

THE PRESTIGE OF THE COSMOGONIC MYTH

A myth relates a sacred story, that is to say, it recounts a primordial event that occurred at the beginning of time. But to tell a sacred story is equivalent to revealing a mystery, because the characters in a myth are not human beings. They are either gods or civilizing heroes, and therefore their *gesta* constitute mysteries: man would not know these tales if they were not revealed to him. Consequently, a myth is a story of what happened—what the gods and supernatural beings did—at the beginning of time. “To recount” a myth is to proclaim what occurred then. Once “told,” in other words, once revealed, the myth becomes the apodictic truth: it establishes truth. “It is so because it is said to be so,” the Netsilik Eskimos declared in order to justify the validity of their sacred history and their religious traditions. The myth proclaims the advent of a new cosmic situation or narrates a primordial event, and so it is always the story of a “creation”; it tells how something has been effectuated, has begun to be. That is why the myth is interdependent with ontology; it deals solely with realities, with what really happened, with what was clearly manifest.

We are speaking, to be sure, of sacred realities because, in archaic societies, it is the sacred that is pre-eminently the real. Whatever belongs to the realm of the profane does not participate in being, precisely because the

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profane was not ontologically founded by the myth; it has no instructive model. No god, no civilizing hero, ever revealed a profane act. Everything that the gods or the ancestors did, and consequently everything that the myths recount about their creative activity, is part of the realm of the sacred and therefore participates in being. On the other hand, what men do on their own initiative, without a mythical model, belongs to the realm of the profane; therefore it is, in the end, a vain and illusory activity.

Essentially, it is this aspect of the myth that should be stressed: the myth reveals absolute holiness because it recounts the creative activity of divine beings and discloses the sanctified nature of their works. In other words, the myth describes the varied and sometimes dramatic irruption of the sacred into the world. For this reason many primitive peoples do not recount myths indiscriminately at any time or place but solely during those seasons of the year that are richest in ritual (autumn, winter) or during an interval between religious ceremonies; in a word, during a lapse of sacred time.¹ It is the irruption of the sacred into the world—an irruption recounted by myth—which really establishes the world. Each myth tells how a reality came into being, whether it be a total reality like the cosmos or merely a fragment: an island, a species of vegetable, a human institution. In telling *how* things came to exist an explanation is also given, and, indirectly, another question is answered: *why* they came to exist. The “why” always overlaps with the “how.” And this is true for the simple reason that by telling *how* a thing is born one reveals a manifestation of the sacred, the ultimate cause of any real existence.

Everything that has been created occurred at the beginning of time: *in principio*. For all creation, all life, begins in time; before a single thing existed, its own time could not exist. There was no cosmic time before the cosmos came into existence. Before a certain vegetable species was created, time, which causes it to grow, bear fruit, and perish, did not exist. That is why all creation took place at the beginning of time. Time sprang up with the first appearance of a new category of existents.

On the other hand, every creation, being a divine act, also represents an irruption of creative energy into the world. Every creation springs from a plenitude. The gods create out of excessive power, out of an overflow of energy. Creation is the result of an ontological superabundance. That is why the myth, which recounts this sacred *ontophanie*, this triumphant manifestation of the fulness of being, became the exemplary model

1. R. Petazzoni, “The Truth of Myth,” *Essays on the History of Religions* (Leyden, 1954), pp. 11–23, esp. pp. 13 ff.

for all human activities. For it alone reveals the real, the superabundant, the efficacious. "We must do as the Gods did in the beginning," an Indian text asserts (*Shatapatha Brâhmana*, VII, 2, I, 4). "So did the Gods, and so do men," *Taittiriya Br.* (I, 5, 9, 4) adds. The dominant function of the myth is therefore to fix the models for all the rites and significant human activities—subsistence or marriage as well as work, education, art, or knowledge. In conducting himself as a fully responsible human being, man imitates the gods' exemplary gestures, copies their acts, be it a simple physiological function such as eating or a social, economic, cultural, or military activity. This faithful imitation of divine models has a twofold consequence: on the one hand, by imitating the gods, man remains within the sacred and therefore within the confines of reality; on the other, the world is sanctified by the uninterrupted reactualization of divine, exemplary gestures. The religious conduct of man contributes to the maintenance of the world's holiness.

