *coincidentia oppositorum*: a strange new mode of being, a super-abundant surplus of meaning that is most readily understood by image and symbol.

> The symbol reveals certain aspects of reality – the deepest aspects – which defy any other means of knowledge. Images, symbols and myths... respond to a need to fulfil a function, that of bringing to

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[13]Eric Gans, "The Little Bang: The Early Origin of Language," *Anthropoetics* 5, 1 (Spring/Summer 1999), (4 July 2008), http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0501/gans.htm.

light the most hidden modalities of being. Consequently, the study of them enables us to reach a better understanding of man.[14]

Cassirer also identifies the inmost core (original and universal talent) of the human mind as the power to form images. From this point of conscious human experience, since all thought involves symbolic expression, the symbolic form emerges as the power of the spoken *word*. The use of a person's name calls that person into mental presence: "Whatever has been fixed by a name, henceforth is not only real, but is Reality."[15] Not only names, but all symbolic forms must "first be emancipated from the common matrix of myth," says Cassirer.

> The original bond between the linguistic and the mythico-religious consciousness is primarily expressed in the fact that all verbal structures appear *as also* mythical entities endowed with mythical powers, that the Word, in fact, becomes a sort of primary force, in which all being and doing originate.[16]

Henceforth, the word is the revealer of reality. But this reality is not necessarily exactly analogous to the world of Nature. With the use of words, that is, the human world shifts into the mental plane.

3. Mythos and Logos

Myth cannot be translated, says Northrop Frye, as it is an integral element of literature. "No rendering of myth into conceptual language can serve as a full equivalent of its meaning."[17] If religious thought is considered mythic while scientific thought is the epitome of the abstract, the logical, the differences in usage of the language show that the two 'ways' point to altogether different realities. Eliade demonstrates this in his books.[18] Lonergan also declares that "the world of pure science and metaphysical thinking is somehow very different from the world of poetry and of

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[14]Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols*, trans. Philip Mairet, London: Harvill Press, 1952, 12 & 15.

[15]Enrico Garzilli, *Circles without Center*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972, 42, quoting Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 58.

[16]Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 45.

[17]Garzilli, *Circles without Center*, 45, quoting Northrop Frye, *Fables of Identity*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1063, 32. Here, 'translation' means to restate in literal or scientific language. For Frye, this is not possible, whereas for Levi-Strauss, "the mythical value of the myth is preserved even through the worst translation" (remains non-literal, mythical).

[18]Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans. Willard Trask, New York: Harcourst, Brace & World, 1959, 14.

common sense."[19] The contrast between discursive, abstract, or logical thought and mythic thought is briefly summarized following Cassirer's description.[20]

Abstract and mediated apprehension differs from concrete, pure presentations embodied in the imagination (imagination as a mental presentation of dynamic audio-visual sequence evoking an arousal of intense feelings). The mythic narrative is typical of events of crisis, an upheaval of cosmic significance, uncontrollable and unpredictable. The deliberate rational flow is typical of stable situations: it reflects a controllable and predictable environment.

> Meaning is said to constitutive when it has become stabilized for any given generation. Stabilized meanings are mediated... and become embodied in the culture, institutions and technology... these affirmed meanings constitute reality for most people at that particular time.[21]

Deliberation is achieved by detachment, i.e., "a gradual shift from the direct relation between man and his environment to an indirect relation." Mediation in concept is followed in action by technology which provides 'effective' but potentially disastrous tools. The distance between the human and the environment is continually increased. But is it thinking that creates the language or is it the language that creates thinking and thence the act?

Human tools are regarded logically as products of mental creation, an aspect of mental formulation which for Kant, at least, is 'spontaneous'. Man, as 'enunciator of sentence' occupies a privileged position as judge and creator. In mythic thinking, a tool is never simply 'manufactured' but has its origin in the super-natural – it is a 'gift from above'; so also, language and myth are sensitive responses to spiritual excitement, a witness to the 'Other'.

Abstract thought is sharply analytical, tending to resolve everything into its smallest possible part or functional step. Mythic thought is 'complex' in that it is yet 'unpacked' – its images, therefore, cannot be categorized or understood by general concepts. For mythic consciousness, any and every familiar physical aspect of the environment can take on a

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[19]Lonergan, *Insight*, 547, cited in Garzilli, *Circles without Center*, 44.

[20]Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 56 ff.

