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Mythological Themes in Creative Literature and Art

I The Four Functions of Mythology

Traditional mythologies serve, normally, four functions, the first of which might be described as the reconciliation of consciousness with the preconditions of its own existence. In the long course of our biological prehistory, living creatures had been consuming each other for hundreds of millions of years before eyes opened to the terrible scene, and millions more elapsed before the level of human consciousness was attained. Analogously, as individuals, we are born, we live and grow, on the impulse of organs that are moved independently of reason to aims antecedent to thought—like beasts: until, one day, the crisis occurs that has separated mankind from the beasts: the realization of the monstrous nature of this terrible game that is life, and our consciousness recoils. In mythological terms: we have tasted the fruit of the wonder-tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and have lost our animal inno-

cence. Schopenhauer's scorching phrase represents the motto of this fallen state: "Life is something that should not have been!" Hamlet's state of indecision is the melancholy consequence: "To be, or not to be!" And, in fact, in the long and varied course of the evolution of the mythologies of mankind, there have been many addressed to the aims of an absolute negation of the world, a condemnation of life, and a backing out. These I have termed the mythologies of "The Great Reversal." They have flourished most prominently in India, particularly since the Buddha's time (sixth century B.C.), whose First Noble Truth, "All life is sorrowful," derives from the same insight as Schopenhauer's rueful dictum. However, more general, and certainly much earlier in the great course of human history, have been the mythologies and associated rites of redemption through affirmation. Throughout the primitive world, where direct confrontations with the brutal bloody facts of life are inescapable and unremitting, the initiation ceremonies to which growing youngsters are subjected are frequently horrendous, confronting them in the most appalling, vivid terms, with experiences—both optically and otherwise—of this monstrous thing that is life: and always with the requirement of a "yea," with no sense of either personal or collective guilt, but gratitude and exhilaration.

For there have been, finally, but three attitudes taken toward the awesome mystery in the great mythological traditions; namely, the first, of a "yea"; the second, of a "nay"; and the last, of a "nay," but with a contingent "yea," as in the great complex of messianic cults of the late Levant: Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In these last, the well-known basic myth has been, of an originally good creation corrupted by a fall, with, however, the subsequent establishment of a supernaturally endowed society, through the ultimate world dominion of which a restoration of the pristine state of the

good creation is to be attained. So that, not in nature but in the social order, and not in all societies, but in this, the one and only, is there health and truth and light, integrity and the prospect of perfection. The "yea" here is contingent therefore on the ultimate world victory of this order.

The second of the four functions served by traditional mythologies—beyond this of redeeming human consciousness from its sense of guilt in life—is that of formulating and rendering an image of the universe, a cosmological image in keeping with the science of the time and of such kind that, within its range, all things should be recognized as parts of a single great holy picture, an icon as it were: the trees, the rocks, the animals, sun, moon, and stars, all opening back to mystery, and thus serving as agents of the first function, as vehicles and messengers of the teaching.

The third traditional function, then, has been ever that of validating and maintaining some specific social order, authorizing its moral code as a construct beyond criticism or human emendation. In the Bible, for example, where the notion is of a personal god through whose act the world was created, that same god is regarded as the author of the Tablets of the Law; and in India, where the basic idea of creation is not of the act of a personal god, but rather of a universe that has been in being and will be in being forever (only waxing and waning, appearing and disappearing, in cycles ever renewed), the social order of caste has been traditionally regarded as of a piece with the order of nature. Man is not free, according to either of these mythic views, to establish for himself the social aims of his life and to work, then, toward these through institutions of his own devising; but rather, the moral, like the natural order, is fixed for all time, and if times have changed (as indeed they have, these past six hundred years), so that

to live according to the ancient law and to believe according to the ancient faith have become equally impossible, so much the worse for these times.

The first function served by a traditional mythology, I would term, then, the mystical, or metaphysical, the second, the cosmological, and the third, the sociological. The fourth, which lies at the root of all three as their base and final support, is the psychological: that, namely, of shaping individuals to the aims and ideals of their various social groups, bearing them on from birth to death through the course of a human life. And whereas the cosmological and sociological orders have varied greatly over the centuries and in various quarters of the globe, there have nevertheless been certain irreducible psychological problems inherent in the very biology of our species, which have remained constant, and have, consequently, so tended to control and structure the myths and rites in their service that, in spite of all the differences that have been recognized, analyzed, and stressed by sociologists and historians, there run through the myths of all mankind the common strains of a single symphony of the soul. Let us pause, therefore, to review briefly in sequence the order of these irreducible psychological problems.

The first to be faced derives from the fact that human beings are born some fourteen years too soon. No other animal endures such a long period of dependency on its parents. And then, suddenly, at a certain point in life, which varies, according to the culture, from, say, twelve to about twenty years of age, the child is expected to become an adult, and his whole psychological system, which has been tuned and trained to dependency, is now required to respond to the challenges of life in the way of responsibility. Stimuli are no longer to produce responses either of appeal for help or of submission to

parental discipline, but of responsible social action appropriate to one's social role. In primitive societies the function of the cruel puberty rites has been everywhere and always to effect and confirm this transformation. And glancing now at our own modern world, deprived of such initiations and becoming yearly more and more intimidated by its own intransigent young, we may diagnose a neurotic as simply an adult who has failed to cross this threshold to responsibility: one whose response to every challenging situation is, first, "What would Daddy say? Where's Mother?" and only then comes to realize, "Why gosh! *I'm* Daddy, I'm forty years old! Mother is now my wife! It is *I* who must do this thing!" Nor have traditional societies ever exhibited much sympathy for those unable or unwilling to assume the roles required. Among the Australian aborigines, if a boy in the course of his initiation seriously misbehaves, he is killed and eaten [1]—which is an efficient way, of course, to get rid of juvenile delinquents, but deprives the community, on the other hand, of the gifts of original thought. As the late Professor A. R. Radcliffe-Brown of Trinity College, Cambridge, observed in his important study of the Andaman Island pygmies: "A society depends for its existence on the presence in the minds of its members of a certain system of sentiments by which the conduct of the individual is regulated in conformity with the needs of the society. . . . The sentiments in question are not innate but are developed in the individual by the action of the society upon him." [2] In other words: the entrance into adulthood from the long career of infancy is not, like the opening of a blossom, to a state of naturally unfolding potentialities, but to the assumption of a social role,

[1] Géza Róheim, *The Eternal Ones of the Dream* (New York: International Universities Press, 1945), p. 232, citing K. Langloh Parker, *The Euahlayi Tribe* (London: A. Constable & Co., 1905), pp. 72–73.

[2] A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *The Andaman Islanders* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1933), pp. 233–234.

a mask or "persona," with which one is to identify. In the famous lines of the poet Wordsworth:

> *Shades of the prison-house begin to close*
> *Upon the growing Boy.*[3]

A second birth, as it is called, a social birth, is effected, and, as the first had been of Mother Nature, so this one is of the Fathers, Society, and the new body, the new mind, are not of mankind in general but of a tribe, a caste, a certain school, or a nation.

