

## **Myth as the Primordial Language of the Primordial Man: A Reflective Account**

**Rajeev Kumar Gupta**

**Ph.D. Scholar (Linguistics), Jawaharlal Nehru University, India**

[rajeevg2002@gmail.com](mailto:rajeevg2002@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

This paper presents the notion of the primordial man, and his language. Humans have always been inquisitive. Hence, it remains a predominant quest of any thinker to ponder upon who was the first man, from whom the current humanity has inherited its physical and spiritual characteristics. This quest also makes us speculate the primordial language, from which all modern languages are believed to have derived. Numerous thinkers since the antiquity have been wondering and pondering on this. They also formulated many theories. But it is not easy to reach any conclusion. We can also witness the conflicting theories about these primordials. Heidegger suggested that we cannot find the truth of historical humans through historiographical analysis. They are to be called as historical humans because they had history, but not in the sense of ordinary understanding of history.

In this paper, I am primarily concerned with making a reflective yet argumentative account of the notion of Myth as the primordial language, and as the language spoken by the primordial man. This is an attempt to synthesize the ideas of a few philosophers to make it a balanced narrative.

**Keywords:** Myth, Mythology, Language, primordial language, Intuition

### **Introduction**

The objective of this paper is to discuss the notion of myth as a primordial language, the primordial human, and the possibility of new mythology from two different approaches, namely, structuralist and post-structuralist. The prominent thinkers to be considered here are Levi-Strauss, Ernst Cassirer, Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Jean-Luc Nancy among others.

It is useful to forth the argument of Nancy that- "It is true that we do not know very much about what mythic truth was or is for men living in the midst of what we call 'myths.' We no

longer live in mythic life, nor in a time of the mythic invention of speech” (Nancy, J.L., 1991, p. 43). Here, my argument is a myth is a story told by some wise man, say having infinitely huge potential manifested by multiple states of consciousness and cognition, for instance, savage mind or universal mind. The story in question is the product of his creative imagination after perceiving the objects around- a kind of generalization (conjecture) in a narrative form. The story is identified by many people with their experiences, and so shared by generations. On these assumptions- can we consider the entire work by Plato is a myth and the characters were fictitious, or at least their speeches were the invention of one human mind- Plato?

### **Myth Defined**

As defined in Wikipedia, Myth is defined as “a sacred narrative, usually explaining how the world or humankind came to be in its present form” (“Myth”, Para.8). It's an ideology in narrative form. Further, “even before entering the narrative, myth is made up of emergence, it is inaugural. It is the speech, the figure, the act that circumscribes the event at the heart of man, emotive like an infant; it is a fixed narrative” (Nancy, J.L., 1991, p. 49). That's why Levi-Strauss asserts that myth is still “a primordial language: the element of an inaugural communication in which exchange and sharing, in general, are founded or inscribed” (Nancy, J.L., 1991, p. 48). It is that tremendous “anonymous voice was uttering a discourse from the depth of the ages, issuing from the extreme depths of the mind” (Nancy, J.L., 1991, p. 160).

Myths are “heard words springing from the mouth of a humanity present to the world. It is speech live from the origin, live because it is original and original because it is live... It is the opening of a mouth immediately adequate to the closure of a universe (Nancy, J.L., 1991, p.49-50). We can say that “myth is very precisely the incantation (a ritual recitation of words or sounds believed to have a magical effect) that gives rise to a world and brings forth a language that gives rise to a world in the advent of a language” (Nancy, J.L., 1991, p. 48). And there comes the notion of 'new mythology' which “contains both the idea that mythology of a necessary innovation in order to create a new human world on the ground of the finished world of ancient mythology, and at the same time the idea that mythology is always the obligatory form- and perhaps the essence of innovation” (Nancy, J.L., 1991, p. 51). According to Schlegel, “a new humanity must arise from in its new myth, and this myth itself must be nothing less than the totalization of modern literature and philosophy as well as ancient mythology, revived and united with the mythologies of the other peoples of the world” (Nancy, J.L., 1991, page. 51).