[21]Mary Gerhart and Allan Russell, *Metaphoric Process: The Creation of Scientific and Religious Understanding*, Fort Worth, USA: Texan Christian University Press, 1984, 64.

spiritual meaning that is startlingly strange, that can impact itself with extraordinarily intense force so as to arouse the mythic imagination and lift it above common experience.

Abstract thought focuses on 'what' it sees while mythic thought does not focus but directs attention to a 'way' of seeing. It is in this *way* that language 'produces' an organization of reality that makes the positing of attributes possible. Cassirer elaborates this point in detail. Given that "the concept (*notio, conceptus*) is that idea which represents the totality of essential properties,"[22] *how* is it that we so effortlessly recognize 'properties' at all? Properties, qualities, names, nouns, verbs, actions, laws – all these are components of thought that emerge through centuries of cultural training.

Yet, if mythic thought is co-original with language, language with the human mind, and the mind with the 'self',[23] then mythic thought that is, the first symbolic form, is the condition of possibility for abstract thought to develop. But then how is it that abstract thought rejects its own ground?

4. Metaphoric Reality

The same opposition that Levi-Strauss found in the structure of myth is found in metaphor. Lonergan's known-unknown expressing mediation between intellect and affect, image and reality is typical of both myth and metaphor. Thus, myth is the "anticipated and expanded metaphor" and metaphor is the "revised and contracted myth."[24] In general, it is agreed that while religious thought is usually saturated with metaphor (and myth), scientific thought is by no means devoid of it. Indeed, some authors claim that all language is metaphoric at least in origin.

Metaphoric language is provocative and creative – depending on its usage it provokes thought, imagination, and emotion.

> In the case of metaphor, this re-description [of reality] is guided by the interplay between differences and resemblances that gives rise to the tension at the level of the utterance. It is precisely from this tensive apprehension that a new vision of reality springs forth, which ordinary vision resists because it is attached to the ordinary use of

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[22]Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 24.

[23]F. W. J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism (1800)*, trans. P. Heath. Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1978, Part One, Section II.

[24]Bernard J-F. Lonergan, *Insight: A study of human understanding*, London: Longmans & Green, 1957, 545.

words. The eclipse of the objective, manipulatable world thus makes way for the revelation of a new dimension of reality and truth. [25]

Colin Turbayne and Philip Wheelwright stress the importance of metaphor in bringing forth new meanings for words or phrases. They also represent two opposed views on the relation between metaphors and reality. For Turbayne, a person who takes a metaphor in the literal sense has become a 'victim' of metaphor.

> The victim of metaphor accepts one way of sorting or building or allocating the facts as the only way to sort, bundle, or allocate them. The victim not only has a special view of the world but regards it as the only view, or rather, he confuses a special view of the world with the world.

Turbayne emphasizes that metaphor must not be taken literally, that is, it is not the literal truth but a make-believe feature, an 'as-if'. Following this line of thought, MacCormac states: "Myth is the mistaken attribution of reality to a diaphoric metaphor."[26] It is formed when a 'tentative' or 'speculative' or 'hypothetical' explanation is taken to be the 'literal' truth. Obviously, for MacCormac, the only truth is the 'literal truth', that is, what is scientifically proven, while metaphor is the 'as-if' that merely suggests. Is not this a falling victim to *literal* language? or in Turbayne's own words, assuming it as the only view, confusing this view of the world with the world.

Wheelwright emphasizes that reality surpasses every description. The living and dynamic interaction of self with reality can never be captured by words. Thus, through metaphor we become capable of being *intimately* connected, experience the presence of the-other-than-us and we participate with reality in an inexhaustible variety of ways. Two dimensions of metaphor derived from Aristotle's definitions are epiphor – standing for "the outreach and extension of meaning through comparison" – and diaphor – meaning "the creation of a new meaning by juxtaposition or synthesis." Put together, these 'enliven' language so that it, like the reality it depicts (or creates, according to Cassirer), becomes inexhaustible.

Ricoeur brings out a new understanding of sense and of reference, of imagination, and of feeling, in his book, *The Rule of Metaphor* ('Rule' as

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[25]Gabriel Furmuzachi, "On Metaphor" (25 May 2009), http://www.geocities. com/aga_10/3.htm.

