

Myten och Människan

Questions:

* What is the myth? How does it work? What is its purpose?

To find out we will begin in the stone age.

* This is just a short exposé, not an exact scientific lecture so in lack of time we must generalise and paint with the big brush.

* We will begin with the theme that we during these days have been working with. The hunter and the hunted game.

* The start of an mythology, when homo sapiens became homo necans, the killing man. The hunter, the meeting with the necessity of death and the scarify of an animal to get food, to get life.

* The separation between holy and profane that we have today was probably not understandable for the stone age people, they did not divide the world and their surroundings into religious and profane. Of course did they understood that some things had to be done in a very practical and pragmatic way. The hunters knew that weapons and organisation of the hunt most develop and become efficient and for that they used their logos.

* What then is logos? The myths and the holy stories could not in them self make the hunt and the strive for survival more efficient you had also to work in a very practical way to take the animal from the forest and make an nutritious meal out of it. Logos is that. To develop the material and action into something better. It can be translated from greek in various way, law, word, invention, structure or development.

* The mythos was the opposite, it helped the people to deal with the fact that they have to kill one of the holy animal, since everything in the stone age world was holy the animals also represented something bigger, a bigger principle. The myths and religious act help the people to understand the necessity of killing and death, not only with the animals but also with them selves, to understand their own death and why it was so absolute.

* A stone for the people who lived during this epoch was a symbol of something strong, solid and sturdy. A three was a symbol for another principle that separated it from the human kind. They where mighty and remembered the humans of a stronger and holier reality who was hidden from the eye but anyway could be experienced.

* As the leader of the tribe, the chief where leading his or her people in this world, the shaman or the wizard where leading the tribe in the unseen world. Like the hunter the shaman also had to leave the tribe to go out on a hazardous quest to confront the death. Everyone had to stare death

in the face if they had to contribute to the survival of the tribe. To know life you must confront death, or as Nietzsche, the famous 1900- century philosopher put it, a three that want to reach the sky must have its roots deep in hell.

* Everyone had to be initiated in the mysteries of death before they could be accepted as adults in the tribe both hunters and shamans. Therefore the stone age society hade advanced initiation rites for their members. The rites probably took place during the great changes of life, birth, adulthood, marriage and death. During this rites the individual took share of the most holy stories of the tribe and a ritualised death and rebirth took place to symbolise the over going from one state to another and when the real death occurred it was seen as an over going to another world.

* The shaman also had his different initiations. He or she had to travel up the three of life or the pillar of life, the axis mundi, världsaxeln.

*The shaman also had to go into the deepest darkness and death before he could reach the light or enlightenment if we want to use a fitting word. He there took care of the tribes contact with the unseen world or the gods.

* A common view of the world was that there been a stronger and much more holy world before this one that slowly disappeared for one or another reason. It was often referred to as a sort of paradise or ideal reality that you longed back to. This state or time is maybe best known among the aboriginals where its called Dreamtime. The paradise or perfect state is still alive in most of the today existing religions.

* The parts when Jesus or Muhammed or any other enlightened character in the myths flies into the sky it is also probably an old remain of when the shaman reaches new and higher levels on his journey on the three of the world or the tree of knowledge if you prefer a more biblical connotation.

* As I said earlier everything was holy and meant something in the stone age world, the rocks the threes and the rivers, of course the sky was a mighty symbol for the humans then as it is today. The sky symbolised the structure of the world, the creation. Sometime during this age we don't know when, the sky or heaven turned into a personification and the sky became symbolised as a creator god or a high god. The creator of everything probably because the concept of this divine principia in the sky was to abstract understand.

* How about the woman then. It has been a lot now about the hunter and the holy shaman and they where probably men. But the women also existed in the tribe. The women most probably where taking care of the place where the tribe lived she was the mother and the caretaker of the home. The men had to support her with meat so that she could secure the tribes survival by giving birth to new humans. Hence the great mother demanded great sacrifices of both animals and hunters to give life to earth and making it a place where humans could live. Therefore the symbol of the great mother appeared, a goddess that was both terrifying and absolutely necessary

for the tribes survival. But yet she was in the background, her time would come when the hunters settled down as farmers.

* The principles of the necessities of death still lives on in our fairytales or sagas. Often the hero have to leave his home or village because the state of things is unbearable or he and the society misses something essential. He leaves on a long quest from which he never may come back. On that journey he meets and confronts death. And when he returns he brings the vital knowledge or artefact back to his people. But to do this he must first sacrifice everything he holds dear. This arc type story is told and retold in many forms and has probably been so since mankind started to communicate. One of the most resent of this story is of course Aragorns journey in the film, Lord of the rings.

* This story again reflects the way the stone age hunters lived. So then back to our starting questions.