If the homo-sapiens are born with the gift of language, then who was the first one to speak (or utter)? Here, I am considering verbal language for the sake of simplicity. Why did he speak? Whom did he speak to? What did he speak?

Let us assume that human being has infinite potential, and that refers to having an endless state of consciousness. Each state is represented by some cognitive elements- ideas, beliefs. Assume all human beings are alike and similar potential across humanity. Now let us consider the myth as a story told by some wise man. How did he create it? Was it just for the sake of yelling or entertaining, and or some belief was inbuilt into their thought process (cognitive process)? Did it have educative purpose? If so, how did he get inspired? Whether some divine inspirations came into his mind directly- effortlessly (from nowhere or elsewhere), inspired by creative imagination after perceiving the objects around, or merely hallucinations.

### **An Insight into Mythic Thoughts**

Myth is generally regarded as a story told by a Wiseman and followed by generations. But long before the so-called creation of moral and educational tale, it was the first human who created a myth, and then he spoke to some other human (most likely the first female). The question is: what was the first thought came to the first human mind, and then what was the second thought? Also, how did these thoughts come to his mind? Perhaps, these were intuitive thoughts as Kant (1987) describes. Here, we can say that consciousness is the use of intellect in managing intuitive feelings. It's also about accepting or rejecting these spontaneous thoughts.

Further, these intuitive thoughts do not belong to 'a priori' of Kant (1999), because these thoughts were the first ones to come into existence. Here, we are assuming that this first man was the first and only person of the human race, to have appeared on the earth. And then he created the world of his kind. Intuitive thoughts might be God-given, but selecting the right one, and make into reality was dependent on his will, provided he was able to receive other ideas in support of his acts.

Now, let us come back to the question of myth. Even what we call as science is indeed a myth. The organized body of knowledge (or belief or speculation) of the observable and non-observable things and thoughts. Any thought which is as of now being regarded as logical and rational was once discarded as irrational by the fellow people of the original thinkers. History is flooded with such instances. For example, Italian scientist Galileo Galilei, who proposed that it is the earth that revolves around the sun and not the vice-versa. Galileo must have his own story to prove his point, and that was the rational interpretation of then existing empirical data. Here, what he used was his intuition.

Some thoughts and ideas came to his mind from nowhere or elsewhere or somewhere. He was on his success in acquiring the set of multiple views, mutually related with a particular kind of structure, and tending towards the definite conclusion or destination that only Galileo could understand. An intervening point can be put forth here that it is possible that the same idea and the same structure of thoughts or the same idea with different arrangement of views could have

come to some other's mind in the world at the same time of Galileo or at some other point of time in the history before Galileo. Also, it doesn't mean that once the world accepted Galileo's arguments, and so no one in the world will think in the other way around. Yes! Today almost every human being knows this fact. Today, the world population is over seven billion, and out of these, at least one person must be there somewhere who is not aware of this fact, and believes that earth is the center of the universe.

The idea is - mythical thoughts contain rational and irrational elements. It is the result of the creative imagination of the myth maker, which includes the immediate experience as the perception of the objects around, the observation of the internal thought processes. These internal thought processes are varied, such as dreams, delusions, hallucinations, imaginations (baseless) apart from the conscious wakeful state. The sixth sense which is supposed to be the female's prerogative is usually not natural to men. They have to learn it by effort unless they are endowed with the ability ever since their birth or by identification of their mother. On the other way around, they might have developed the habit of repressing their intuitive thinking to proliferate their rational thought although this distinction between male-female natural thinking is regarded as the result of social construction, and so a subject matter of research. The Darwinians would say that men are analytical and destructive, whereas women are imaginative and constructive. Ever since the beginning of human existence, men with a stronger and active body were supposed to make untiring efforts to find food and go beyond their existing territory as an explorer.