[26]Earl R. MacCormac, *Metaphor and Myth in Science and Religion*, Durham, USA: Duke University Press, 1976, 102.

in the living reign). In order to know how metaphors relate to reality we have to find out first to what they refer. A reference is demanded by the intention of the speaker of the sentence, which, according to Frege, is "the striving for truth." For Frege, the reference is communication from the proper name to the entire proposition..., [while] for Benveniste, the reference is communicated from the entire sentence to the word. The two are complementary and reciprocal conceptions of reference, and for Ricouer, this interplay, this two way action is typical metaphor's 'split-reference'.[27] The literal meaning is absurd in metaphor. A new structure is made visible as the metaphor emerges on the ruins of the previous structure to which the remote ideas previously belonged. This double-sense of double reality, says Ricouer, is "cogently exposed in the preambles to fairy tales of various peoples, for instance ... the Majorca storytellers: "*Aixo era y no era*" (it was and it was not)."[28]

Metaphor raises reciprocity from confusion to tension between opposites, and then reconciles opposition. Tension could exist within a (metaphorical) statement, between two interpretations (literal and metaphorical) or as tension between identity and difference in the interplay of resemblance. This tension is inherent in the copula 'is' or the verb 'to be' which "does not distinguish between the relational and the existential," according to Cassirer.[29] This cannot be removed; "it underlines the inescapably paradoxical character surrounding a metaphorical concept of truth."[30]

5. Resolving Opposition by Analysis

"Scientists who wish to formulate new theories that are hypothetical and intelligible almost inevitably must resort to the use of metaphor."[31] New mediation between experience and understanding results in a coherent enlargement of the world of meanings by a new concept. This has been variously termed as discovery, induction, and revelation. In particular, it is a startlingly new perspective on *what has already been accepted and* '*stabilised*', and very frequently involves 'deconstruction' or, indeed, a

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[27]Paul Ricouer, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. Robert Czerny, et al., London: Routledge Classics, First Indian Reprint, 2004, 264 ff.

[28]Ricouer, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 265.

[29]Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 1, ch. 5, cited in Ricouer, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 292-293.

[30]Ricouer, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 302.

[31]MacCormac, *Metaphor and Myth in Science and Religion*, 138.

destruction of the old views. Here, this type of experience is called "limit-experience,"[32] differing in the immediate experience that does not modify understanding. The paradigmatic example is Archimedes' "Eureka!" But such a sudden jump is not the only way by which concepts are formed. Typically for Kant,

> Reflection (*reflexio*) does not concern itself with objects themselves with a view to deriving concepts from them directly, but is that state of mind in which we first set ourselves to discover the subjective conditions under which [alone] we are able to arrive at concepts. It is the consciousness of the relation of given representations to our different sources of knowledge; and only by way of such consciousness can the relation of the sources of knowledge to one another be rightly determined (B316).[33]

This slow, steady, and careful accumulation, with almost imperceptible shifts in alteration of meaning is the necessary prelude and aftermath of the shocking new *way of seeing*, understandably emphasized in science.

There is a surprising *absence of tension* in this description – there is no conflict here in understanding reality, whether at the point of modification or in the periods of consolidation. Analytic detachment appears to have solved the opposition in perception that metaphor so eloquently demonstrates.

> Science is the system of inter-subjectively valid statements. If our interpretation, that physicalistic language is the only inter-subjective language, is correct, it follows that physicalistic language is the language of science... It is also universal, i.e., each of its sentences is translatable; what is untranslatable comes to nothing whatever...[34]

What has been lost by a univocal, fully translatable, codified language is the surplus of meaning inherent in creative imagination. Such a surplus demands interpretation, according to Ricoeur, and "every hermeneutics is,

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[32]Gerhart and Russell, *Metaphoric Process*, 70, quoting David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*, New York: The Seabury Press, 1975, ch. 5, 91-118.

[33]Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 276. Usener's 'sympathetic feeling' by which knowledge is extracted (section 2 above) is also elaborated as 'accord' in Kant's third *Critique* §§9, 27, and 37, in reflective judgment, but in the context of aesthetics only.

[34]Rudolf Carnap, "*Physicalische Sprache als Universalsprache der Wissenschaft,*" *Erkenntnis* 2 (1932), 441 ff., cited in Cassirer, *Logic of the Humanities*, 96.

thus, explicitly or implicitly, self-understanding by means of understanding others."[35]

6. Resolving Opposition by Synthesis

"Poetic feeling itself also develops an experience of reality ... where creation and revelation coincide."[36] Myth and religion have their origin in feeling, and they promote a feeling of solidarity and unity of all forms of life. Feeling is not simply extreme emotion, but is a continuous substratum, a mood or 'state of soul', a way of finding oneself in the midst of reality.[37] Feeling lies at the inmost 'depths' of human consciousness, that is, in mythic consciousness and permeates all awareness.

