

Questions for Myth & Theology Seminar 10/16/75

1. Given people who uncritically accept the meanings which constitute their culture, i.e., who do not realize the extent to which they rely on beliefs: do these beliefs function as myth?
2. Can one be said to be living according to myth even after the myth is criticized and accepted as true?
3. Can we still speak of myth once we have viewed it critically?
- 4a. Can you replace one myth with another, i.e., realize a former myth does not correspond now to your belief and accept another myth?
- b. Must we replace one myth with another, i.e., can we ever know truth or do we only move from one (eventually to be found inadequate) view to another?

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Key terms: 1) myth, 2) belief, 3) truth, 4) criticism, 5) advance

Problem: ambiguities (myth, truth), misconceptions (belief, advance)

Procedure: begin from ambiguities, misconceptions, that keep recurring; gradually clear the field; not operate most of the time in the darkness of the ambiguities, misconceptions, with most of the clarification delayed to the end.

Advance:

cognitively, advance is advance in understanding

data of sense, consciousness, are what is to be understood  
concepts, hypotheses, theories, systems: statements of what has  
been grasped by understanding

checking, weighing the evidence, judging: accepting (rejecting)  
as true, probable, what has been grasped by understanding.

existentially, advance is conversion, religious moral intellectual

conversion: a transformation of horizon, world, Umgreifendes

intellectual: higher synthesis of both world of immediacy  
and world mediated by meaning: each its own criteria, field of  
relevance, adequacy

moral: praise and blame on criteria of value rather than satis-  
factions

religious: Hebraic-Christian: effectiveness of Deut 6, 4 f.;

Mk 12 29 f.; cf. Rom 5 5.

Advance twofold:

From below upwards: from experience through understanding to true  
judgements

From above downwards: from religious through moral to intellectual  
conversion

The nature of advance:

From below upwards:

originally: perplexity, puzzlement, plus sustained effort to  
understand, plus good luck (Archimedes, Newton)

derivatively: communication and belief

communication (positively: teaching; negatively, criticism of  
previous views especially when great resistance to learning)

From above downwards:

the religious or moral or intellectual leader

ordinarily: first God's grace; then moral enlightenment and

actual practice; finally intellectual (Xtians after Nicea)

In both cases

{effectively, not in principle  
(exerceite, not signate)

the originator is the individual

the carrier is the community

the relevant community is the total community, the human race:

in its many tribes, nations, peoples

gradually accumulating knowledge, wisdom

millennia needed for significant advance (ox and plough: 3000 BC;

industrial revolution 1700 AD)

accumulation beyond grasp of any individual (today even specialists

in math phys chem biol know all of math or of phys or of chem)

1. Do beliefs, of which one is not aware as beliefs, function as myth?

"Myth" used in various manners, senses; so too beliefs.

Engineer, needs to calculate a quantity, whips out his slide-rule, performs a few operations, writes x down the answer.

Slide-rules depend on logarithmic and trigonometric tables; such tables can be worked out with great labor from first principles (exponential series, cos series, sine series, calculate for successive values of 'x')

Most engineers have never worked out such tables: they grasp the x general principles; they know why the slide rulex works; they can use it properly and correctly. But they do not possess immanently generated knowledge of the truth of the tables. That they believe, on excellent grounds, but still they believe it they do not properly know it.

Similarly most engineers do not calibrate theix markings on their slide rules against the accepted tables. That correspondence they believe.

#### Maps

Newman. England is an island? Are you certain? Have you walked around the shore line? Have you circumnavigated it? Have you ever met anyone who did? If you did, have you any grounds for asserting him really to know, to speak truthfully, to speak accurately?

In brief, you believe and the people you believe believe other people, and so on xx indefinitely?

Is true belief myth? Simply because it is belief?

Does true belief become myth in subjects unaware that they are x believing? Exercite signate; vecu thématique; lived said

Eighteenth centxury enlightenment thought x existing tradition evil, to be eliminated; attacked belief in general; generated illusion about human knowledge.

98% of what a genius knows is belief or entwined xix insepably with beliefs.

Beliefs

2

Huxman advance consists in accumulating common fund of  
knowledge and wisdom  
to which each contributes according to his ability  
on which anyone may draw according to his diligence

Belief in general is good: alternative to perpetual primitivism  
believing this or that person, proposition: prudent checking  
accepting one's cultural tradition;  
until found wrong  
when found wrong on ~~k~~ this or that point, then ferret out  
related errors

Insight 703-718

Method 41-47 of Indexx

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Relativism

Natural science: known to be no more than probable  
condition of possibility of its advance

Hestroy hermentutics: of Methoda chapters 7-10

Philosophic: transcendental argument

Common sense: invulnerable insight

### Myth

1. Very early form of reflection: narrative, saying what is being done prior to distinction by opposition of sacred-profane (Dupré)  
mode of ~~an~~ expressing, managing, feelings (Carl Rogers)
2. Interaction of symbolic gesture, rite, and narrative  
survival of this, these, in later differentiated consciousness  
function of inner communication: psyche, mind, heart (Method 66 f)  
Vergote: Our Father who art in heaven
3. Affect-laden meaningful structures  
Clifford GEERTZ, The Balinese Cockfight
4. Substitute in differentiated consciousness: art
5. Deliberate constructions to meet legitimate demands of feeling, Plato's evocation of transcendental feeling
6. Pejorative usage to name opinions, attitudes, which one wishes to stigmatize as mistaken backward

### The truth of the myth

A vehicle expressing authentic subjectivity: the truth of existence

### The falsity of myth

- a) A vehicle expressing unauthentic existence
- b) Backward world-view associated with either truth or falsity of the myth

### Correction of myth by myth

Survival of mythic elements in OT and NT a matter of conveying religious truth by repeating myth in a corrected form compatible with religious convictions