

Louis Dupré, The Other Dimension. A Search for the Meaning of Religious Attitudes, Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1972.

Chapter 6. The Myth and its Survival.

1. The Myth and its Truth (243)

243: "The relation between religious symbol and myth cannot be defined in a single statement."

BL ie it has to be constructed out of a number of elements isolated from their current context and put together to constitute another archaic context.

244: "... Dr Jane Harrison (Themis p 328) bluntly asserted: 'A mythos to the Greek was primarily just a thing spoken, uttered by the mouth. Its antithesis or better correlative is the thing done, enacted, the ergon or work.'

"... the mythos is the spoken accompaniment of the acted rite."

"Its function is not to explain... but to provide the plot of the dromenon, of the ritual action."

245: "The myth introduces a new stage of consciousness: it makes reflective what before was only lived. Yet this first and most basic awareness of inner life is not the reflection of science or philosophy or even of what we now call ordinary language. The myth does not fully objectivate. It still participates so much in the lived reality that its meaning must be felt rather than rationally understood."

Cf. Augustine lamenting the irrationality, the eclipse of reason, deliberation, in coitus.

245: "Although its forms are fully conscious, the form-giving roots are buried deep in subconscious soil. The interest which psychoanalysis has long taken in these subterranean roots is slowly beginning to yield results."

246: "Whether they accept the theory of the collective unconscious or not, most analysts today regard the myth as the community's most powerful means to adapt the individual to life in a particular group with a particular culture."

"... What makes the technique so effective is the powerful motive force of the childhood instinctual wish... which comes from identification with the hero and the myth."

247: "Psychoanalytic interpretations have mainly emphasized the myth's reference to the past... But the myth's connection with the future is equally important. A hint of it may be found in Freud's thesis that the myth expresses repressed wishes. Yet more than a wish, the myth is a vision of what is to come."

BL: cf Binswanger.

248 f: Lévi-Strauss

249: "All functions of the mind are united in this first articulated reflection: the logical and the practical, but also the religious and the artistic."

250: "... the myth is a unique form of reflection... It is a different way of thinking because it is a different stage of the reflective consciousness. In the beautiful expression of Georges Gusdorf, the myth is 'une pensée avant la réflexion, avant la médiation, encore inhérente à l'action instinctive.' There is a certain truth, then, in the myth for which critical reflection can never substitute because it possesses a unique value in itself. Whether this truth will be able to survive critical reflection is another problem, but one can certainly not be replaced by the other."

250: "The mythical mentality does not distinguish the self from the world in a subject-object opposition.. It unites both in a highly personalized vision.... 251 / Natural phenomena are used to explain personal conditions, and social relations, in turn, explain the world of natural phenomena. A mythical explanation is always a full emotional response to a problem which is never regarded as purely theoretical." Hence:

251 "'The mythical explanation.. is more emotional than rational and works not by describing cause and effect, but by associating one kind of experience with another and suggesting a connection or similarity between them.'

"Actually the mythical mind is familiar with ~~causality~~ the principle of causality. Yet, it does not attempt to isolate a single factor as condition of the entire process but connects all empirical data in a largely emotional association. Thus,

as Cassirer wrote, anything can

as Cassirer wrote, anything can come from anything 'because anything can stand in temporal or spatial contact with anything.

"Still the term causality with its purely theoretical connotation~~x~~ is misleading. For the problems to which the myth responds are mainly existential situations which interrupt the smooth course of archaic man's exchange with nature. Birth, adolescence, marriage, and death confront him with realities which he must in some way justify to himself. Such a situation differs essentially from that of a scientific or philosophical problem. Contrary to the scientific mentality, for the mythical mind life after death is not as much a problem as death itself. That a person goes on living once he is alive seems normal enough. That life comes to an end is what requires justification. The existential challenges to which the myth responds are genuine, and modern man deludes himself when he thinks ~~he~~ he has overcome them through scientific answers. The scientific insight that organic bodies must eventually ^e decay offers no answer /252/ to the question why life is such that it should decay. In the myth we move on the fringes of the weightiest metaphysical problems. Yet the myth itself is not metaphysical, for its primary orientation is not theoretical but existential-practical."

252 "(Malinowski): 'The subjects developed in these myths are clear enough in themselves: there is no need to 'explain' them, ~~x~~ and the myth does not even partially perform this function. What it actually does is to transform an emotionally overwhelming foreboding, behind which, even for a native, there lurks the idea of an inevitably and ruthless fatality.'

252 not merely social function "The myth sets up a model for existence in its entirety. It aims primarily at ~~re~~ restoring the ~~pr~~ primeval wholeness which man has lost ~~ing~~ through reflection. Yet such a restoration requires that man first clearly formulate the disjunction which he must ~~over~~ overcome."