Whereafter, inevitably, in due time, there comes a day when the decrees of nature again break forth. That fateful moment at the noon of life arrives when, as Carl Jung reminds us, the powers that in youth were in ascent have arrived at their apogee and the return to earth begins. The claims, the aims, even the interests of society, begin to fall away and, again as in the lines of Wordsworth:

> *Our noisy years seem moments in the being*
> *Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,*
> *To perish never:*
> *Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,*
> *Nor Man nor Boy,*
> *Nor all that is at enmity with joy,*
> *Can utterly abolish or destroy!*
>
> *Hence in a season of calm weather*
> *Though inland far we be,*
> *Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea*
> *Which brought us hither,*

[3] William Wordsworth, *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, ll. 64–65.

Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.[4]

Both the great and the lesser mythologies of mankind have, up to the present, always served simultaneously, both to lead the young from their estate in nature, and to bear the aging back to nature and on through the last dark door. And while doing all this, they have served, also, to render an image of the world of nature, a cosmological image as I have called it, that should seem to support the claims and aims of the local social group; so that through every feature of the experienced world the sense of an ideal harmony resting on a dark dimension of wonder should be communicated. One can only marvel at the integrating, life-structuring force of even the simplest traditional organization of mythic symbols.

II *Traditional and Creative Thought*

And so what, then of the situation today?

As already noted in relation to the four functions traditionally served—the mystical, cosmological, social, and psychological—the spheres of the two that in the course of time have most radically changed are the second and third, the cosmological and social; for with every new advance in technology, man's knowledge and control of the powers of earth and nature alter, old cosmologies lose their hold and new come into being. To be effective, a mythology (to state the matter bluntly) must be up-to-date scientifically, based on a concept of the universe that is current, accepted, and convincing. And in this respect, of course, it is immediately apparent that our

[4] *Ibid.*, ll. 158–171.

own traditions are in deep trouble; for the leading claims of both the Old Testament and the New are founded in a cosmological image from the second millennium B.C., which was already out of date when the Bible was put together in the last centuries B.C. and first A.D. The Alexandrian Greeks had already left the old Sumero-Babylonian, three-layered "heaven above, earth below, and waters beneath the earth," centuries behind, and in A.D. 1543 Copernicus carried us still further. In the modern universe of galaxies, millions beyond millions, spiraling light years apart in the reaches of space-time, the once believable kindergarten tales of the Tower of Babel threatening God, Joshua stopping the sun, Elijah, Christ and his Virgin Mother ascending physically to heaven, simply are impossible, no matter how glossed and revised. Moreover, the marvels of our universe, and even of man's works today, are infinitely greater both in wonder and in magnitude than anything reported from the years B.C. of Yahweh; so that legends that even in the recent past might have produced in reverent readers some *sense* at least—if not *experience*—of a *mysterium tremendum* in Levantine masquerade, can today be read only as documents of the childhood of our race. And when compared with certain of their primitive, ancient, and oriental counterparts, they are not even very interesting myths.

Moreover, with respect, next, to the moral value of this heritage, with its emphasis on the privilege of race and its concept of an eternally valid moral law, divinely delivered to the privileged race from the summit of Mount Sinai, it can be asked whether in the modern world with its infinite mixture of contributing peoples any such racism can be longer regarded as either edifying, or even tolerable; and further, whether with all the conditions of life in flux (so that, in fact, what only yesterday were virtues are today, in many cases, social evils), anyone has a right to pretend to a knowledge of

eternal laws and of a general moral order for the good of all mankind. Just as in science there is no such thing today as a fixed and final, "found truth," but only working hypotheses that in the next moment may require revision in the light of a newly found fact, so also in the moral sphere, there is no longer any fixed foundation, Rock of Ages, on which the man of moral principles can safely take his stand. Life, in both its knowing and its doing, has become today a "free fall," so to say, into the next minute, into the future. So that, whereas, formerly, those not wishing to hazard the adventure of an individual life could rest within the pale of a comfortably guaranteed social order, today all the walls have burst. It is not left to us to *choose* to hazard the adventure of an unprecedented life: adventure is upon us, like a tidal wave.

And this brings me to my next point, which is, that not only in the cosmological and sociological, but also in the psychological dimension of our lives, there is dawning today a realization of the relativism of all measures. In the human brain alone there are some 18,000 million nerve cells; so that, as one great physiologist notes: "If nature cannot reproduce the same simple pattern in any two fingers, how much more impossible is it for her to reproduce the same pattern in any two brains!" [5] No two human beings are alike: each is an unprecedented wonder. Hence, who is to tell either you or me what our gift to the world is to be, or what in the world should be good for us? Already in thirteenth-century Europe, when the prestige of an enforced Levantine religion-for-all was at its height, there had dawned the realization that every individual is unique, and every life adventure equally unique. In the Old French prose version of the Grail adventure known as the *Queste del Saint Graal*, for example, there is a line that makes

[5] Sir Arthur Keith, in *Living Philosophies*, a symposium (Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1931), p. 142.

this point with the greatest clarity. The Holy Grail, hovering in air but covered with samite cloth, had appeared before the assembled knights in the dining hall of King Arthur and then, again, disappeared. Whereupon Arthur's nephew, Gawain, arose and proposed to all a vow, namely, to depart next day on a general quest, to behold the Grail unveiled. And indeed, next morning they departed. But here, then, comes the line. "They thought it would be a disgrace," we read, "to ride forth in a group. But each entered the forest at one point or another, there where he saw it to be thickest and there was no way or path." [6] For where you are following a way or path, you are following the way or destiny of another. Your own, which is as yet unknown, is in seed (as it were) within you, as your intelligible character, pressing to become manifest in the unique earned character of an individual life. And it is just this sense of a personal potential to be realized that has given to the greatest Occidental biographies and creative works their character of yearning toward an undefined unknown. Each in his lifetime is in the process of bringing forth a specimen of humanity such as never before was made visible upon this earth, and the way to this achievement is not along anyone else's path who ever lived. In the later episodes of the old French *Queste*, whenever a knight, in the "forest adventurous" of his questing, comes on the trail of another and seeks to follow, he goes astray.

And so we stand now, in the modern West, before an irreducible challenge. The Grail, so to say, has been shown to us, of the individual quest, the individual life adventured in the realization of one's own inborn potential, and yet, the main sense of our great Occidental heritage of mythological, theological, and philosophical orthodoxies—whether of the biblical

[6] Albert Pauphilet (ed.), *La Queste del Saint Graal* (Paris: Champion, 1949), p. 26.

or of the classical strain—is of certain norms to be realized, beliefs to be held, and aims toward which to strive. In all traditional systems, whether of the Orient or of the Occident, the authorized mythological forms are presented in rites to which the individual is expected to respond with an experience of commitment and belief. But suppose he fails to do so? Suppose the entire inheritance of mythological, theological, and philosophical forms fails to wake in him any authentic response of this kind? How then is he to behave? The normal way is to fake it, to feel oneself to be inadequate, to pretend to believe, to strive to believe, and to live, in the imitation of others, an inauthentic life. The authentic creative way, on the other hand, which I would term the way of art as opposed to religion, is, rather, to reverse this authoritative order. The priest presents for consideration a compound of inherited forms with the expectation (or, at times, even, requirement) that one should interpret and experience them in a certain authorized way, whereas the artist first has an experience of his own, which he then seeks to interpret and communicate through effective forms. Not the forms first and then the experience, but the experience first and then forms!