On the other hand, women with a relatively weaker and passive body were supposed to preserve and nurture the existing state. Now the question is: whether the division of work resolved by our ancestors was a social construction or due to the condition imposed by their biological differences. If the story as depicted above may be discarded as myth, and not the truth, then what could be the alternative truth? After all what made the earliest man and woman learn to co-exist. What thinking processes they had to undergo to speculate about each other's differences, and then to think about how they could be managed together. Here, we can suggest an alternative myth that at the beginning of humanity, God blessed both man and woman the spontaneous understanding about their differences, and thus they had been successful in forwarding the human civilization to the generations. But this appears to happen unlikely, and today we find couples fighting together for trivial reasons no matter how dedicated they are to one another and might be committing to love each other more than himself or herself. This feeling of non-sexual love is undoubtedly a dominant factor in the human thought process ever since the era of the first human.

### **The First Myth Maker**

The first human was the first myth maker. Here, we can refer to the insights of Prof. Ernst Cassirer, who in the early 1920s wrote in his book "*Language and Myth*" regarding the origin of language. According to him, both language and myth are the twin creature. Here, he suggests myths to be something that is beyond the immediate experience of daily activity. It is something describing the unknown based on known. So, it can be argued that any new thing analogous to known could be arbitrarily assigned the name or symbol of that of known. This gave the birth of practice of metaphors. This is how the first man created his language. First by assigning names to the things. These names must be the first utterance from the human vocal system in response to some stimuli presented before him. These utterances were the first words ever in the history of human existence. Later the man observed their constancy in spatial and temporal dimensions, and so these static objects were the first nouns. But the natural inquisitiveness of man led him to perceive the variations in some objects both spatially and temporarily. These varying natures of the objects inspired him to discover verbs. Now the world was full of objects- both static and dynamic. Again, specific feature was found to be repetitive, gave birth to the thought of exploring the periodicity, such as days, months (in modern terms). This was observed naturally because some distant objects such as Moon and Sun appear to be at the same place and moves through the same trajectory.

Further, the variation of shapes could be experienced observing same natural creature such as animals, plants growing from tiny to giant (provided the first man stayed at the same place for the longer duration and watched patiently for what was happening). The words related to comparisons were invented by him to distinguish between an ant and an elephant, between a drop of water and an ocean, between a pebble and a mountain. The first man was able to sense the binary oppositions such as hot spring and chilled ice, high mountain peak and deep lake bottom, hard rock and gentle air etc, along with the continuum between the two extremes, especially the neutral positions such as his ground level which exist in between the top and bottom, the temperatures of the similar to his own body temperature.

Here, the ideas of Levi-Strauss (2013) are worth mentioning: Myth is nothing but the act of reconciliation between the binary oppositions. What he proposed is that the myths and folktales can be analyzed by recognizing the binary oppositions. He intended to simplify the analysis of myths and folktales that were suggested by Russian Philosopher Vladimir Propp (2010) in terms of 31 basic functions. Levi-Strauss's works led to the structuralist school of thought in determining the deep structure, which A.J. Greimas (1983) called semio-narrative. This method of analysis can show that all the intellectual discourses, whether philosophical, literary, mythic-religious, political, or scientific are also partly organized on similar bases. Apart from that, the deep semio-structures reflect the lived experiences of passions, ideologies, actions, dreams, etc. Greimas's semio-narrative grammar is mainly concerned by a genuinely original

relationship between syntax and semantics, which is nothing but the projection (or conversion) of the paradigmatic axis onto the syntagmatic shaft.

In other words, the objective of the structuralism was in determining the understanding truth of the mythological discourses. And at this particular point, the voices of poststructuralist philosophers become audible. Let us consider the position of Foucault (1997) that there are procedures, practices, theories to determine the truth, but the truth of one kind in one way is suppression of the truth of another kind. Thus, a mythology which is defined as the science of myth can never determine the truth of the actual event. By making the etymological analysis, mythology is made of two roots, say, *mythos* (i.e., False), and *logos* (i.e., Right), *Mythos* or myths are the false representations, and imagination, whereas, *logos* or right leads to sciences. Thus, the truth of the myths can never be found.