It is rather interesting to note that religious man assumes a humanity that possesses a transhuman, transcendental model. He sees himself as truly man solely to the extent that he imitates the gods, the civilizing heroes of the mythical ancestors. This means that religious man wills himself to be different from what he happens to be at the level of his secular experience. Religious man is not given; he creates himself by drawing close to divine models. As we have already stated, these models are preserved by myths, by the story of divine *gesta*. Therefore the man who belongs to traditional societies, like modern man, believes himself to be created by history; but the only history that interests him is sacred history, revealed by myths—the history of the gods. Yet modern man wants to be constituted solely by human history, hence precisely by that sum of acts which, for pre-modern man, is of no interest, since it lacks divine models. What we wish to emphasize is that, from the start, religious man fixes the model he wishes to attain on a transhuman level—the level revealed by myths. A man becomes truly a man solely by conforming to the teachings of the myths, that is to say, by imitating the gods.

At this point let us illustrate these preliminary remarks on the structure and function of myths by a few examples concerned with sacred time and space. We chose sacred time and space because the behavior of religious man in regard to them represents the best illustration of the essential role played by the myth. In the eyes of religious man, space is not homogeneous: it exhibits fissures; that is to say, portions of space exist that are qualitatively different from others. There is a sacred and therefore "strong,"

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significant space, and there are others, non-sacred spaces, which consequently lack structure and consistency—in a word, which are amorphous. Furthermore, this spatial non-homogeneity manifests itself to religious man by means of the experience of an antithesis between sacred space—the only one which is real, which truly exists—and all the rest, the shapeless expanse that surrounds him.

We must immediately add that the religious experience of the non-homogeneity of space constitutes a primordial one, homologous with a “founding of the world.” This is not a matter of theoretical speculation but of a primary religious experience which precedes any reflection about the world. The world can be constituted, thanks to the fissure affecting space, because it is this fissure which marks the “fixed point,” the central axis of all future orientation. Whenever the sacred manifests itself in any hierophancy, there is not only a split in the homogeneity of space but also a revelation of absolute reality which is in direct contrast to the non-reality of the vast, surrounding expanse. The manifestation of the sacred establishes the world ontologically. In the homogeneous and infinite expanse, where no guidepost is possible and therefore no orientation can be effected, hierophancy reveals an absolute “fixed point,” a “center.”

We can see the extent to which the discovery, or, one might say, the revelation, of sacred space holds an existential value for religious man; for nothing can begin, nothing can be done, without a prior revelation, and any orientation implies the existence of a fixed point. This is the reason why religious man has always endeavored to establish himself within the “center of the world.” In order to live in the world, one must find it, and no world can be born in the “chaos” of homogeneity and in the relativity of secular space. The discovery of projection of a fixed point—the “center”—is equivalent to the creation of the world. We hasten to recall examples that illustrate in the clearest fashion the cosmological value of the ritual orientation and the construction of sacred space.

Any religion suffices to demonstrate the non-homogeneity of space as it is experienced by religious man. Let us select an example that is meaningful to everyone: a church in a modern city. In the eyes of the faithful this church participates in space other than that of the street where it happens to be. The door that leads to the inside of the church signifies, in actuality, a solution of continuity. At the same time the threshold that separates the two spaces indicates the distance between two worlds of being—secular and religious. This threshold is both the boundary that separates and contrasts these two worlds and the paradoxical place in

which these worlds communicate, where the transition from the profane to the sacred can be effected.

From what we have just said one can understand why the church participates in space that is entirely different from that of the human agglomerations which surround it. Within the sacred inclosure the profane world is transcended. At more archaic levels of culture this possibility of transcendence is expressed by diverse images of an opening:² there, within the sacred walls, communication with the gods has become possible; consequently, there must be a “door” up above through which the gods can descend to the earth and man, symbolically, can rise to the heavens. And, indeed, this was the case for many religions; the temple, properly speaking, represents an “opening” toward the heavens and insures communication between the world and the gods.