> The world of myth is a dramatic world – a world of actions, of forces, of conflicting powers... Mythical perception is always impregnated with these emotional qualities. Whatever is seen or felt is surrounded by a special atmosphere – atmosphere of joy or grief, of anguish, of excitement, of exultation or depression... All the efforts of scientific thoughts are directed to the aim of obliterating every trace of this first view ... [but] every feature of our human experience has a claim to reality.[38]

Emotion has also been seen as a 'feminine weakness' (for example, Nietzsche). It is feared because it irrupts suddenly, uncontrollably, unpredictably, and is typically fleeting. Science rightly rejects bias and prejudice. But can these be eliminated by eliminating emotion, and can emotion be eliminated by eliminating the 'subject' from the objective view? There are notions that language has done something similar:

> By giving a 'name' to things by means of 'single words', probably a million and a half years ago..., the Hominid of the Lower Paleolithic began to achieve increasing independence from objects. In accordance with arguments put forward by Bronowski and Bellugi, who claimed that in epigenesis *language carried out the task of restraining and cleansing the content of communication from the emotional pressures of the limbic system, controlling emotive*

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[35]Paul Ricouer, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin, ed. Don Hide, Evanston: NorthWestern University Press, 1974, 17.

[36]Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 291.

[37]Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 271. Ricoeur recalls Heidegger's 'attunement' but does not follow Heidegger's view of being-in-the-world.

[38]Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964, Yale Paperbound, 1968, 76-77.

afferences in order to use them to link past and present experiences...[39]

On the other hand, "To mythical and religious feeling nature becomes one great society, the *society of life.*"[40]

Primitive man's view of nature is neither theoretical nor merely practical; it is sympathetic... A deep conviction of a fundamental and indelible *solidarity of life* bridges over the multiplicity and variety of the single forms. He does not ascribe to himself a unique and privileged place in the scale of nature.[41]

Cassirer heartily endorses Durkheim's view that "Not nature but society is the true model of the myth. All its fundamental motives are projections of man's social life.[42] So also, for Gans, only culture is concerned with human interaction.[43] Human interaction is involvement with the other, a being-with.

The shift is in the 'you'-perspective from the 'it'-perspective of science. This view treats the other as a being (not necessarily living – it is noticeable that *any* and all parts of nature are equally venerated in myth). Moreover, all nature is vibrant with life, spirit. Nature provokes but also responds to human beings, though (or perhaps because?) there is no attempt on either side to control or subordinate the other. There is no rigid 'right' relationship,

... [N]o fixed, self-enclosed 'I', which in association with a similar 'you' seeks to penetrate into its sphere as if from outside... [Both arise] in the meeting point of the reciprocal *transaction*, which consummates itself in speech, in artistic creation... [I]n the beginning is the act... in speech, in artistic creation, in process of thought there is expressed a specific *activity*. And only in this

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[39]Tiziano Telleschi, "Origins of language and of society-culture relationships," in *Becoming Loquens*, B. H. Bichakjian, et al, eds., Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000, 75-100, cited in Eric Gans, "What's New and Old about the Origin of Language (I)" (4 July 2008), http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/views/vw283.htm; emphasis added. 'Afference' stands for the reception by the brain of signals originating in sensory organs, here, the limbic system.

[40]Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, 110.

[41]Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, 82.

[42]Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, 70.

[43]Gans, "The Little Bang" [online].

activity do the 'I' and the 'you' exist with the possibility of simultaneously distinguishing themselves from each other.[44]

The 'natural' relationship between an infant and her family is one of participation, without a clear distinction of the 'I' and the 'you' within the inter-subjective experience. In fact, it is noted that the child and the mother mimic each other in loving delight. Chatterjee quotes extensively from Max Scheler to elaborate this view.

> ... [I]n the beginning we live more in others than in ourselves. This we do, not by the method of intellection which encounters objects over and against it, but by that of "entering into" and participation. The small child "knows" his family in this way, and this is a "knowing" which is at the same time a "feeling." The person, in fact, is only accessible through participation which is "distinct from and in no way based upon perception," and participation can be described as the only way "whereby one essentially spiritual being can enter into the life of another one."[45]

What is gained by this involvement is self-knowledge, self-creation: "the self which is knowing is at the same time affirmed by the other. The love which is knowledge then, discovers both kinship and difference ... *to understand others is to understand ourselves.*"[46]

7. The Principle of Knowing

Eliade describes the sacrality of space, time, nature, history, and human life. For a religious man, space is not homogenous but centred and founded, oriented to the 'point' of its origin where creation began. Time too is not homogenous but repeatable and reversible: "It is ontological, Parmenidean time; it always remains equal to itself, it neither changes nor is exhausted, capable of *being made present by the rite or festival*... Time constitutes man's deepest existential dimension... [For] nonreligious man, temporal rhythms always represent a human experience, in which there is no room for any divine presence."[47]

The utter conviction of the mythic story teller is only matched by his seriousness. Not only is all authority relegated to the sacred Other so that

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[44]Cassirer, *Logic of the Humanities*, 109.

