

Henricus Fortmann, "Primitive Man: The Poet and the Believer"

p 21 '... our society is "worlds" away from that of ancient cultures, and not even so much in time as in plain quality.

'... consider how many ways of thinking that were obvious for ancient man have simply become impossible for us. We simply cannot see a goddess in the moon -- and this not only since Lovell's Christmas journey. Nor can we see more than a fairy tale in an Indian story from Colombia which begins like this: "A boy and a girl went into the forest and began to fast in order that they might soon learn the language of the owls." Today if Boy Scouts and Brownies go into the woods to study the life of the owl, they don't have to fast. And while the owl may still always have something mysterious about it for poetical natures because of its wide-open eyes and the soundless beat of its wings, it nevertheless remains an owl and nothing but an owl, a mighty interesting creature, but all the same an object of study.'

p 22 'The decisive factor in this change is that for ancient man the landscape was "animated," both the cover and the revelation of invisible powers which could be called "supernatural" on condition that this word means something different from what it means in Christian theology. In the mind of the ancient peoples the "Supernatural" is "of this world, though invisible, dangerous, or at least incalculable. It shows itself ~~xx~~ when something striking or out of the ordinary disturbs the daily round of events. You have to watch out if a black crow comes swooping down from your left. Whole cultures were based on this kind of "supernatural" manifestation. In establishing its power, the Roman Empire was always guided by augurs and auspices, and in this way generals were instructed how to cope with these capricious numinous powers. There was no need to believe in these numinous ~~xxxx~~ powers, because they daily experienced as a reality. It is true that among the people somewhere more rationally inclined and others more religiously (P R. din), but on the whole ancient society took the "supernatural" very seriously and as a matter of course.'

p 23 'The monotheism of the Bible caused the world of the old religions to crack wide open. The same thing had already happened in the philosophy of the pre-Socratic thinkers. To describe this event we use various words which all come down to the same thing: secularization, demythologization, disenchantment, neutralization. The numinous is no longer the hidden, extraordinary,

unpredictable, and dangerous aspect of ~~things~~ earthly things. It is no longer on "this side" (diesseitig) as the old gods and goddesses were. The divine is above, not within, things. This "Above" must not be understood in space but existentially, as Augustine in his Confessions saw the divine light "above himself:" "Not as oil drifts on top of the water, or as the sky is above the earth: the light was 'above' me because it had made me ~~me~~ and I was below because I was made by the light." (VII x 16)

'When this view penetrates, the earth becomes definitely neutralized; it is secularized. No wonder that doubt begins to surround the divinity itself.... Monotheism and science, turning the world into an object, seem to have deprived man of a vital way of knowledge through which the people of the ancient world saw more in things than the real nature of these things. If there is a God, he is distant, above. The world itself consists of facts, ~~as~~ just as man finds facts in himself.'

'... Yet this process of secularization took a long time to mature. One cannot simply impose a new structure on the human consciousness. The old norms and standards persisted for a long time. The gods were replaced by miracle-working saints; holy wells and holy wounds gave rise to places of pilgrimage, and to this day astrology still holds its own.'

p 24 'Obviously, these saints were not to be called gods. Both Rome and the Reformation objected to that. Nevertheless ~~the~~ the history of Catholic Christianity is one vast effort to keep the distant God in the vicinity. The simple people did that in the way ~~of~~ the ~~the~~ great ones ~~did~~ among the pagans did it. In the northern countries we may say that by now this effort has been broken. From Erasmus and the philosophers ~~of~~ of the ~~Enlightenment~~ Enlightenment onward this archaic mentality suffered one defeat after another. The Bible (in its essence), the Church leaders (in their more enlightened moments, and science were at one on this ~~point~~ point: this can no longer go on.'

Yet I remain stuck with the problem of Lovell and his edifying story (Gen I) and with Augustine who saw the divine light.... Is there some intolerable dissonance when a scientist comes home in the evening, forgets his formulas and microscopes, and ~~reaches~~ reaches /25/ for an anthology of poetry? Our knowledge proceeds

