

## Theory-Tales and Paradigms

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Dramatic forms are universal in all art and experience. They provide structures which embed emotional bonds in the symbolic repertoire of a culture, internalizing them in the psyches of individuals, endowing language and acts with meaning, transforming symbolic artifacts into living presences. Collective dramas (the founding of states and nations, wars and civil wars, economic crises and internal conflicts, natural disasters and accidents, the growth of children, of crops in the fields, the building and decay of cities) provide political and social bonds, aggregates, and purposes.

The discovery of "paradigm" by Thomas Kuhn—as well as its celebration by scholars during the last decade—destroys the ultimate solidity of the objective world, substituting instead arbitrary creative constructs of culture. "Paradigm" introduces into scientific knowledge the same relativism and pluralism which science itself brought to religion, reducing all to a level of cultural ethos, if not convenience.

### The Middle Cosmos

*Paradigm* means a model that we accept as reality. More precisely, it refers to a conceptual framework, or a category of causes that we accept as a working artifact or tool for perceiving the environment. When one affirms the reality of something, one is applying a complex paradigm which contains all sorts of linkages, all sorts of definitions of what *thingness* is: what are *forces*, what is *matter*, what are the moving parts. A paradigm is far more basic than any of the possible worlds it contains; it is far more basic than the cluster of theories about its inner connections, conditions, and operations. It contains an infinite number of potential adumbrations and modalities, which may or may not get spelled out by theory. The paradigm itself *is not empirical* and cannot be tested empirically. It cannot be proven true or false by laboratory demonstrations.

Rather, the paradigm is a metaphysical framework of definitions and relationships out of which specific empirical programs may be drawn. The test of a paradigm is social legitimacy and not empirical efficacy. Appropriate symbolic material to provide sufficient hooks and handles

for events and actions can be discovered in any paradigmatic material. Whether one chooses this or that paradigm depends upon loyalty, group affiliation, the baggage of culture. The rules of instrumental manipulation that are supposed to be inherent and intrinsic to a given model of reality can be rationalized either to fit or to challenge any paradigm, depending upon whether one wishes to affirm or to disconfirm the social legitimacy with which it is associated.

Paradigms of reality do not arise from fact, but in Jung's words, "they clothe themselves in fact as it were" (Progoff, 1953, p. 77). Like the invisible jet streams in the skies that determine the course of a storm, invisible currents arise from the paradigmatic stories of our culture which shape our lives. They are the structuring agents of the human order. They constitute a "mesocosm—a mediating, middle cosmos through which the microcosm of the individual is brought into the relation of the macrocosm of the all. This mesocosm is the entire context of the body social, which is thus a kind of living poem, hymn, or icon of mud and reeds, of flesh and blood, of dreams . . ." (Campbell, 1959, p. 149).

Kuhn marked the breakthrough in his *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). He stepped away from the positivism that has dominated scientific thinking for two generations. He recognized that scientific theories are metaphors with no inevitable or necessary correspondence to any objective universe. Paradigms are seen as cultural inventions, "universally recognizable scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners." (Kuhn, 1962, p. x). The metaphor constitutes "truth" by definition and consensus. It may provide inspiration for many diverse bodies of theory, and is never completely formulated or spelled out in all of its implications.

At any given time "normal science" consists of working within the prevailing paradigm, making it more specific and precise "by extending the knowledge of those facts that the paradigm displays as particularly revealing, by increasing the extent of the match between those facts and the paradigm's predictions, and by further articulation of the paradigm itself" (Kuhn, 1962, p. 24). Anomalies exist in any theoretical material. When a motive to challenge the prevailing legitimacy of the paradigm or its practitioners arises, the anomalies are exploited by young scientists building their careers on the shoulders of the past. Scientific revolutions occur when the existing paradigms lose legitimacy, not necessarily because they cannot deal with the anomalies (if there is a will, there is a way), but because they have been challenged by a new metaphor which represents new activity, new personnel, and new culture forms. Kuhn emphasizes that scientific revolutions are "non-cumulative developmental episodes in which an older paradigm is replaced in whole or in part by an incompatible new one" (Kuhn, 1962, p. 91).

Exactly the same process occurs in other aspects of culture. If you were to turn the process of technological growth backwards and remove the extensions of humankind layer-by-layer, the operationally true description of reality would likewise regress, and all the things that contemporary science takes for granted would become mad and meaningless dreams. Truth is always a paradigm based on a myth of legitimacy; its continuation or decline depends upon a political process. There is no absolute sense in which one theory is more or less true than another. Elaborate patterns of action are created to substantiate a "truth." A truth is "absolute" among believers who share the same values, and who deem the "truth" so obvious as to be beyond challenge. In this period of dying truths, we discover "paradigms" (another name for dying truths?).