Who, however, will be touched by these forms and be moved by them to an experience of his own? By what magic can a personal experience be communicated to another? And who is going to listen?—particularly in a world in which everyone is attuned only to authorized clichés, so that many hardly know what an inward experience might be!

III The Problem of Communication

How is it possible to waken new life in words or in mythic forms that in their common use have become confirmed in a context of unwanted associations? Let us take, for example,

the word "God." Normally, when this monosyllable is heard we associate it, one way or another, with the idea of "God" in the Bible. Pronounced in India, however, it would not normally carry such associations. We use the same word for a Greek god, a Navaho god, a Babylonian god—all of which are, in fact, so different from each other that the word, employed in this rough and ready way, has no meaning at all. A meaning has somehow to be given to it anew, every time it is used. And indeed, even referred to the Bible, is it the "God" of Genesis 1 or 2, the prophets, Jesus, Paul, St. Patrick, Innocent III, or Luther?

And what about the carriage of communicated experience—or even of ideas—across the great cultural divide between East and West? One cannot directly translate into English any basic Sanskrit religious term. There is no counterpart for the noun *ātman,* or for *brahman, ṣakti,* or *jīva,* all of which are fundamental. To be rendered, they must be couched in settings of explanation. But they *can* be so rendered: at least well enough to produce in those with a will and readiness to understand, something like their intended effects. And so too, as every poet knows, old words, old themes, old images, can be rearranged and renewed, to communicate sentiments never expressed before; as, for example, in the words and images of Keats in his "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

I am interested in rehearsing, in illustration of this problem, three inflections of a single mythological image that has been used in three greatly differing traditions to communicate altogether differing ideas and manners of experiencing the mystery dimension of man's being.

The first is from the Indian *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad,* a work of about the eighth century B.C. It tells of that original Being, beyond the categories of being and nonbeing, antecedent to

being (that is to say), who had been, and yet had not been, for eternity. (You see! we are already in great trouble here, already at the start! We have no words!) . . . That Being who was no being, at a certain time before time had come into being, said "I."

But in what language did he say that, before languages were known? Well, he said it, we are told, in Sanskrit, which, like Hebrew (the language that Yahweh spoke when he was at work at this same timeless time, performing the same task) is supposed to be an eternal language, the very sounds of which are the structuring tones of the universe. This Being that was no being said, therefore, not "I" exactly, but *ahaṁ*, and as soon as he had said that, he became conscious of himself (we note that he is being spoken of as a *he*, though, as will appear, that designation of gender is inexact). And when he had become conscious of himself, fear overcame him; but he reasoned: "Since there is no one here but myself, what is there to be feared?" The fear departed and a second thought arose: "I wish that I were not alone."

For wherever there is ego-consciousness, according to the Indian view, there is fear, the fear of death, and there is yearning. We all know what comes of yearning. That one, now yearning, became inflated, swelled, split in half—and there she was. He united with her, and she thought: "How can he unite with me, who have been produced from himself?" She turned into a cow, he into a bull, and united with her; she, into a mare, he, a stallion; and so on, down to the ants. And when the whole world with all its beings had been thus begotten by that pair, he looked around himself and mused: "I am creation; I have gushed this forth: it is I." [7]

Let us turn, now, a little westward, to the work of that other Creator of approximately the same date, whose *logoi* were

[7] *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* 1.4.1–5.

in Hebrew. Here we find this curious little fellow, Adam, fashioned (we are told) of dust (which, however, is simply another way of saying that he had been born of the goddess Earth). He had been made to tend a garden, but he was lonesome; and his Maker, thinking, "Let me find some toys for this boy," formed every beast of the field and bird of the air (also out of dust), and brought them before his melancholy lad, to be named; but none satisfied. Whereupon, a really great thought dawned in the mind of this experimenting god (where it came from, we are not told). He put his problem child to sleep and, as James Joyce says in *Finnegans Wake*, "brought on the scene the cutletsized consort"—the Rib, to wit: and there she was. And Adam said, "At last!"

And here, today, are we.[8]

Let us turn a little further westward, to Greece and the version in Plato's *Symposium*, where, as recounted by Aristophanes: "in the beginning we were nothing like what we are now.

"For one thing, the race was divided into three; that is to say, besides the two sexes, male and female, which we have at present, there was a third which partook of the nature of both. . . . And secondly, each of these beings was globular in shape, with rounded back and sides, four arms and four legs, and two faces, both the same, on a cylindrical neck, and one head, with one face one side and one the other, and four ears, and two lots of privates, and all the other parts to match. They walked erect, as we do ourselves, backward or forward, whichever they pleased, but when they broke into a run they simply stuck their legs straight out and went whirling round and round like a clown turning cartwheels."

The males were descended from the sun, the females from

[8] Genesis 2 and James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (New York: The Viking Press, 1939), p. 255.

the earth, the hermaphrodites from the moon; and such were their strength and energy that they actually tried—as Aristophanes told—"to scale the heights of heaven and to set upon the gods." Whereupon Zeus, perceiving how powerful and arrogant they were, sliced them each in half, "as one might slice an egg."

But Zeus, it must be understood, had not created these creatures. They had been born, as we have just heard, of the sun, the earth, and the moon, whereas the Olympians—Zeus, Poseidon, and the rest—were not creators, but had themselves been born of the great Cretan Mother Goddess Rhea. Zeus, having sliced the people in half, then called Apollo, son of Leto, to help him heal the whole thing up: who "turned their faces back to front, and, pulling in the skin all the way round, stretched it over what we now call the belly—like those bags you pull together with a string—and tied up the one remaining opening so as to form what we call the navel.