Any sacred space implies hierophancy, an irruption of the sacred, the result of which is to detach territory in the surrounding cosmic environment and to render it qualitatively different. If no theophany, no sign of any kind, sanctified a place, then man consecrated it. For, as we have seen, the sacred is pre-eminently the real—at once power, efficiency, source of life, and fertility. Religious man’s desire to live within the sacred is equivalent, in fact, to his desire to be fixed within objective reality, to live in a real and effective world and not in an illusion. This behavior is confirmed on every level of life, but it is principally evident in religious man’s desire to live uniquely in a sanctified world, that is to say, in a sacred space. This is why techniques of orientation have been elaborated; these are, properly speaking, techniques concerned with constructions of sacred space. But it would be wrong to believe that this refers to a human endeavor, that man is able to consecrate a space by his own effort. Actually, the ritual by which he constructs a sacred space is adequate only to the extent that he reproduces the work of the gods. And, as we have seen, it is myth that reveals the history of divine works to him, offering him a model he can imitate.

To attain a fuller understanding of the need to construct sacred space ritually, one must take into account the conception that primitive and traditional societies held of the world. A man from such a society believes that an antithesis exists between the territory which he and his people inhabit and the unknown and undetermined space that surrounds him. The former is the world, the cosmos; the latter is no longer a cosmos but

2. A few examples are to be found in my study, “Centre du monde, temple, maison,” *Le Symbolisme cosmique des monuments religieux* (Rome, 1957), pp. 57–82, esp. pp. 72 ff.

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a kind of “other world,” an alien, chaotic space inhabited by larvae, demons, “foreigners” (and associated, moreover, with demons and the souls of the dead). At first glance this split in space seems to be due to the contrast between an inhabited and organized territory, therefore “cosmicized,” and the unknown space that extends beyond its frontiers; we have “cosmos,” on the one hand, and “chaos,” on the other. But we will see that, while an inhabited territory is a “cosmos,” this is precisely because it has been previously consecrated, because in one way or another it is the work of the gods or is in communication with the world of the gods.

All this emerges very plainly from the Vedic ritual concerning the occupation of a territory: possession becomes legally valid by virtue of the erection of an altar of fire dedicated to Agni. Because of this altar Agni is present, and communication with the world of the gods is assured. But the significance of the ritual is more complex; if all its articulations are taken into consideration, we see why the consecration of a territory is equivalent to its “cosmicization.” Actually, the erection of an altar to Agni is nothing but a reproduction of creation on a microcosmic scale. The water with which the clay is mixed is associated with primordial water; the clay used for the base of the altar symbolizes the earth; the lateral walls represent the atmosphere; etc. Consequently, the erection of an altar of fire—which alone warrants the occupation of a territory—is equivalent to the cosmogony.³

An unknown, foreign, unoccupied territory nonetheless participates in the fluid and larva-like modality of chaos. In occupying it, man transforms it into cosmos by a ritual repetition of the cosmogony. What is to be “our world” must be “created” beforehand, and any creation possesses a mythical model: the gods’ creation of the universe. When the Scandinavian colonists took possession of Iceland and cleared it, they did not look upon this enterprise either as an original endeavor or as a human and secular accomplishment. In their eyes this labor was but the repetition of a primordial act: the transformation of chaos into cosmos by the divine act of creation. Consequently, everything that is not “our world” is not yet a “world,” and a territory becomes “ours” only by creating it anew—in other words, by consecrating it.

In this instance one realizes the major role played by the cosmogonic myth. For it is this myth that reveals how the world was first created. Men

3. Cf. the texts cited in my *Le Mythe de l'éternel retour* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), pp. 112 ff.; English trans., *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1955).

have but to imitate this instructive gesture of the gods. The following example illustrates what we have just said. According to a myth of the Achilpa, an Australian tribe, in the beginning the Holy Being, Numbakula, “cosmized” their future territory, created their ancestor, and established their institutions. Numbakula fashioned a sacred stake from the trunk of a gum tree and, having first anointed it with blood, climbed it and disappeared into the heavens. This stake represents a cosmic axis, for the territory surrounding it became inhabitable and consequently transformed into a “world.” For this reason the ritual role of the sacred stake is a considerable one; the Achilpa take it with them during their peregrinations, and they decide which direction to take according to the way the stake inclines. This allows the Achilpa, despite continuous travels, always to find themselves in “their world” and also to remain in communication with the heavens, where Numbakula had disappeared. If the stake is broken, catastrophe ensues; in a way, it is the “end of the world”—regression into chaos. Spencer and Gillen relate a legend in which the sacred stake was once broken and the entire tribe fell prey to anguish; its members wandered aimlessly for a while and finally sat on the ground and allowed themselves to die.⁴

