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World Mythology

16 June 2014

Speech, the Body and Creation

Creation myths seemed to have begun its developments along with the creation of speech and language (Rank 227), and have evolved and continued to be redefined according to the needs and understanding of its people and times. Embedded within them is found the purpose and immortality-ideologies espoused by the society from which it emerged. In *The World of Myth*, David Leeming recognizes in the Judeo-Christian tradition “the idea that human beings are created to be namers, to apply their godlike powers of consciousness to recording creation and thereby providing it with significance.” A view that stands in stark contrasts with other creation myths where man does not play a protagonist role in the origins and reason of the cosmos, but is merely a byproduct or afterthought of a greater—or perhaps meaningless— act of creation.

In primal creation myths of ancient people at the dawn of civilization it is common to find a closer relationship between the creation of the cosmos and the violent dismemberment of the body (usually that of a giant) by the gods to create the heavens and the earth. In later traditions, and across many other cultures, emerges the concept of the World-Egg, after which being broken in half, the world comes into being (Rank 209). All of these forms of creation seem to indicate “the construction of the world demands a living sacrifice” (Rank 210); in which the story of Genesis would appear to set itself apart in this genre given that in the Bible the world comes into being through the Word—which would indicate this myth takes form at a time when the development of language had reached a significant level of maturity to confer upon it the miraculous powers of creation.

An earlier and fascinating creation myth found in the *Bargadananyaka Upanishad*, depicts the

split into two halves of a “Parusha-like primal figure” (Lemming 25), here we go back to the dismemberment concept from which a male and female part emerge. The pairs of opposites carefully in balance. However, as in other myths, the inevitable incestuous sexual intercourse must take place in order to give birth to the cosmos, and ultimately, humankind. In this particular story, it is almost fascinating to see the parallels of the female half feeling ashamed (being lowered) for participating in this act with a half so closely related to herself. Therefore, on account of her shame, she turns herself into a cow, and later, into all creatures of creation, each time being followed by her male half who continues to impregnate her, thus giving birth to all kinds of creatures.

In contrast, in the creation myth of Genesis, God creates all creatures according to their kind, before proceeding to create mankind, in which:

26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness [...]”

27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (*Holy Bible: New International Version*, Genesis. 1:26-27).

Here it would seem to suggest man and woman were created equal at first, and moreover, that the likeness of God was that of an androgynous being possessing equally masculine and feminine traits. But in the next chapter, we experience once again the creation of woman, this time, not directly from God, but from Adam's ribs. Giving way in this form to the repression of the feminine found in the Semitic languages between “the classification of “higher” and “lower” beings, that presently became one of “male” and “female”” (Rank 245).

Going back to the more ancient Indian creation myths, we find “one *Rig Veda* hymn sings of the necessity of opposites;” citing “Being requires Non-Being” (Lemming 25). Here, the standing of mankind in the universe seems to be of no consequence. Instead, the creation myth worries itself more with the balance of energy and the things that “emerged from the original chaos” (25).

Although creation myths follow a certain evolution through time, this does not seem to indicate

necessarily an improvement for the people whose life it will shape. But rather it seems to be a reflection of their collective identity and individual ego development which originates from the compounding effects of building their doctrines through the use of language. Evidently, the creation myth of Genesis belongs in a much later stage in man's understanding of the world he inhabits. A more curated account of primal versions where the stage is set for the development of a patriarchal society.

However, the basic function of both of these and most other creation myths seems to be rather to show the Way from which rebirth (and thus immortality) can be achieved. In Christianity, this is achieved in the Bible through the bodily sacrifice of Jesus Christ (as redemption from the fall from grace, something which seems absent from the Indian perspective) and his resurrection serving as a model in the “belief in metamorphosis [...] thus [making] death only a change of form” (Rank 211). And in the Indian ideology through the concept of the eternal recurrence by which all being is tied, including the universe itself through Brahma's dream or bodily reincarnation within this kalpa.

In all, Jungian psychoanalyst June Singer, in her illuminating work titled *Androgyny*, states that ultimately “it does not matter what names we assign to the mysterious process that gave birth to the universe before the beginning of time. The capacity for awareness of the process is an innate quality of the human psyche. It makes itself known when individuals experience the archetypal dimensions of their being. It is the Way and the Word, the Light and the Tao” (245). A view that would perhaps be of more significance to the primal questions of origins still being asked by a modern man.

Works Cited

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