"But now," as we read, continuing, "when the work of bisection was done, it left each half with a desperate yearning for the other, and they ran together and flung their arms around each other's necks, and asked for nothing better than to be rolled into one." Wherefore Zeus, perceiving that the work of the world would never get done this way, and that all these immobilized beings, furthermore, would be dead soon of starvation, scattered mankind abroad, so that each of us, to this day, is born apart from his other half. But lovers, having found each other, wish for nothing more than to be welded again into one. "And so you see, gentlemen," as Aristophanes remarked in conclusion to his friends, "how far back we can trace our innate love for one another." [9]

From Greece, from Palestine, and from India: three variants,

[9] *Symposium* 189d–193d; trans. Michael Joyce in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (eds.), *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, Bollingen Series LXXI (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961), pp. 542–546.

obviously, of a single mythic theme, inflected to represent three modes of experience—significantly different—of the mystic dimension of man's being. In the Indian myth, it is the god himself who splits in half, becoming then the world substance; so that for the Indian saint the ultimate religious realization must be of his own essential identity with that Being of beings: "I am that divine Ground." Whereas in both the Greek and the biblical versions of the mythology, the god is a kind of medicine man, operating on his victim from outside. Moreover, in the Bible, the godly figure is represented as the Universal Creator. He stands, therefore, in a position of unchallengeable authority, and the ultimate loyalty of the Bible, therefore, is not to mankind but to God ("What is man, O Lord, that thou shouldst regard him?" Job 7:17; 15:14; Psalms 8:4), whereas the sympathy of the Greeks, finally, is for man; and the respect of the Greeks, for man's reason. We call this latter the humanistic position, and the Hebrew, in contrast, the religious or theological. And our own tradition, unhappily, is mixed marvelously of both. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, we are humanists with the Greeks; Sunday, for half an hour, Levantines, with the Prophets; and the following Monday, groaning on some equally troubled psychotherapist's couch.

In the Orient, in the Indian sphere, such a conflict of spiritual terms would be laughed at as delusory, since, according to the teaching there, a man's god is but his own conceptualization of the ground of his own being. As stated in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad:* "Whoever realizes, 'I am *brahman,*' becomes this All, and not even the gods can prevent him from becoming this; for he becomes thereby their own Self. So whoever worships another divinity than this Self, thinking, 'He is one, I another,' knows not." [10]

Obviously, the term *god* is hardly fit to be used without ex-

[10] *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* 1.4.10.

planation if it is to serve as a designation of the mythic beings of all three of these traditions; and particularly, since, in the biblical sense, the god is regarded as in some way an actual being, a sort of supernatural fact, whereas in both the Greek and the Indian versions of the myth, the personages and episodes are neither regarded nor presented as historic, or protohistoric, but as symbolic: they do not refer to actual events supposed once to have occurred, but to metaphysical or psychological mysteries, i.e., an inward, backward dimension of ourselves, right here and now. And in the same way, the closely related image of the fall can be regarded either in orthodox biblical terms, as a prehistoric fact, or in the pagan way, as a metaphysical-metapsychological symbol.

The biblical version of the fall in the Garden is readily recalled. No sooner had Eve been formed of Adam's rib than her eyes began to rove. And they fell upon the serpent, who, in the earlier mythologies of that same Levant, had been symbolic of the creative energy and living substance of the universe.

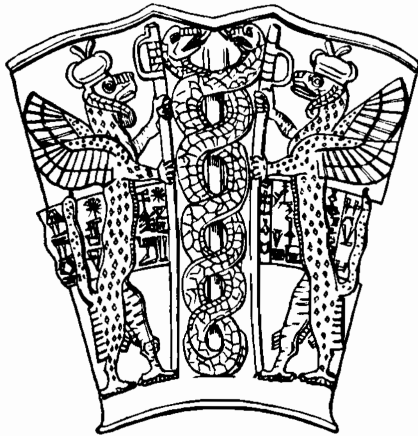

Figure 1

Figure 1 is a representation of this serpent, split, like the Indian creative Self, in two, and generating the universe—as depicted, *ca.* 2000 B.C., on the famous libation vase of King Gudea of Lagash. Figure 2 is another scene of approximately

Figure 2

the same date, but with the female power in human form and the male serpent behind her, the Tree of Life before, and beyond that, a male personage wearing the horned headdress of a god who has evidently come to partake of the fruit of the wonderful tree. A number of scholars have recognized in this scene something analogous to the episode in Eden, a full thousand years before Yahweh's day however, and when the figure rendered in the Bible as a mere creature, Eve, would have been recognized as a goddess, the great mother goddess Earth, with the primal self-renewing serpent, symbolic of the informing energy of creation and created things, her spouse. In any case, Master Adam, who had been told and seems to have thought that he had given birth to Eve (though, as we all know today, it is not men who give birth to women, but women who give birth to men), became aware, at length, of the conversation in progress, over by the tree; and he approached. Eve was already chewing. "Have a bite!" she said. "It's good. It will open your eyes to something." But then God, who walks in the cool of the day, strolling by, was amazed. "What's this!" he thundered. "You have leaves on!" For, having

eaten of the knowledge of good and evil (duality) they were egos, moved, like the Indian god, by desire and fear. Their eyes having opened to the nature of life, their shocked consciousnesses had recoiled. And the Lord, lest they should eat, next, the fruit of a second tree (or perhaps from the other side of the same), the Tree of Immortal Life, expelled the unfortunate pair from the garden: "drove out the man," as we read, "and at the east of the garden of Eden placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life." [11]

Now a number of years ago (and this is not to change the subject), during the course of our war with Japan, I chanced to see in one of our New York newspapers a photo of one of those two giant temple guardians that flank the outer gate of the great Todaiji temple at Nara, in Japan: a huge warrior figure with lifted sword and wearing a rather frightening scowl—beneath which I read the legend: "The Japanese worship gods like this." I was at first simply disgusted. But then a strange thought occurred to me: "Not they, but we, are the worshipers of a god like that." For the Japanese do not stop at the gate to worship its door guardians, but walk between them, through the gate, and on into the temple, where an immense bronze image of the Solar Buddha is to be seen seated beneath the Tree of Immortal Life, holding his right hand in the gesture meaning "fear not"; whereas it is we who have been taught to worship the god of the turning flaming sword who would keep mankind from entering the garden of the knowledge of immortal life.

Where, however, is that garden? Where that tree? And what, furthermore, is the meaning or function of those two guardians of its gate?

[11] Gen. 3.

Some there have been who have actually searched the earth for the Garden of Eden. St. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, declares that it surely must be somewhere on this physical earth, shut off from us by mountains or beyond the uncrossed seas.[12] We have crossed the seas, however, and have crossed the mountains. No earthly paradise has been found. Yet we need not have searched so far; for it is the garden of man's soul. As pictured in the Bible tale, with its four mysterious rivers flowing in the four directions from a common source at the center, it is exactly what C. G. Jung has called an "archetypal image": a psychological symbol, spontaneously produced, which appears universally, both in dreams and in myths and rites. Figure 3 is from an Aztec codex. Like the image of a deity, the quadrated garden with the life source at its center is a figment of the psyche, not a product of gross elements, and the one who seeks without for it, gets lost.

But let us look, once more, at those two guardians at the Nara gate. One has his great mouth open; the other, his mouth tightly closed. The mouth open is of desire; the mouth closed, of determined aggression. Those are the two deluding powers that keep one from the garden, the same two that overcame the Father of Creatures when he conceived and pronounced the word "I," *ahaṁ*. They are the same two deluding emotions, furthermore, that were overcome by the Buddha when he sat beneath the Bo tree on what is known as "The Immovable Spot" and was tempted, to no avail, first to lust and then to fear, by the prime mover of all beings. According, therefore, to the Buddhist way of interpreting the two cherubim or guardians at the archetypal gate, it is no angry god who has put them there, but our own deluding psychology of ego-centered desires and fears.