This example is an admirable illustration of both the cosmological function of the ritual stake and its soteriological role; for, on the one hand, the ritual stake is a reproduction of the one employed by Numbakula to “cosmize” the world and, on the other, the Achilpa believe that through it they can communicate with the celestial domain. And so human existence is made possible by this permanent communication with the heavens. The Achilpa’s “world” becomes truly their world only to the extent that it reproduces the cosmos as organized and sanctified by Numbakula. One cannot live without a vertical axis that permits an opening into the transcendent and, at the same time, makes orientation possible; in other words, one cannot live in chaos. Once contact with the transcendent is broken and the orientation is disrupted, it is no longer possible to live in the world, and so the Achilpa allow themselves to die.

The ritual stake of the Achilpa “supports” their world and assures communication with the heavens. We have here the prototype of a cosmological image that was very widespread: that of the *axis mundi*, the cosmic axis that supports the heavens and simultaneously paves the way to the

4. Sir B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Arunta* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1927), I, 374, 386; cf. also E. de Martino, “Angoscia territoriale et riscatto culturale nel mito Achilpa delle origini,” *Studi e materiali di storia della religione*, XXIII (1951–52), 51–66.

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world of the gods. We cannot detail here the innumerable images of the cosmic axis. It will suffice to state that all myths which stress the Tree of the World, the Cosmic Mountains, pillars, stone columns, or ladders that link the earth with the heavens, express this fundamental idea: that a "center of the world" exists thanks to which communication with the heavens can be accomplished and around which the totality of the habitable world extends. The "center" is the place where a split in the ontological level was effectuated, where space becomes sacred, therefore pre-eminently real. This also means that the universe is created from its center and extends from a central point that is like its "navel." Thus, according to the *Rig Veda* (X, 149), the universe is born and evolves; it starts from a nucleus, from a central point. Jewish tradition is even more explicit: "His Holiness created the world like an embryo. Just as the embryo grows from the navel, so God began to create the world. Starting with the navel, it spread out thence in all directions."⁵

The occupation of an unknown or foreign territory, the establishment of a village, the construction of a sanctuary or merely of a house, constitute so many symbolical repetitions of the cosmogony. Just as the visible universe develops from a center and spreads in four directions, just so does the village grow around a crossroads. In Bali as well as in certain regions of Asia, when a new village is first under construction, an effort is made to find a natural crossroads where two perpendicular roads intersect. The division of the village into four sectors corresponds to the division of the universe into four horizons. Often an empty place is left in the middle of the village; there, a little later, the cultural house will be built, the roof of which will symbolically represent the heavens (in some cases the heavens are indicated by the top of a tree or by the image of a mountain).⁶ At the other end of the village one will find the world of the dead, symbolized by certain animals (snakes, crocodiles, etc.) or by ideograms depicting darkness.⁷ The cosmic symbolism of the village is repeated in the structure of the sanctuary or the cultural house. At Waropen, in New Guinea, the "house for men" is placed in the middle of the village. Its roof represents the celestial archway, and the four walls correspond to the four directions of space.

5. Rabbinical text cited in *Le Mythe de l'éternel retour*, p. 36.

6. C. Tg. Bertling, *Vierzahl, Kreuz und Mandal in Asien* (Amsterdam, 1954), p. 11.

7. This iconographic complex is to be found in China, India, Indonesia, and New Guinea (cf. Bertling, *op. cit.*, p. 8).

One is scarcely surprised to encounter analogous conceptions in ancient Italy and among the ancient Germans. We are, after all, dealing with an archaic and very widespread notion: the city is an *imago mundi*; consequently, its construction imitates cosmogony. The Roman *mundus* was a circular ditch, divided into four parts. It was both an image of the cosmos and an exemplary model of the human habitat. It has been correctly suggested that the *Roma quadrata* must be conceived not as having the shape of a square but as being divided into four parts.⁸ The *mundus* was obviously associated with the *omphalos*, the earth's umbilicus: the city was situated in the middle of the *orbis terrarum*. It has been demonstrated that the same ideas explain the structure of Germanic villages and cities.⁹ In extremely diverse cultural contexts we always find the same cosmological pattern and the same ritual scenario: settling down in a territory is equivalent to founding the world. In other words, man progressively occupies increasingly vast areas of the planet and "cosmicizes" them in accordance with the model revealed by the cosmogonical myth. Thanks to this myth, man also becomes a creator. At first glimpse all he seems to do is to repeat indefinitely the same archetypal gesture. In reality, however, he conquers the world, organizes it, and transforms the natural landscape into a cultural environment. Herein resides the great secret of myths: they incite man to create. They continuously open up new perspectives for his creative genius, although superficially they seem to paralyze human initiative because they appear to be intangible models.