BL: Meaning ~~x~~ is constitutive of human living. The myth complements the symbol and the two interact in the archaic

stage of man's effort to constitute his living through meaning. So the myth not merely looks back to a primary undifferentiation but also forward to a fuller differentiation.

253 "The myth posits time only to abolish it immediately. It relates the present to a mythical past, yet the ultimate purpose of this relation is not to insert it into the succession of time but rather to overcome the flux of temporality altogether. For the mythical past is no ordinary moment of succession: it is the totality itself, the wholeness from which the present has become separated. It introduces stability by reducing a questionable situation to one which requires no further questioning. The beginning itself requires no further foundation: it is creative while all that follows is imitative. The mythical past abolishes the present as well as other temporal moments. Yet in another sense it provides its ultimate foundation. For it justifies the present structures of reality by giving them a timeless permanence. Connecting actions and events with the timeless acts of the beginning, man recaptures the initial creativity from which they originated. In paradigmatic gesture and myth he is reunited with the primeval 254/ events. Mircea Eliade emphasizes again and again that ritual gestures are never commemorative but always foundational."

BL "justifies" cf.

S. J. Tambiah, "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts: A Point of view," in Horton and Finnegan, Modes of Thought, London: Faber and Faber, 1973.

BL "foundational"

cf above p. 251 on archaic apprehension of causality, i.e., intelligibility which down the ages has had many conceptualizations.

254: "Part of the foundational process undoubtedly consists in the theoretical justification of the present, and this aspect will be later replaced by causal explanations. But this 'gnostic' element, which loses its significance in a postmythical age, remains a subordinate to a more basic existential need for structures."

BL existential need for constituting human living through meaning

254 "Most primitive myths do not even mention the sacred. But in opposing the archetypal structure of the beginning to the pure temporality of the present, the myth in fact divides the real into a sacred and a profane sphere. For what we term sacred is originally nothing more than what is regarded as more truly real because it is whole and self-founded, while the profane happens only now and is therefore purely contingent.

255/ 'This trait of isolation, this character of the egregious, is essential to every content of mythical consciousness as such... it is/the characteristic transcendence which links the contents of the mythical and the religious consciousness.' quoting Cassirer, Symbolic Forms, II 74.

255 "The sacred is constituted when man considers one kind of reality π so far superior that all others become real only to the extent that they participate in it. The sacred reality reconciles the conflicting elements of ordinary reality by integrating them all into a higher organic unity. The myth is the mind's first and most powerful instrument of existential integration. It is in the myth that we become aware of the tremendous power of the sacred to unite contraries."

256 "The foundation of the world is the foundation of the ordered, inhabited universe -- the only one that matters -- not of the entire physical universe. But this is an ever expanding event: whenever new territory is occupied the world is founded again. The π center of the world itself becomes a movable concept. Every epiphany makes the space in which it occurs into the center of the world."

2. The Survival of Myth

257 "Can man continue to believe in myth once he becomes aware of its existence as myth?"

Opinions: Herder & Heyne Hermann Hegel Schelling Bultmann

258 "The archaic mentality, in which mythical reflection determines all spheres of consciousness and leaves no room for nonmythical ways of thinking, belongs definitively to the past."

such is the unbroken nature of the archaic myth

"This nature changes basically when other ~~myths~~ reflective attitudes ~~are~~ appear. At that moment the original myth becomes fragmented over a number of separate areas. Part of it continues to exist in all of them, but in a modified form."

259 "Yet the presence of mythical elements is undeniable (ie in Spinoza, Darwin, Marx, Freud). They have been called transcendence models because, like myths, they transcend all available evidence, project the future, and escape the present."

"As a rule rational man is very reluctant to accept the presence of mythical elements in his thinking... Yet the more he attempts to lock out the myth, the more he drives it underground where it will do its work subconsciously." Cassirer, The Myth of the State, New Haven Yale UP 1946 (150 years in Germany; ultimately eclipses reason)

260 Marx

261 Aesthetic goal distinct from mythic to 265

3. The Religious Survival of the Myth

266 "The first fact to recognize is that myth as such may ~~not~~ not be considered the earliest expression of 'religion.' Cassirer is right: the myth as such is not religious at all. To become religious it must undergo substantial changes. Nevertheless, the mythical consciousness results in the religious consciousness by an intrinsic dialectic. The myth is the birth-place of the gods: it initiates a movement toward transcendence which is completed and clarified in formal religion."

"The 'other' reality of the myth remains essentially a part of nature, without achieving full transcendence. Only

/266/ a further development can make it into ^{the} different realm of being to which man attributes the name sacred.

267 Quoting Georges Gusdorf, Mythe et métaphysique, Paris 1953 p 148

'The reflective consciousness elaborates the primitive experience of the sacred and thus gives rise to religion... For the primitive consciousness the relation between man and the deity is one of implication, of participation. The reflective consciousness takes its distance: it divinizes the gods and humanizes men. Henceforth man asserts his presence before God and this relation of exteriority corresponds here to an affirmation of divine transcendence.'