[12] *Summa Theologica*, Part I, Question 102, Article 1, Reply 3.

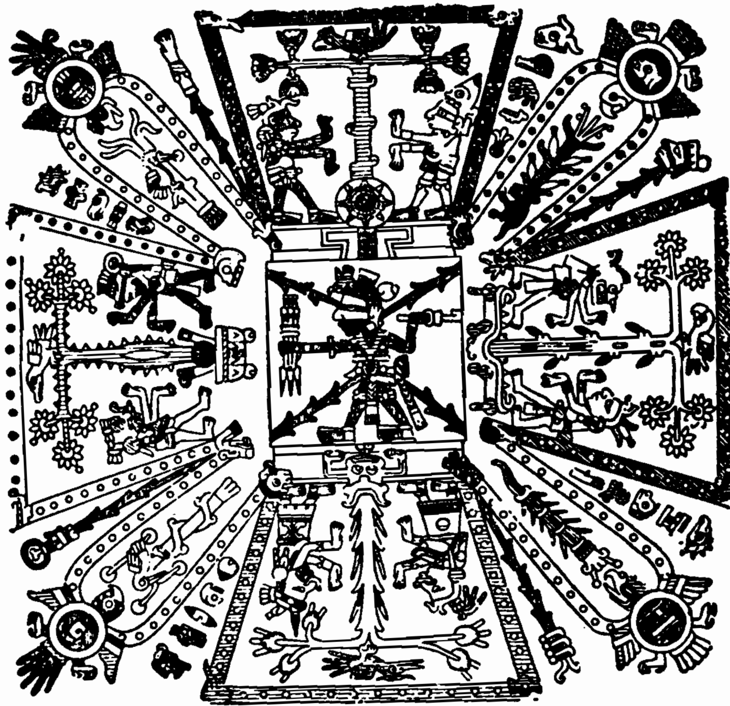

Figure 3

The mythological image of the fall, that is to say, which in the biblical tradition has been represented in pseudohistorical, penological terms, as the consequence of a prehistoric act of disobedience, the Orient reads otherwise, namely in psychological terms, as an effect of our own present anxieties. Hence, in contrast to the great Christian theme of the reconciliation of an offended god through the infinite merits of his true and only son crucified, the Buddhist concept of redemption in-

volves no atonement of any outside power, no atonement theme at all, but the experience within of a psychological transformation—not vicariously wrought by the Savior, furthermore, but inspired by the image and radiance of his life. Like the differing readings of the one word, "god," so the various interpretations of the mythological tree configurate greatly differing theologies, sociologies, and psychologies; and yet, the Bo tree, Holy Rood, and the Tree of Immortal Life in the center of Yahweh's garden, actually are but local inflections of a single mythological archetype, and the image itself was long known, moreover, before any of these cultic readings: as, for example, in the old Sumerian scene of Figure 2, a full thousand years before Eden. Like life itself, such mythological archetypes simply *are*. Meanings can be read into them; meanings can be read out of them. But in themselves they are antecedent to meaning. Like ourselves, like trees, like dreams, they are "thus come" (Sanskrit, *tathāgata*). The Buddha is known as "The One Thus Come," the Tathāgata, because transcendent of meaning; and in understanding him as such, we are thrown back on our own sheer "suchness" (*tathātva*), to which words do not reach.

IV The Miracle of Art: Aesthetic Arrest

The folk proverb speaks of throwing out the baby with the bath: an archetypal mythological image is not to be thrown away along with the archaic definitions of its meaning. On the contrary, such images—which, in a magical way, immediately touch and waken centers within us of life—are to be retained, washed clean of "meanings," to be reexperienced (and not reinterpreted) as art.

But what is art?

Let me summarize, briefly, the answer to this question given

by the greatest artist of the present century, James Joyce, in the last chapter of his first novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* where he distinguishes between "proper" and "improper" art. Proper art is "static"; improper, "kinetic," by which last Joyce means an art that moves one either to loathe or to desire the object represented. For example, the aim of an advertisement is to excite desire for the object; the aim of a novel of social criticism, to excite loathing for injustices, inequities, and the rest, and to inspire thereby a zeal for reform. "Desire," states Joyce's hero, Stephen Dedalus, "urges us to possess, to go to something; loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something. The arts which excite them, pornographical or didactic, are therefore improper arts. The esthetic emotion . . . is static. The mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing." And he proceeds, then, to elucidate the psychology of aesthetic arrest by interpreting three terms drawn from the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas: *integritas, consonantia,* and *claritas.*

1. *Integritas ("wholeness").* Let us take, for example, any conglomeration of objects. Imagine a frame around a portion of them. The area within that frame is to be viewed now, not as a conglomeration of disparate things, but as one thing: *integritas.* If the objects are on a table of which the frame cuts off a part, the part cut off, then, is "other," and the part within the frame has become a component of that "one thing" of which all the other included objects also are parts.

2. *Consonantia ("harmony").* The self-enclosed "one thing" having been established, what is now of concern to the artist is the rhythm, the relationship, the harmony of its parts: the relation of part to part, of each part to the whole, and of the whole to each of its parts: whether detail x, for example, is

just *here,* let us say, or a quarter inch to the left, or to the right.

3. *Claritas ("radiance").* When the miracle has been achieved of what Joyce calls the "rhythm of beauty," the object so composed becomes fascinating *in itself.* One is held, struck still, absorbed, with everything else wiped away; or, as Stephen Dedalus tells in his interpretation of this "enchantment of the heart": "You see that it is that thing which it is and no other thing." It is regarded not as a reference to something else (say, as the portrait of some personage whose likeness gives it value), or as a communication of meaning (of the value, say, of some cause), but as a thing in itself, *tathāgata,* "thus come."

But let us now suppose that we are to include within the frame of our work, not indifferent objects only (flowerpots, lemons, apples, tables, chairs), but also human beings; or suppose we are composing a play with people and situations that might well excite loathing and desire: how is our experience of these to be controlled? Joyce speaks of the tragic and comic emotions.

The tragic emotions named, but not defined, by Aristotle, he reminds us, are pity and terror. Joyce defines these: "Pity is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatsoever is grave and constant in human sufferings and unites it with the human sufferer. Terror is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatsoever is grave and constant in human sufferings and unites it with the secret cause." The key phrases in these definitions are "grave and constant" and "*arrests* the mind." For what is to be shown is what cannot be changed: those constants inevitable in life, in the world, in the nature of man, in the very processes of being and becoming, to which I have already alluded in my opening definition of the first function of mythology: not the variables, the "cor-

rectibles," to which social criticism and ameliorative science can be reasonably addressed, but exactly what I termed there, "the preconditions of existence."