[45]Margaret Chatterjee, *Our Knowledge of Other Selves*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963, 153, Quoting Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, trans. Peter Heath, New York: Archon Books, 1970, 246.

[46]Chatterjee, *Our Knowledge of Other Selves*, 167, 154.

[47]Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 69 ff.

the story is *true*, pointing to a sacred reality that is different yet similar to Nature as we know it; this story has a definite purpose. This is the enactment of the split reality of metaphor by ritual. *"One becomes truly a man only by conforming to the teaching of the myths, that is, by imitating the gods."*[48]

How does one imitate the gods? Aristotle's notion of entelechy was discarded when nature was 'seen' as deterministic and mechanical. Various theories, like Hans Driesch's vitalism, have been completely ignored by science. Nevertheless, evolutionary theories today do demonstrate that every single living cell is capable of 'intelligent' growth and 'intelligent' interaction with its environment in a self-creating, self-organizing *drive*. As Aristotle states, "Each natural organism has within it a desire to do those things necessary to realizing and maintaining its form. This desire is part of the organism's form or nature itself: form is a force in the organism for the realization and maintenance of form."[49] Jonathan Lear describes this driving force in the paradoxical conception of man as driven by his nature to *transcend* his nature. Aristotle is attributing to us a desire, a force, which urges us on toward *knowledge*. "It is in this divine transcendence of his own nature that man fully realizes himself... Man has a desire to understand, which, if satisfied, pulls him right out of human life into a divine existence. God is a principle of heaven and nature: Aristotle calls him *a way of life*."[50]

8. Conclusion

At the point where natural consciousness first becomes self-consciousness, human, the self-creating word, mythos and logos are one. Thus, "the language of the myth and the language of self are identical."[51] The self that is elevated, in this manner, to an intelligence is, therefore, thrown into a perpetual state of expansion and contraction; but this state is precisely that of imaging and producing.[52]

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[48]Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 100.

[49]Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 295, quoting Aristotle's *De Anima* II.4, 415a26-b7.

[50]Lear, *Aristotle*, 9-10, and 297, translating *diagógē* as 'way of life' from *Metaphysics* xii.7, 1072b14.

[51]Garzilli, *Circles without Center*, 39. Here the author makes this statement in the context of speaking of the different approaches to myth (Cassirer, Levi-Strauss, Frye, etc.) that converge at one point.

[52]Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 75.

But the mythical world, most obviously, is a pretence and a make-believe. Any 'explanation' of a myth, whether medieval allegory or modern 'mapping', somehow results in a negation of mythic phenomena. Literal language destroys creativity. Conflict and its resolution appear to be the only way to read myth and metaphor. For Cassirer, creative imagination is the key. The Word has to be conceived in the mythic mode carrying spiritual power before thought itself evolves into an 'ideal instrument', "a fundamental function in the construction and development of spiritual reality."[53]

There are two ways of seeing the same reality, two realities, inner and outer tensions. These are products of self becoming conscious of itself. Tension in perception can be removed by one way of seeing one reality. This occurs in all walks of life, and is not exclusive to the scientist. Excess emotion, even a feeling-with, can lead to mob fury and fanaticism. It is the recognition of the unique worth and dignity of the Other, the 'you-view', that is needed in both thinking and feeling. "The search for man's identity is founded on his oneness and his participation in nature, not on his opposition to it."[54] It is in human societies that humanity develops – the self is affirmed in affirming the other in human relationships.

Opposites (like mythos and logos) cannot be brought together except by an act of the self whereby the self raises itself above opposition, creating a new mode of tension.[55] Such creative acts are typically sympathetic strains that link differences together into a 'synoptic vision'. Neither must be discarded. The clarity, precision, and power of science must be allied with the depth of sympathetic feeling of the humanities to balance justice with mercy and, thus, perfect the human being.

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[53]Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 62.

[54]Garzilli, *Circles without Center*, 46.

[55]For Levi-Strauss, opposition remains: the myth remains a myth as long as it is felt as such, i.e., it includes all its versions whether primitive or modern.