* What is the myth? The story of the myth is unlike history, a historical true event, that have taking place in a certain time and in a certain place, in contrary it is a symbolical event that keeps happening again and again.

* How does it work? The myth is like an early form of psychology, if its work it gives hope and bids us to live a more full and understanding life. It reflects a archetype world in which we mirror our own, a world in which we only intuitive know, a longing where our dreams or origin dwells.

*What is its purpose? The myth is a way of dealing with the hard questions of life, from where do we come, Where are we going, from where do the enlightened moments occur that we only can experience in brief moments. Questions that the science or logos cannot answer. The myth helps us dealing with the fact that we once must die, to think and experience the things that we cannot put in words. It also must change with time, to be told and retold again, if it not talks to the people that are living in this time and dealing with the new conditions the myth is dead and cannot help us.

The agricultural revolution.

* Around 10 000 b.c.t. the hunters and gatherers in middle east started to plant cereal and herd goats, this developed during following decades towards fully functionalised farms and keeping of livestock.

* Farming is a product of logos, a way to rationalise your life to secure the meat, milk and bread supply. The game is already captured, and the grain is already gathered, so you save time to build on your comfort and surrounding.

* The putting of seed into the ground and the importance to be able to feed your stock was giving the people new ways of looking at their mythology.

* The unification between the rain from the sky and the fertility of the earth became essential. The sexlife between man and women and between the father of the heaven and mother earth now became object for worship.

* The awe for the creator god in heaven became combined with the worship of the great mother, who was mixed with the old terrifying goddess of the hunting society. The giver of life became a goddess both feared and loved.

* The labours of agriculture changed the mythology. To cut and plough, to grind and burn were daily labour for the farmer. To violate the earth and what grows on it was a chore additional to killing the animals.

*Everything must be violated to be improved.

*Now the great mother goddess starts to show in the mythology. A violent goddess who grinds and hacks her lovers before they can return with the other growing things.

* An example of the torments in farming is described in the bible, first book of Moses 3.17 Notice also how the labours in farming is a punishment and a degenerated form of living in paradise.

*The great mother now becomes a heroin in the stories, the men is often weak and slaves in her presens. It is she who goes out in the world to face death and returns with life and food to mankind. Reed about the goddess Anat. Prekaaneic myth, page 48.

Cities and beginning of civilisation.

- * Around 4000 b.c.t man started to build cities, the first ones appeared in Mesopotamia in the middle east. The cities of Ur and Catal Huyuk in Turkey is two of the earliest examples.
- * In the process of building cities a specialai of different handcraft and works soon appeared, an administration had to be created to control all the commerce an infrastructure of the cities.
- * One of the first invention in the area of administration and religion in the cities was the art of writing, Kilskrift in Mesopotamia and Hieroglyphs in Egypt.
- * Building a city like building farm demands that you violate the earth and then to maintain the city you must tear down old buildings and raise new ones, a big and hard work.
- * More new events started also to appear in the cities, riots, revolutions, war between the cities and deportations. These things were not totally new things but they were performed in a much more larger scale then ever before.
- * There is not by coincidence the first founder of a city in the Bible is Cain, also the first murderer.
- * The cities in the middle east also inspired the biblical authors to tell the story of Babels tower and the vain of man. (tell the story, första mosebok 11)
- * Of course the habitats of the cities in Mesopotamia look at their cities in another way then the Hebrews, They saw it from another angle, the city was the highest form of civilisation, the builders and craftsmen where fulfilling the will of the gods and the crown of this fulfilment was the ziggurat, the giant temple, a massive pyramid made out of bricks. On the top of the ziggurat lay the temple.
- * The ziggurat replaced the mountain as a holy elevated place. Man still saw their world as an reflection of the world of gods, and now they had brought order into chaos. The cities was a part of divine creation.
- * The preaching in the temple and the holy myths still worked as a form of therapy for the people but the message have changed.
- * The world was created out of chaos. Old gods were sacrificed for the benefit of other, newer better gods and in every creation there is a sacrifice. In the end the divine city emerges the top of the creation, as in the name Babylon, bab ilani the gate of gods.
- * Now we also se a new phenomena, before the cities the mythologies often evolved around the world an the gods, now the humans starts to intervene. Before the gods cared less about what

happened in the world of humans and the line of time we call history. But in the epos of Gilgamesh we can se how that is changing.

Gilgamesh, probably the fifth king of the city of Uruk, a historical person an hero. Lived around 2600 b.c.e

Wild king
Enkidu as challenge
Wild live with animals
Whore Shammat
Enkidu and Gilgamesh as friends adventures
Meeting Ishtar the goddess
Rejecting her, revolution telling her about her dead lovers
Enkidu dies
Gilgamesh grieves
Goes on shamanic quest for eternal life
Utnapishtim
Comes back with new knowledge about death, not thru gods but thru himself unlike Utnapishtim.