Let us suppose that in our tragic play a Mr. A has shot a Mr. B. What is the "secret cause" of B's death? The evident cause, the instrumental cause, is the bullet by which his body is supposed to have been penetrated. Is that what our play is about: how bullets may cause death? Are we arguing for tighter gun laws, or for not walking in the woods in the fall without wearing a red hat? Or perhaps, the evident cause, the instrumental cause, to which our attention is being addressed is the politics of Mr. A, who is a Fascist, whereas B, God love him, is an "intellectual." Is that, then, what our play is to be about: Fascism and its works? Communism, Fascism, and their likes, may be grave—as indeed they are in the politics of the hour—but in the long view of human affairs, of history and prehistory, they are not (thank heaven) constant.

What, then, is both grave and constant, irreducible, inevitable, in this scene of conflict and death?

Obviously, as in all scenes whatsoever of conflict, whether in nature, in history, or in biography and domestic life, there is in play here a basic law of existence, the polarization of opposites: of positives and negatives, of aims, loyalties, commitments, and delusions in collision. I think of the words of James Joyce in comment on the "male-female" and "brother-battle" themes of his tragicomical masterwork, *Finnegans Wake:* the contenders "cumjustled . . . as were they, *isce et ille,* equals of opposites, evolved by a onesame power of nature or of spirit, *iste,* as the sole condition and means of its himundher manifestation and polarized for reunion by the symphysis of their antipathies." [13] Or I think of the words of the

[13] James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (New York: The Viking Press, 1939), p. 92.

medieval Grail poet, Wolfram von Eschenbach, in comment on the epic battle of the Christian Parzival with his unrecognized Muslim half-brother Feirefiz: "One could say that *they* were fighting if one wished to speak of two. They were, however, one. 'My brother and I' is one body—like good man and good wife. . . . The purity of loyal-heartedness is what is battling here: great loyalty with loyalty." [14] When such a point of view on conflict is rendered without partisanship ("Judge not, that you may not be judged."),[15] the secret truth of conflict as a function of being, the very song of life in this "vale of tears," will begin to be heard and felt resounding through all the passages of time—to which awesome mystery, furthermore, we are to become, in the tragic work of art, not merely reconciled, but *united.* One thinks of the dictum of Hèraclitus: "We must know that War is common to all, that Strife is Justice, and that all things come into being by Strife." And again: "To God all things are fair and good and right; but men hold some things wrong and some right." "Good and evil are one." [16] The songs of the bowstring and the lyre equally are of a tension of opposites.[17] And what gives poignancy—that strange life-sweet tone of tragic terror to all revelations of this kind—is the realization that, though poles apart, the antagonists are brothers. in Wolfram's words: "of one flesh and one blood, battling from loyalty of heart, and doing each other much harm." [18]

[14] Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival,* ed. Karl Lachmann (6th ed.; Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1926), Book XV: 740, ll. 26–30 and 741, ll. 21–22.

[15] Matt. 7:1.

[16] Heraclitus in Diels, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (1922), Fragments 80, 102, and 58; *Greek Religious Thought from Homer to the Age of Alexander,* trans. F. M. Cornford (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons; New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1923), p. 84.

[17] *Ibid.,* Frag. 51.

[18] Wolfram, *op. cit.,* XV: 740, ll. 2–5.

The "secret cause," then, of the death of Mr. B is what is to be heard in the tick of time, death delivered through life, the *mysterium tremendum* of the ultimate nonexistence of existences: which, in the work of tragic art, is to be experienced and affirmed as the wonder of life. Accordingly, where partisanship, criticism, or propaganda enters into an artwork, the aim and effect of aesthetic arrest is irretrievably lost. Ego-shattering, truly tragic pity unites us with the *human*—not with the Communist, Fascist, Muslim, or Christian—sufferer. Moreover, this pity, as experienced through art, is in the way of a yea, not a nay; for inherently, art is an affirmation, not negation, of phenomenality. In contrast to the message, then, of what I have called "The Great Reversal" (Ah! But see with what ills this terrestrial life is wrought, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal! Let us lay up our treasure in heaven—or in extinction! [19]) the lesson of proper art is of the radiance of this earth and its beings, where tragedy is of the essence and not to be gainsaid. And this yea itself is the released energy that bears us beyond loathing and desire, breaks the barriers of rational judgment and unites us with our own deep ground: the "secret cause."

In other words, what I am saying here is that the first function of art is exactly that which I have already named as the first function of mythology: to transport the mind in experience past the guardians—desire and fear—of the paradisal gate to the tree within of illuminated life. In the words of the poet Blake, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell:* "If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite." But the cleansing of the doors, the wiping away of the guardians, those cherubim with their flaming sword, is the first effect of art, where the second, simultaneously, is the rapture of recognizing in a single hair "a thousand golden lions."

[19] See Matt. 6:19–21, of which this is a paraphrase.

V *The Fashioning of Living Myths*

In Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* there is represented, stage by stage, the process of an escape from a traditional and the fashioning of a personal myth, adequate to the shaping of an individuated life. From the first page, attention is focused on the feelings and associated thoughts of a growing boy in response to the sights, sensations, teachings, personages, and ideals, of his Irish-Catholic environment, his home, his schools, and his city. The key to the progress of the novel lies in its stress on what is inward. The outward occasions of the inward feeling-judgments are thereby emptied of intrinsic force, while their echoes in the boy's—then the youth's—interior become enriched and recombined in a growing context of conscientiously observed subjective associations. Steadily, a system of sentiments, separate and increasingly distant from that of his fellows, takes form, which he has the courage to respect and ultimately to follow. And since these guiding value judgments are conceived in relation, not only to the accidental details of life in late nineteenth-century Dublin, but also both to the "grave and constant" in human sufferings and to the dogmas and iconography of the Roman Catholic Church—together with the school classics of the Western world, from Homer to his own day—the inward life and journey is by no means an isolating, merely idiosyncratic adventure, but in the best sense a mystery-flight from the little bounds of a personal life to the great domain of universals. The novel is introduced, on the title page, by a line from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Book VIII, line 188): *Et ignotas animum dimittit in artes,* "And he turns his mind to unknown

arts." The reference in Ovid is to the Greek master craftsman Daedalus, who, when he had built the labyrinth to house the monster Minotaur, was in danger of being retained in Crete by King Minos; but turning his mind to unknown arts, he fashioned wings for himself and for Icarus, his son; then warned the boy:

Remember
To fly midway, for if you dip too low
The waves will weight your wings with thick saltwater,
And if you fly too high the flames of heaven
Will burn them from your sides. Then take your flight
Between the two.[20]

Icarus, however, disobeyed; flew too high and fell into the sea. But Daedalus reached the mainland. And so Joyce would fly on wings of art from provincial Ireland to the cosmopolitan Mainland; from Catholicism to the universal mythic heritage of which Christianity is but an inflection; and through mythology, on wings of art, to his own induplicable immortality.