In all traditional societies, to "cosmicize" a space is equivalent to consecrating it, because the cosmos, being a divine work, is sacred by virtue of its very structure. To live in a cosmos is, above all, to live in a sanctified space, one that offers the possibility of communication with the gods. We have seen that the Achilpa's sacred stake symbolizes both an opening toward the transcendent and communication with the heavens where Numbakula had disappeared. Hence the "cosmicization," therefore the consecration, of space by some kind of ritual technique of orientation is also repeated when a house is being built. One perceives this "cosmicization" in the very structure of the home. Among a good many archaic peoples, particularly among hunters and seminomadic shepherds, the home possesses a symbolism that transforms it into an *imago mundi*. Among the nomads the stake that supports their tent is associated with the cosmic axis; for sedentary peoples a central pillar or the hole for smoke evacua-

8. Cf. Werner Müller, *Kreis und Kreuz* (Berlin, 1938), pp. 60 ff.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 65 ff.

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tion¹⁰ plays the same role. All this represents the symbolism of the “center of the world”; having examined it in several prior works, we shall not come back to it.¹¹ And so we conclude: just as occupied territory, the city or village, reproduces the universe, so does the home also become an *imago mundi* because of the ritual orientation and the symbolism of the center.

In summary we might say that traditional societies want to live continuously in a sacred space and that it is myth which teaches them how they must build this sacred space: by imitating the work of the gods—cosmogony. Therefore the myth forces religious man to become responsible for the creation of the world in which he has chosen to live. To settle down in a land, to build a village, calls for a vital decision, an existential choice. For tragic, bloody cosmogonies also exist, and, as the imitator of divine gestures, man is compelled to repeat these gestures. The bloody sacrifices on the occasion of building a city or a house are explicable in terms of the need to imitate the primordial sacrifice by virtue of which the gods created the cosmos.

Since “our world” is a cosmos, any external attack threatens to transform it into chaos. And since “our world” was founded by imitating the exemplary work of the gods—cosmogony—those enemies who attack it are associated with the enemies of the gods, the demons and especially the archdemon, the primordial dragon that was conquered by the gods in the beginning of time. An attack against “our world” can be likened to the revenge of the mythical dragon that rebels against the work of the gods, against the cosmos, attempting to reduce it to nothingness. The enemies are ranked with the powers of chaos. Any destruction of a city is equivalent to a regression to chaos. Any victory against the attacker repeats the gods’ exemplary victory over the dragon (that is, over chaos). The dragon is the exemplary figure of the sea monster, of the primordial serpent, a symbol of the cosmic waters, of darkness, of night and death—in short, of the amorphous, the potential—everything that has no “form.” The gods had to conquer and destroy the dragon so that the cosmos could be created. It was with the body of Tiamat, the sea monster, that Marduk fashioned the world. Just as the gods’ triumph over the forces of darkness, of death and chaos is repeated each time the city is victorious over its invaders, so must the gods’ victory over the dragon be repeated symbolically each year; for each year the world must be re-created.

10. Cf. my *Le Chamanisme* (Paris: Payot, 1951), pp. 235 ff.

11. Cf. *Le Mythe de l'éternel retour*, pp. 30 ff.; *Images et symboles* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), pp. 33 ff.; and “Centre du monde, temple, maison,” *op. cit.*, *passim*.

And so we see that the principal function of the cosmogonic myth is to serve as an exemplary model for the periodic regeneration of time. Each new year is a resumption of time from its beginning, that is to say, a repetition of the cosmogony. A great many of the New Year's rituals can be explained as an attempt to revive primordial time, "pure" time, the time of the creation. The ritual struggle between two groups of contestants, the return of the dead, the saturnalia and orgies—all these are elements which signify that, at the end of this year and while we await the new one, the mythical advent representing the transition from chaos to cosmogony is being repeated. The Babylonian New Year's ceremony, the *akîtu*, is fairly conclusive. During this ceremony, *Enuma elish*, the "Poem of the Creation," was recited. This ritual recitation revived the struggle between Marduk and the sea monster, Tiamat, which took place at the beginning of time. This struggle was re-enacted by two groups of contestants. The mythical event became actual. "May he continue to vanquish Tiamat and abbreviate its days!" the person officiating would exclaim. The struggle, Marduk's victory, and the creation of the world were taking place at that very instant, *hic et nunc*.¹²

