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**Essay 2: Myth**

Although myths may have complex histories, liminal meanings, and borderless implications, they are all connected with human perception. They showcase the relationship that humans have with the world. And though this is well known, what myths may emphasize and how they go about emphasizing them is not. Many authors like Sproul, Bringhurst, Kane, and Kimmerer all view the nature of and uses of myths in different shades of light. However, each can still agree on some key elements that thread all their perspectives together into a single tapestry of understanding.

Kane focuses in on is how myths communicate an integrative system, a pattern of things. If the context of the system is lost, the messages that the myth are trying to communicate are lost. Kane emphasizes that myths express patterns within the natural world and these patterns in themselves can be gods, regardless of if they are just moments in time. Liminality does not determine whether a ‘something’ is a god or not, it is simply another facet of what makes up that god. It is an experience. A product of our sense perceptions intermingling to register a pattern in the world and if you choose to dissect these patterns into parts, you choose to receive only a facet of that experience – one that doesn’t make much sense. Like eyes, it takes two to focus in and see an image in its “true form.” A single eye, or even two unfocused eyes, will not give the image justice, will not communicate reality. Kane gives breath to this idea when he writes “…because a people coevolve with their habitat, because they walk the paths their ancestors walked, myth-telling assumes that the stories already exist in nature, waiting to be overheard by humans who will listen for them.” (pg.33) Myths express the patterns that humans perceive in the natural world, but the patterns exist regardless of whether we recognise them.

Sproul shies away from this focus on patterns, instead highlighting the theoretical ecological aspects of tribal religions and myths. She emphasizes the answers that myths provide. Myths were communicated in their entirety without much analyzation from Sproul, she wanted to express them as authentically as she could. The aspects of myths she did bring to focus to was how they form a perspective of reality and how myths, even when removed from religious practice, affect the realities if all people. Central questions of value and meaning can be answered most directly with myths through the symbols they communicate with. While Kane focused on how myths expressed the patterns that human register in the world, Sproul instead defines them as “…whole stories, dramas placed in the familiar world of time and space that attempt to reveal, through their common details and particulars, truths that are uncommon and universal.” (pg.13) She focuses in more on their moral implications – what they can teach us about both ourselves and the more than human world.

Bringhurst in his texts brings elements that both Sproul and Kane discuss, but often brings in science to highlight how myths operate. He presents science as a sort of inverse of myth. Sharing the idea that science analyzes the world as a pile of dead things to observe in isolation, rather than a whole complex system of living moments that meld into one another. By reducing things to their parts, proclaiming them as dead and sterile, it’s easy to adopt the notion that they are less than human. They lose both their respect as things in themselves and their power in teaching us about the world around us. After all, “…the presumption of mythology is always that the world has more knowledge and more power than any human being could possess, and that the order of the world is richer and more meaningful than any order humans could impose.” (pg.71) Bringhurst argues that tribal stories are living, whole systems that try to package the world in stories, communicating the lessons hidden within patterns of the natural world.

Unlike the others, Kimmerer expresses how myths shape our realities through her own storytelling of how they have affected her life. Through her first-hand experiences as both a myth teller and scientist, she argues that science and mythology go hand in hand. They are not separate systems as much as they are separate ways to view the same world. She echoes Kane in this regard but delves deeper into how we as humans are part of the cycle of myths. Kimmerer very much emphasizes the “humanness” of myths, the power of responsibility that comes with both telling and listening to them. Myths and stories are much older, have gone through more iterations to form a better awareness of truth. They are the combinations of hundreds of generations of people watching the world breath in and out, they are powerful repositories of wisdom. They should be respected, and we should be thankful. She argues that although everyone is integrated into this world, not everyone is aware of their place or the debt of gratitude that they are under. Myths are truly manmade gifts, the only things that we can give one another. They come from the observations of the world over generations and when received properly can establish a feeling-bond through time – connecting us both with the world and the people who came before us.

Although all the authors differ on how they conveyed the purpose of myths, like the myth-tellers in the past, they all communicated a universal underlining truth. Myths connect us with the natural world. They are human made bridges to the more than human world and they breath, growing through time. Kane attempts to define myths as “…[direction] towards an emotional and philosophical language of coevolution with nature, a language that allows all life, not just human life, to participate in the ecology of the earth.” (pg.33) Investigating the in-between connections between beings and systems and things, while still being respectful of the whole system. Myths, unlike science, come with moral implications attached to their knowledge – they come with causes and motivations. This should not be surprising, since humans inherently have those same characteristics, it is because of those desires that we explore the world. Each author focused in on different elements that make up a myth, but all were trying to communicate this in the background of their texts. How myths shape our human values, how they help us navigate the world, how they tune our perspectives to reality as it truly is.