Thomas Mann, likewise, in his early novelette, *Tonio Kröger*, tells of a youth, who, guided by the inward compass of his own magnetic pole, dissociates his destiny, first, from his family—in this case, German Protestant—but then, also, from "those haughty, frigid ones," as he calls them, the literary monsters of his day, "who," as he discovers, "adventure along the path of great, demonic beauty and despise 'mankind.'" He consequently stands "between two worlds, at home in neither," where it is darkest, so to say, and there is no way or path; or like Daedalus, in flight between sea and sky.

In his masterwork, *The Magic Mountain*, which appeared

[20] Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, VIII, 203–206; trans. Horace Gregory (New York: The Viking Press, 1958), pp. 211–212.

shortly after World War I, Mann turned this mythological theme of the inwardly guided passage between opposites to the representation of the psychological metamorphosis, not of an artist this time, but of an ingenuous though attractive young marine engineer, Hans Castorp, who had come for a brief visit to a Land of No Return—the timeless playground of Aphrodite and King Death (an Alpine tuberculosis sanatorium)—where he remained to undergo a sort of alchemical transmutation, for a span of exactly seven years. Mann extended the import of this adventure, to suggest the ordeal of contemporary Germany between worlds: between the rational, positivistic West and the semiconscious, metaphysical East; between *eros* and *thanatos*, liberal individualism and socialistic despotism; between music and politics, science and the Middle Ages, progress and extinction. The noble engraving by Dürer of "A Knight Between Death and the Devil," might stand as the emblem of Mann's thesis in this work. He expands the image further to signify Man, "life's delicate child," walking the beveled edge between spirit and matter, married in his thinking to both, yet in his Being and Becoming, something else—not to be captured in a definition. Then in the biblical tetralogy of *Joseph and His Brothers*, Mann passes altogether into the sphere of mythological archetypes, sounding once more, but now *fortissimo*, his life-song of the Man of God, *Homo Dei*, in adventurous passage between the poles of birth and death, from nowhere to nowhere, as it were. And as in the novels of James Joyce—from the autobiographical *Portrait*, through *Ulysses*, to the cycling mythologic nightmare ("whirled without end") of *Finnegans Wake*—so in those of Thomas Mann, from the life-adventure of his Tonio, through that of his unassuming yet gifted Hans, to the unashamedly self-serving, cheating yet imposing and beloved heroes of his tales of Jacob and Joseph, we may follow, stage by stage, the flight of a highly conscious, learned, and superbly competent artist, out

of the "Crete" (so to say) of the naturalistic imagery of his accidental birthplace, to the "Mainland" of the grave and constant mythological archetypes of his own inward being as Man.

As in the novels of Joyce, so in those of Mann, the key to the progression lies in the stress on what is inward. The outward occasions represent, however, substantial external contexts of their own, of historical, sociopolitical, and economic relationships—to which, in fact, the intellects of the minor characters of these novels are generally addressed. And that such relationships have force, and even make claims on the loyalties of the protagonists, not only is recognized, but is fundamental to the arguments of the adventures. In the words of Joyce's hero: "When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets." Obviously, an outward-directed intellect, recognizing only such historical ends and claims, would be very much in danger of losing touch with its natural base, becoming involved wholly in the realization of "meanings" parochial to its local time and place. But on the other hand, anyone hearkening only inward, to the dispositions of feeling, would be in equal danger of losing touch with the only world in which he would ever have the possibility of living as a human being. It is an important characteristic of both James Joyce and Thomas Mann, that, in developing their epic works, they remained attentive equally to the facts and contexts of the outward, and the feeling systems of the inward, hemispheres of the volume of experiences they were documenting. They were both immensely learned, furthermore, in the scholarship and sciences of their day. And they were able, consequently, to extend and enrich in balanced correlation the outward and the inward ranges of their characters' spheres of experience, progressing in such a way from the purely personal to the larger, collective orders of outward experience and inward sense of

import that in their culminating masterworks they achieved actually the status, the majesty, and validity, of contemporary myth.

Carl Jung, in his analysis of the structure of the psyche, has distinguished four psychological functions that link us to the outer world. These are sensation, thinking, feeling, and intuition. Sensation, he states, is the function that tells us that something *exists;* thinking, the function that tells us *what* it is; feeling, the function that evaluates its *worth* to us; and intuition, the function that enables us to estimate the *possibilities* inherent in the object or its situation.[21] Feeling, thus, is the inward guide to value; but its judgments are related normally to outward, empirical circumstance. However, it is to be noted that Jung distinguishes, also, four psychological functions that unlock, progressively, the depth chambers of our nature. These are (1) memory, (2) the subjective components of our conscious functions, (3) affects and emotions, and (4) invasions or possessions, where components of the unconscious break into the conscious field and take over.[22] "The area of the unconscious," he writes, "is enormous and always continuous, while the area of consciousness is a restricted field of momentary vision."[23] This restricted field, however, is the field of historical life and not to be lost.

Jung distinguishes two orders or depths of the unconscious, the personal and the collective. The Personal Unconscious, according to his view, is composed largely of personal acquisitions, potentials and dispositions, forgotten or repressed contents derived from one's own experience, etc. The Collective Unconscious, on the other hand, is a function rather of biology

[21] C. G. Jung, *Analytical Psychology, Its Theory and Practice* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), pp. 11–14.
[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 21–25.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

than of biography: its contents are of the instincts, not the accidents of personal experience but the processes of nature as invested in the anatomy of *Homo sapiens* and consequently common to the human race. Moreover, where the consciousness may go astray and in the interest of an ideal or an idea do violence to the order of nature, the instincts, disordered, will irresistibly protest; for, like a body in disease, so the diseased psyche undertakes to resist and expel infection: and the force of its protest will be expressed in madness, or in lesser cases, morbid anxieties, troubled sleep, and terrible dreams. When the imagery of the warning visions rises from the Personal Unconscious, its sense can be interpreted through personal associations, recollections, and reflections; when, however, it stems from the Collective, the signals cannot be decoded in this way. They will be of the order, rather, of myth; in many cases even identical with the imagery of myths of which the visionary or dreamer will never have heard. (The evidence for this in the literature of psychiatry seems to me now to be beyond question.) They will thus be actually presentations of *the archetypes of mythology* in a relation of significance to some context of contemporary life, and consequently will be decipherable only by comparison with the patterns, motifs, and semantology of mythology in general.[24]

Now it is of the greatest interest to remark, that, during the period immediately following World War I, there appeared a spectacular series of historical, anthropological, literary, and psychological works, in which the archetypes of myth were recognized, not as merely irrational vestiges of archaic thought, but as fundamental to the structuring of human life and, in that sense, prophetic of the future as well as remedial of the present and eloquent of the past. T. S. Eliot's poem, *The*

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41.