* But when the cities became more and more efficient when law and order where implemented, the gods in the mythology became more and more distant and seemed indifferent against mankind.

* Now an emptiness appeared, a spiritual void that much later would lead to a religious renessains.

Axialåldern.

* A lack, disappointment occurs in the cities, rituals and ceremonies feels empty. Great sacrifices to the mighty gods don't comfort the people any longer.

* New movements in all of the world, prophets and philosophers are start to talk about the moral and ethics in life.

Conciseness and respect to your neighbour is now spreading within the religious sphere, Confucius is the first to formulate the strophe, "Do not do to others what you don't want them to do to you" but many would follow.

* Buddha in India, the biblical prophets in Israel and Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in Greece. And of course later Jesus

* We are now talking about 700-400 b.c.e.

* We can clearly see it in the Bible, where the old Jahve or El Elohim whose is his name. The early writers describe him almost as a human, he sits down with Abraham and speaks, but later, in the writings from this age he is described as a mighty wind or lightning who scares the other part and makes him tremble or fall in to chock.

*The myths now starts to carry a ethical message.

* An awareness of the suffering in the civilisation starts to show itselfs in the myths.

* The individual becomes more and more important, it started with Gilgamesh but know continues, hard exercises in askes, yoga and meditation becomes important. Focus on the personal discipline, the law of karma.

*More focus on the soul, not the strict and regulated rituals of old times.

* But Confucius knew that all this cannot be fulfilled with strict logos or rational thinking, a special medicine had to be blended, Music, ritual, and thinking where different ingredients in this new form of religious life.

* When you put this new learning beside each other you also see that they have different ways of looking at the old rituals.

*Buddha was willing to use the old myths to make people understand and reflect the new teachings. The prophets of the bible, Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, made a radical reinterpretation of the old humanlike, personal god in the earlier writings.

* Then Greece, whose rational philosophy came to signify Europe and the rest of the western world for a long time ahead.

* In Greece Plato, and Socrates put the logos in the first room. It was the way to think critical and to rationalise the world and the surroundings who signified this new way of thinking.

* The intelligence took over, and shape the philosophy.

* The Greek Tragedy is a good example. The myths don't question themselves it demands that you identifies yourself with it. The tragedy is the reversed story, it force yourself to question yourself and your relations with things and persons. It confronts you and in the best of worlds you feel that you been cleansed afterwards, the catharsis, an inner cleaning. Your heart has been invaded by compassion and fear.

* The tragedy was created just in the gap where the new citystate started to lose contact with the old myths and there the tragedy took its place.

* Plato did not even like the tragedy, it was to emotional and abstract for him. Pure rational thinking was his only cure for a sick society.

* Here a big vast gap start to divide the mythos from the logos. A problem that will have consequences that stretches deep into our own time which we soon will see.

Beginning of our time.

- * The beginning of our time, I now mean around the birth of Christ to the sixteenth century 1500-talet. The religion was very marked by the ethics and moral laws that appeared in the axial age.
- * It became more and more important to prove that the holy stories and myths were historical facts so that they wouldn't stand weak against the rational way to think.
- * In Europe and the middle east this was very obvious, the Jews, Christians and the Muslims all competed in this race.
- * In the eighth and ninth (700-800-tal) century the Arab caliphate translated Aristotle and then tried to prove the existence of Allah.
- * The Greek orthodox who lived close to the Arabs, Constantinople knew the flaws of the Greek rationalisation philosophy to well and totally rejected the idea to mix up their religion with logos. Like eating soup with a fork.
- * Soon the Arabs and the Jews gave up the idea to rationalise their religion.
- * In the eleventh century the Muslims understood that the rational philosophy had to be combined with deep mysticism and ritual to be understood. Hence the Sufi movement became big in Islam.
- * The rational way of thinking could be good in science, medicine, mathematics and so on. But to explain the suffering on earth and to solve the great mysteries in was hopeless. A view that was shared with the Jews who couldn't explain the hate and persecutions against them with the help of logos.
- * During the middle ages the works of Aristotle were translated into Latin from the Arabic, the Greek and Roman sources were destroyed when Rome fell.
- * Then Europe fully could embrace the philosophy of rationalism. And also here the theology came to adopt the philosophy in its trying to explain the holy.
- * When Copernicus and Galileo introduced their science of the stars and the nature it superseded the Christian way of using rationality in their explanation of the world.
- * Therefore this science was such a treat to the church, if the mythos way of thinking been the dominant, it probably not have been such a big issue for the church but now the emergence of nature science became a big problem.
- * The problem with the thinking in mythos now became more and more obvious in Europe.

Into the (post) modern age.