266/7 "Yet it is // the myth itself which initiates the dynamism that leads ~~from~~ the mind beyond the mythical. In the religious consciousness alone are the gods fully separated from the men."

268 Comparison between Israel (myth to religious development) and Greece (myth to scientific development).

BL Cf Horton & Finnegan, Japanese from literature to cult of feeling, Greek from literature to science.

269 Israelite "mythistory"; cf Voegelin IV.

270/1 "The myth substantially changes when it comes to serve an exclusively religious purpose. Within the archaic mentality the term/"religious myth" has no definable meaning, yet once the myth is assumed within a religious perspective it becomes restricted to one of the many functions which it fulfilled in the primitive consciousness: [ie] to distinguish the sacred from the profane."

269-272 Various aspects of the question, Does the "mythical" survive? Israelite and Xtian history. Bultmann.

272/3 "Cassirer, who strongly emphasizes the distinction between the religious and the mythical, / describes the decisive moment in which the myth "breaks" and the religious attitude emerges. When the dancer realizes that he is not the god whose nature he assumes, but only represents him, we have left the ~~m~~ purely mythical mentality.

'It is this separation that constitutes the actual beginning of the specifically religious consciousness... Religion takes the decisive step that is essentially alien to myth:

in its use of sensuous images and signs it recognizes them as such -- a means of expression which, though they reveal a determinate meaning, must necessarily remain inadequate to it, which "presents" to this meaning but never wholly exhaust it.' Symbolic Forms II 238-39.

The original distinction between the sacred and the profane must inevitably result in a distinction between two realms of being, which the myth cannot fully express. All this seems grist for the demythologizer's mill."

273 Undoubtedly some aspects the myth cannot survive their recognition by the religious, philosophical or scientific mind. (Space time causality; lack of negativity in transcendence) The myth possesses two qualities which make it irreplaceable for the religious symbolization process. One is a capacity to reflect, without objectifying the reality upon which it reflects. Earlier we saw that all religious symbols are reflective as well as nonobjective. We now may add that outside the myth such symbols cannot be formed and, once they exist, cannot be understood. This quality of the myth is but a result of its unique ability to reconcile and integrate opposed facets of ~~existence~~ existence. [274] The religious mind does the same though in a different way. In one sense its scope is less ambitious than that of the mythical mind since it grants the partial integrations of science, art, and philosophy a relative autonomy, reserving to itself only the ^multimate one. In another sense however the religious integration surpasses the mythical one since it posits a reality beyond the ordinary realm of life and yet manages to bring man's entire existence within its compass by cult, prayer, and religious reflection. The only language ~~available~~ available to express this kind of total integration is that of myth and poetry."

BL Also the language of philosophy as transcendental method which speaks of all differentiations of consciousness and in any of the differentiations on ~~the~~ the basis of the methodologist's ability to enter into anyone and to shift from any one into any other. After all Dupre's speech and writing is neither myth nor poetry. But it is about them. And it can be about them because he has entered into each and then reflected upon them,

274 "Religion... continues to need the symbolic expression which only the myth provides."

BP The exercise of religion (reciting the Our Father who art in heaven...) continues to need it. Reflection on religion is reflection ~~of~~ one's own previous experience and its need of the myth is not immediate but mediated.

274/5 "... one might wonder whether faith, once it is established, still needs the actual myths. My answer would be affirmative, at least in the case of a historical religion, because the myth introduces ~~N~~ an indispensable awareness of time /275/ which the historical consciousness cannot provide. Faith reaches for a beginning and an end which fall entirely beyond the scope of history. Any attempt to integrate the beginning and the end with the rest of history is bound to be mythical. Moreover as we shall see in the chapter on religious alienation ~~xxx~~ symbols such as the fall and redemption are inherently temporal, yet inaccessible to history as the recording and analysis of human phenomena. In all such cases religious man has nowhere to turn but to the myth."

BL "... is bound to be mythical" "has no where to turn but to the myth"

Without transcendental method, C. With it, N.

275 "Could we not remythologize religious faith and thus have new myths instead of outdated ones? Indeed, mythical renewal is a constantly ongoing process, whether religious man is aware of it or not. New myths emerge and old ones are remodeled. But mythical renewal cannot be commanded or controlled. A myth has no author: it grows out of the life of the community. No theologian or philosopher possesses the right or the ability to remodel myths on his own, apart from the religious community. Moreover, remythologizing is particularly hazardous when the old myth is part of a privileged, "revealed" founding tradition.... If outmoded myths belong to the original authoritative expression they must be retained....

'Foundations are given once ~~and for all~~ for all; they cannot be replaced. Christianity as a historical ~~revelation~~ revelation must