Waste Land, Carl Jung's *Psychological Types*, and Leo Frobenius' *Paideuma* appeared in 1921; James Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1922; Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* in 1923; and Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* in 1924. It was very much as though, at a crucial juncture in the course of the growth of our civilization, a company of sages, masters of the wisdom that arises from the depths of being, had spoken from their hermitages to give warning and redirection. However, what men of deeds have ever listened to sages? For these, to think is to act, and one thought is enough. Furthermore, the more readily communicable to the masses their driving thought may be, the better—and the more effective. Thus the nations learn in sweat, blood, and tears what might have been taught them in peace, and as Joyce's hero in *A Portrait* states, what those so-called thoughts and their protagonists represent are not the ways and guides to freedom, but the very nets, and the wielders of those nets, by which the seeker of freedom is snared, entrapped, and hauled back into the labyrinth. For their appeal is precisely to those sentiments of desire and fear by which the gate to the paradise of the spirit is barred. Didacticism and pornography are the qualities of the arts that they inspire (their hacks I would term very simply, a bunch of didactic pornographers!), and their heroes are rather the monsters to be overcome than the boon-bringers to be praised.

And so, I come to my last point.

There are (and, apparently, there have always been) two orders of mythology, that of the Village and that of the Forest of Adventure. The imposing guardians of the village rites are those cherubim of the garden gate, their Lordships Fear and Desire, with however another to support them, the Lord Duty, and a fourth, her holiness, Faith: and the aims of their fashionable cults are mainly health, abundance of progeny, long life,

wealth, victories in war, and the grace of a painless death. The ways of the Forest Adventurous, on the other hand, are not entered until these guardians have been passed; and the way to pass them is to recognize their apparent power as a figment merely of the restricted field of one's own ego-centered consciousness: not confronting them as "realities" without (for when slain "out there," their power only passes to another vehicle), but shifting the center of one's own horizon of concern. As Joyce's hero, tapping his brow, muses in *Ulysses:* "In here it is I must kill the priest and the king." [25]

Meanwhile, those under the ban of those powers are, as it were, under enchantment: that is the meaning of the Waste Land theme in T. S. Eliot's celebrated poem, as it was also in the source from which he derived it, the Grail legend of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Middle Ages. That was a period when all had been compelled to profess beliefs that many did not share, and which were enforced, furthermore, by a clergy whose morals were the scandal of the age. As witnessed by the Pope himself, Innocent III (himself no saint): "Nothing is more common than for even monks and regular canons to cast aside their attire, take to gambling and hunting, consort with concubines, and turn jugglers or medical quacks." [26] The Grail King of the legend was one who had not earned through his life and character his role as guardian of the supreme symbol of the spirit, but had inherited and had simply been anointed in the part; and when riding forth, one day, on a youthful adventure of *amor* (which was appropriate enough for a youthful knight, but not for a king of the Grail), he became engaged in combat with a pagan knight whom he slew, but whose lance simultaneously unmanned him; and,

[25] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Paris: Shakespeare and Company, 4th printing, 1924), p. 552; (New York: Random House, 1934), p. 574.
[26] Innocentii III, *Epistolae*, Bk. VII, No. 75, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. CCXV, pp. 355–357.

magically, his whole kingdom thereupon fell under an enchantment of sterility, from which it would be released only by a noble youth with the courage to be governed not by the social and clerical dogmas of his day but by the dictates of a loyal compassionate heart. Significantly, in the leading version of the tale, by the poet Wolfram von Eschenbach, every time the hero Parzival behaved as he had been taught to behave, the case of the world became worse, and it was only when he had learned, at last, to follow the lead of his own noble nature that he was found eligible to supplant and even to heal the anointed king, lifting thereby from Christendom the enchantment of a mythology and order of life derived not from experience and virtue, but authority and tradition.

In T. S. Eliot's modern poem a similar point is made, referring, however, to a modern Waste Land of secular, not religious, patterns of inauthentic living:

> *Unreal City,*
> *Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,*
> *A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,*
> *I had not thought death had undone so many.*[27]

And again, the answer to the spell of death is understood to be psychological, a radical shift in the conscious center of concern. Eliot turns for a sign to India, to the same *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, by the way, from which my figure came of the primal being who said "I" and brought forth the universe. That same Prajāpati, "Father of Creatures," speaks here with a voice of thunder, DA—which sound is variously heard by his three classes of children: the gods, mankind, and the demons. The gods hear *damyata*, "control yourselves"; mankind hears *datta*, "give"; and the demons hear *dayadhvam*, "be compas-

[27] T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909–1962* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), p. 55.

sionate."[28] In the *Upanishad* this lesson is declared to epitomize the sum of that sacred teaching by which the binding and deluding spell of egoity is undone, and in the modern poem equally, it is again pronounced as a thunder voice, releasing a rain of enlivening grace from beyond the hells and heavens of egoity. Joyce, also, in *Ulysses*, invokes a thunderclap (which then resounds through every chapter of his next work, *Finnegans Wake*) to break the self-defensive mask of his young hero, Stephen Dedalus, whose heart thereafter is open through compassion to an experience of "consubstantiality" with another suffering creature, Leopold Bloom. And finally—to close this sample series of timely modern works renewing timeless mythological themes—Thomas Mann's hero Hans, on the Magic Mountain, his spirit set in motion by the same two powers by which the Buddha had been tempted—namely, Death and Desire—follows courageously, unimpressed by all warnings of danger, the interests of his heart, and so, learns to act out of a center of life within, or, to use Nietzsche's phrase, as "a wheel rolling from its own center" (*ein aus sich rollendes Rad*). Whereupon, once again, there is heard a "thunderclap," the *Donnerschlag*, as Mann calls it, of the cannon-roar of World War I, and the same young man who formerly had found an office job too much for him has the heart to enter voluntarily the battlefields of his century and to return thus to life.

For what to the young soul are nets, "flung at it to hold it back from flight," can become for the one who has found his own center the garment, freely chosen, of his further adventure.

To conclude, then, let me simply cite the brief poem, "Natural Music," of the Californian poet Robinson Jeffers,

[28] *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* 5.2.

where the whole sense of my argument will be found epitomized, and the way once again disclosed between the two Billikins of the garden gate to a realization of that joy at the still point of this turning world that is the informing will of all things. Joy, states James Joyce, is the proper emotion of comedy, and in Dante's *Divine Comedy* true beatitude is discovered only in the contemplation of that radiant Love by which all the pains of hell, toils of purgatory, and rapturous states of heaven are sustained: joyful wonder in the marvel of things, being, finally, the gift immortal of myth.

And so, to Jeffers (in reading whose lines, it will help to recall that the grassy Californian hills are in summertime yellow and in winter green):[29]

Natural Music

The old voice of the ocean, the bird-chatter of little rivers,
(Winter has given them gold for silver
To stain their water and bladed green for brown to line their banks)
From different throats intone one language.
So I believe if we were strong enough to listen without
Divisions of desire and terror
To the storm of the sick nations, the rage of the hunger-smitten cities,
Those voices also would be found
Clean as a child's; or like some girl's breathing who dances alone
By the ocean-shore, dreaming of lovers.

[29] Robinson Jeffers, *Roan Stallion, Tamar, and Other Poems* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1925), p. 232.