Here, it would be relevant to bring forth about Nietzsche (2002), who defines truth as a movable force of metaphor and metonymy. Thus, truth is merely an illusion, and these illusions are forgotten. Illusions are a false perception. Whatever we label the truth (i.e., Original event) is subject to the limits of observation's perception. The observer in this case a human, and a human's capacity of sense perception is bounded. For instance, he can see the objects which can see the objects which reflects the waves with wavelengths between 4000 A and 7000 A, and he can hear sounds within the defined range of 12 to 20 K Hz frequency and intensity within the range 0-120 decibels. The same is true in case of other senses such as touch, taste, and smell. The sixth sense which is nothing but the prediction in terms of projection of outcomes by collaborating the imagined effects of the perceived reality through five senses. Further, women are more sensitive to the high-end frequency range than their male counterparts.

Now, in general, the ability of acute perception can trigger lofty thoughts, which is nothing but the high speed, highly intense, and high numbered sequence of thoughts. These lofty thoughts are referred to as creative imagination if agreed upon by several other individuals. If we are fully conscious, we don't allow our imagination to go beyond the limits and make sure that reality is not distorted, i.e. we try our best that what we are thinking is in the direction of what the reality is, i.e., What is the truth. In the same manner, we can say that the myth may not be depicting the complete truth, but definitely, have some truth at its root. The myths traversing through the process of multiple permutation and combination, but its original educational value must have retained over time, and also been capitalizing the vales of the subsequent generations.

Further, we can bring into the point suggested by Gill (1996) that myths communicate to each other as well. In most of the cases, we find that there are many levels of myth makers or speakers, in which one character starts narrowing another story, or the nature of one character is described by another story. Here, the criticism of Derrida (2016; 2001) appears to be relevant, who reiterates that myth in itself is deconstructed. Thus, according to him, the truth has already

vanished away. The point suggested by Derrida is realistic, and at the same time gives a clue that myth is an example of multiplicity, i.e., Existence of multiple ideas together.

The study of myth can be taken into consideration of the fact that they give the clue of the structure of human thought processes, i.e., various possible ways of multiplicity. These can suggest how a thought can depart from its destination, which is what Deleuze (1999) named as *schiz* (i.e., the point of departure from the destination). Thus, Deleuze's schizoanalysis can become a useful tool in analyzing the myths differently. As Deleuze (1994), himself, suggested in his book "Difference and repetition," that any idea is a structure of multiple ideas. These ideas are described in terms of thoughts, which are represented in the ordinary language, i.e., Arrangement of words. As we have already discussed elsewhere in this paper that each word is a conceptual metaphor, it has its structure meaning, and this structure may be spherical or tree-like or any other shape similar to some natural object. Its elements may be related or isolated. The point to be emphasized here is that our every utterance makes a new language, i.e. a newer arrangement of our conceptual world. Needless to say that this conceptual world is mere the representation of our perception of our external and internal world. Thus, our conceptual world is analogous to the real world provided we can go beyond the perception. So, again to remind that we have a limited perceptual capacity. This capacity is limited not only because of the physiological limits but also because of our limited awareness of the world.