Why did men from traditional societies feel the need to relive the cosmogony annually? In order to regenerate the world by reintegrating original sacred time, the time when the creation of the world occurred. On the Iranian New Year's Day, called the *Nauroz*, the king would proclaim: "Here is a new day of a new month of a new year; we must renew what time has worn out!" Time had worn out human beings, society, the cosmos; and this destructive time was profane time, duration—to be exact, history. For time, like space, is not homogeneous; there is a sacred time, eternally present because it is eternally repeatable, and profane time, the irreversible duration which implacably leads to death. And just as religious man wishes to live continuously in a sacred space, where the possibility of communication with the divine world exists, so does he attempt to escape from the confines of profane time and to rediscover sacred time.

In all the pre-Judaic religions sacred time was the time of the myth. primordial time, in which the exemplary acts of the gods were accomplished. But in reactualizing primordial time, that profane time which was already past, the time that contains death in its own duration, was suppressed. All the individual and collective purifications that took place on the occasion of the new year came after the abolition of time gone by and, consequently, after the abolition of all that time had worn out. Time was

12. Cf. *Le Mythe de l'éternel retour*, pp. 89 ff.

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reborn “pure,” just as it was in the beginning, from the very fact that at each new year the world was created anew. By reiterating the cosmogony, primordial sacred time was restored. The re-creation of the cosmos implied the regeneration of time. The interdependence of the cosmos and cosmic time was so thoroughly perceived by pre-modern man that in many languages the term designating the “world” is employed to mean the “year.” For example, certain North American tribes say “the world is past,” or “the earth is past,” to mean that “a year has passed.”¹³

By examining the cosmological symbolism of the temples, we gain a better understanding of this close kinship between space and sacred time. Since it is an *imago mundi*, a cosmos in miniature, the temple also represents the cosmic, temporal rhythms. The Vedic altar was not merely the cosmos; it was also the year—that is to say, cyclical time. Besides its cosmological symbolism, the Temple of Jerusalem also possessed a temporal symbolism: the twelve loaves of bread that were placed on the table were the twelve months, and the candelabra with seventy branches represented the Decans. In the Greco-Latin domain, H. Usener showed his thorough understanding of the etymological kinship between *templum* and *tempus*. We find an analogous symbolism on archaic levels of culture. The Dakota Indians affirm that the year is a circle around their sacred hut, which represents the world.¹⁴ The profound reason for all these symbols is clear: the temple is the image of the sanctified world. The holiness of the temple sanctifies both the cosmos and cosmic time. Therefore, the temple represents the original state of the world: the pure world that was not worn out by time or sullied by an invasion of the profane. This is the very image of the world as it was before history, at the very moment when it emerged from the hands of the Creator.

It is fitting to note that, by periodically repeating the cosmogony and by annually regenerating time, religious man is attempting to recover the original purity and holiness of the world as still preserved symbolically in the temple. In other words, religious man wants to live in a cosmos that is similar in holiness to that of the temple. The cosmogonic myth reveals to him how to rediscover this primordial holiness of the world. Therefore, thanks to the cosmogonic myth, religious man from the pre- and extra-Mosaic societies attempts to live in continuous imitation of the gods. It is this myth that teaches him how to found a humanity beyond man's

13. A. L. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1925), pp. 177, 498.

14. Werner Müller, *Die blaue Hütte* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1954), p. 133.

immediate, profane experience—a humanity that finds its model in the transcendental world of the Gods.

All creations—divine or human—are definitively dependent upon this model which constitutes the cosmogony. To create is, after all, to remake the world—whether the “world” happens to be a modest cabin, a humble tool, or a poem. The repetition of the cosmogony, whether periodic or not, is not an absurd and childish superstition of a humanity squatting in the darkness of primordial stupidity. In deciding to imitate the gods and to repeat their creative acts, primitive man had already taken upon himself that which, later, was revealed to us, the moderns—the very destiny of man. By this I mean the creation of the world we live in, the creation of the universe in which one wishes to live.