- * In the beginning of 1500 century Europe and what would become USA started to build a civilisation whose culture can't be compared with anything known throughout history.
- * The consequence or the price of this society would be the sacrifice of the myth.
- * This society would totally rely on technical improvement and rationality.
- * Of course the religion is still here but the trust and comfort of the myth is totally dead. Our society today totally rely on the practical logos.
- * Instead of building a culture based on reproduction of agricultural products and technical reproduction we emancipated ourselves from the necessities of the old culture.
- * We developed an economy that from the beginning seemed eternal.
- * Industrialisation and social reforms of our society, led to an intellectual awakening who saw down on the myth or the mythos as worthless and untrue.
- * An invention or idea must today be proven efficient and effective to be considered as true.
- * It must correlate to the surrounding by proof, proof that correlates to logos, to be considered as a fact.
- * The prophets of our time is the scientist. Einstein, Newton, Darwin is the names that will be remembered instead of the great names of the axial age, Buddha, Confucius and Jesus.
- * Our new society showed that this logos way of thinking led to tremendous development. People now had greater influence over their life, they could manipulate the nature to its will and break old laws that held them down, They were free.
- * The myth went away with everything else that suppressed the humans and even the theology and the religion were revised to be more modern and effective.
- * One of the clearest cases is the fight between Martin Luther and the pope in Rome. Hocus Pocus filioocus changed the holy communion, nattvarden.
- * With the invention of book printing spread the knowledge of reading and soon the bible was an object for debate and critical reading as any other text or book.
- * The scientist and philosopher Francis Bacon 1561-1626 declared an independence of freedom act for the science, to let it free from the shackles of myth and religion.

* Later Auguste Comte started the church of science where all priest were scientists.

* Everything now had to be looked at with critical scientific eyes, and if god existed he must be proved, an opinion still very alive today.

* Only logos could lead mankind to bliss and freedom, Christianity had to get rid of its mystical and irrational parts. An opinion doomed to failure since the religion is not built on facts and truths.

* The only historical things we know about Jesus, for example, is that he was a man that was executed by the Romans around year 30 and his disciples believed that he had been resurrected from the dead. The myth on the contrary tells the Christian person that the story of Jesus is true because his sacrifice on the cross happens again and again, because the Christian person relives it every time he or she take part in the holy communion and when they are baptised. They have together with Jesus went thru the initiation.

* To claim that the bible is a series of historical true event and interpret the text word by word is doomed to be fruitless and only lead to denial and defensiv polemic.

* 1882 Nietzsche declared that god was dead. In a way that was right, because without, the myth the mysteries and the cult the sense of the holy dies.

* But science and rationality didn't take us away from brutality or despair.

* Titanic, world wars Hiroshima and Nagasaki showed us that the horror lies deeper than to act irrational, even worse we could perform this acts very rational with the help of science. This logos project has not led us out of barberry in triumph

* We don't see the paradise that was promised us by science. When we look at our dark century and compare it with the visions of science we understand that our agony doesn't come from our self-centredness.

* We are standing in front of something totally new, when we look at all the death and suffering that has happened in our modern society.

* No known culture before us has faced death without any tools or stories to deal with it.

* No other known culture would stop in the middle of the meeting with death in an initiation rite and just sit down with the horror. It is almost insane on the border to heroic.

* We now has made rid of all our tools to deal with the unacceptable things in our lives, but have we then got further than the people that were living before us. Material wise maybe but in other terms we gone backwards.

* How can we then deal with these things again, how do we take our stories back?

* First we must realise that the myth is not untrue or false, it is a tool to help us. We are the myth creating being.

* It has been tries to reclaim the myth during the last century, but they often been polemic and made hostility between us and them. Like the nazis, who maybe is the biggest myth creators in our time.

* But where then do we find the myths in a more creative environment. Where can we find the stories that doesn't see our world as a resource but sees it as holy.

* In one of Joseph Conrad books, Heart of darkness, we can follow the British colonial officer Kurtz deep into the jungle of Africa. There further and further from civilisation he meets the true darkness of his heart. Enable to face or deal with the horror of death he rejects his own evil and becomes a dictator of the tribes in the jungle. Like a failed shaman he who meets death but neither respect himself or the African society he rapes. When he finally meets his physical death he cannot accept the tragedies of our world. And the last things that comes from his dying lips is, The horror, the horror.

* The novel written by Joseph Conrad 1902 can be seen as a modern myth of our society. The regression, nihilism and disrespect captures exactly the problems of this unholy world.

* And there is the answer to our question, in the books, the music, art and theatre we doesn't have to use our rational mind to understand, we can understand and know that it is true without any proofs or explanations.

* The arts can be seen as an initiation rite who if its really good intervenes and changes the very essence within us.

* An initiation rite that makes us move from a state of life to another.

* To finish this little and to summon up, I would like to quote Karen Armstrong, professor in history of religion. Page 132