There are various methods for increasing this awareness or attaining the state of self-awakening or enlightenment. One such method is by actually learning the concepts and facts of the world using the books of all disciplines, i.e., unifying all the human sciences. But here the words of precaution come from French Philosopher Henry Bergson (1998; 2010), who says intellect can never lead to Absolute knowledge unless it is mediated by Intuition. Here, Intuition is the thinking in duration. Duration is the flow of time as a continuum- coming from the past and moving towards the future. What is available at present has a spatial dimension. What is perceived in the present is the result of synchronization of one the images of the past recollections and the present reality? Thus, any concept is formed based on similarity with the past image, or which has a similar conceptual structure. One may modify his previous concept by incorporating additional features from the nearly similar objects to be perceived by five human senses. Needless to say, every human being is presented with different objects, but their perception varies. This variation is due to different sense-perceptual capacities. But, all of us share everyday experiences, it suggests that we all organize our concepts in a nearly same manner. The individual variations may be due to the individual differences corresponding to space, time and physiological factors represented by body.

Further, we accept something readily when we find it analogous to one of the past images or structures. So, here it indicates the ideal form of Plato from which all the objects have been

derived. It appears that this ideal form is a multiplicity represented in terms of the continuum in which all the possible conceptual structures in the world lies. So, it calls on the attaining absolute knowledge by unifying intellect (Human Sciences) and Intuition (Mythic-religious literature). The science is the result of logic, whereas myth is the manifestation of human imagination. Philosophy provides the link between science and religion, because it deals with the fundamental thought processes, giving ways to streams of science and religion. The idea of unification by many philosophers like Hegel (2014) and Levi-Strauss (1963; 2013), which was criticized by the poststructuralists on the ground that such attempt is fruitless and unrealistic as the truth cannot be achieved this way, because truth itself does not exist. Ideal form or essence is not at all possible. Here, it can be argued that Plato himself believed that essence is unachievable, but it gives us an impetus to thinking. Perfect unification or Integration is neither possible nor desirable, but an attempt in doing so raises our level of thinking to the higher level. When Nietzsche (2002) says that the truth is an illusion, so any idea of achieving the truth through unification is fruitless, but at the same time, this effort can raise the status of an ordinary man to the '*Urbemensch*,' i.e., Over-man, or Higher man, i.e., someone who behaves more than or different from other men. He is more powerful than other men in terms of capacity to think. Such a man can not only think differently from the others but also he can think what others can think about him and others.

## Conclusion

The description as mentioned above leads us of the idea of 'Empirical Man' and 'Anthropological Man'. The first man was an empirical man who was incessantly analyzing his perceptual results or data. Obviously, he was also a 'Rational Man' of rationalists like- Plato and Descartes' Genius and Evil-Genius (like Hollywood Movie the Matrix's character) who could build his world his way at his own will. Not only this, but he was also a Kant's Transcendental Man, who was receiving knowledge coming from the way of Intuition.

So, this man [the first man or the primordial man] was blessed with three socially accepted means of attaining knowledge- say, rational, empirical and intuition. And, so whether the first language was something mysterious that encapsulated all the features can only be said to have inherited? This school of thought usually belong to analytical philosophy of language and structuralists. Throughout their life they remain engaged in search of something 'metalanguage', which is regarded as the precursor of all modern languages. Yes, many names are associated with this 'The Language', such as- the Adam's language, primordial language, primitive language or language of the primitive people. Their endeavor remains confined to find the set of rules which could represent this language.

Most of the linguistics departments across the universities are restlessly busy in collecting as many linguistic data, with the expectation of reaching their goal- Adam's language, which may be only a myth. Whereas, the other school of thought represented by poststructuralist thinkers are knowingly and unknowingly influenced by Heidegger. They are of firm belief that



such language is non-existent, and myth, as a primordial language, bring out languages and culture. But the origin of this first language is not yet known, in fact, the origin itself cannot be known through ordinary ways of thinking. For Heidegger (1962), language is critical in building human language and culture, but this language is not to be conceptualized as the way we ordinarily do. Language has an ontological and existential role to play in human life, and by making representational analysis, its true nature cannot be known.

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**Rajeev Kumar Gupta**  
Ph.D. Scholar (Linguistics),  
Jawaharlal Nehru University, India  
[rajeevg2002@gmail.com](mailto:rajeevg2002@gmail.com)