### Rationality

A primitive person seeks to control nature through prayers and incantations. Words are important because they carry an operational code about the nature of reality. If you can give a thing the "right" name, you know what to do about it; you are putting it in a frame of reference based on some consensus about appropriate action. In addition, since words and thoughts do influence the relations of persons to one another, it is but a short jump to the conclusion that the physical world will likewise respond magically to words and thoughts.

Modern humanity deals with the world through rationalization. Rationality is not an absolute. In symbolic terms, it is the structure of language—a set of rules governing a sequence of propositions based on irreducible axioms, principles, and definitions (Chomsky, 1975, pp. 120-127, 214-23). *Rational* merely means uniform, continuous, sequential, capable of being weighed or measured. The syllogism is the basic unit of symbolic rationality; through it anything can be rationalized, that is, made to appear rationally sequential. The content and symbols of the syllogism are provided by a paradigm, i.e., a descriptive model or metaphor. These embody the ethos of the time, motives and interests, values, forecasts of the future: in short, the myths and stories of the culture. Every sectarian group claims unique rationality for its own metaphysical preferences. Like beauty, truth, and sexual prowess, rationality is a claim of legitimacy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In practical terms, one may define rationality, as does the economist, as the optimizing of choices and rewards. Such a concept is value-neutral and can be mated to any given set of values. Obviously, this use of the word rationality has little to do with its use in formal logic. One can be completely rational, in the sense of maximizing one's bargaining position, without relying on a web of logical symbols and verbal discourse. This is surely the sense in which animals, children, and inarticulate persons may behave rationally. And much that passes for symbolic rationality on the part of the articulate person is merely *post hoc* rationalization or a claim for special consideration.

It is not unusual for behavioral rationality (optimizing choices and rewards) to constitute a dimension quite apart from symbolic rationality (logical consistency). To achieve the latter, it is often necessary to refine the contradictions and reversals inherent in human behavior. In the context of bargaining, rationality is a synonym for success: rational behavior is behavior that works; irrational behavior does not work. We should avoid the fallacy: "my values which work for me, are rational; yours, *which do not work for me*, are irrational."

We recognize today the metaphorical nature of all intellectual imagery and conceptual material. We have learned that "we hold these truths to be self-evident" still provides the touchstone of reality for all creeds, political and physical. We escape the tautologies of language only by taking for granted the self-evident values of language and culture and the equities of interpersonal communication.

The consensus of scientific theory at any given time is not an inexorable approximation of reality, nor does it matter a pin. Truth always contains an arbitrary and imaginative element that is the result of a historical and social process. The notion that scientific laws represent an approach to "things in themselves" is no longer considered a necessary supposition. So-called laws of nature are a figurative shorthand.

Scientific theories that endure represent a felicitous selection among many possible ways of symbolizing events. Any construct, no matter how primitive, can be qualified with enough variables to express human experiences and the capability for prediction and control. When scientists "discover" theories, they are in fact inventing them: in the words of Simon Kuznets, "the order which they bring into the structure of the universe is of their own contriving even though the test lies in an agreement between theoretical conclusions and operational data mirroring the real world." (Schmookler, 1966, p. 19).

The anatomy of the world is coherent, because it represents the logic of a university professor who thought it up. Up to about 1850, writes William James, almost everyone believed that "sciences expressed truth(s) that were exact copies of a definite code of non-human realities." There are now too many geometries, too many logics, too many physical and chemical hypotheses, so that "the notion that even the truest formula may be a human device and not a literal transcript has dawned upon us" (Speigel, 1970, p. 37).

### Symbols

Paradigms of science arise from the imagination of individuals; the life of the imagination is more than merely a source of ornament and entertainment. It is rather "the essential instrument in the development of

human consciousness" (Read, 1965, p. 17). Writing in 1876, Conrad Fiedler contended that artistic activity "begins when man finds himself face-to-face with the visible world as something immensely enigmatical..." Such activity is "not fortuitous, but necessary; its products are not secondary or superfluous, but absolutely essential if the human mind does not want to cripple itself" (Read, 1965, p. 17). On the basis of this activity, symbolic discourse becomes possible, and religion, philosophy, and science follow.

Truth can be described as an art form. What convinces us, what has the ring, the sting, the actuality of truth meets certain requirements of form. Objects, symbols, acts which may be selected for special status combine intense ambivalence: they must be seen as simultaneously very dangerous and very attractive. Anything that is endowed with this ambivalence can be raised up into a symbol of concentrated power which can evoke and express complex messages and can refresh the incentives of old and familiar behavior forms.

All symbols of legitimacy and authority take on a sacred cast. As ritual figures, political leaders with a high degree of legitimacy are crowned with sacred qualities. They assume responsibility not only for government policy but also for the weather, the good or bad fortunes of their followers, and the preservation of their own ritual character.

Arguing against Kant, Ernst Cassirer distinguishes against "passive images" of *something given*, and "symbols" created by the intellect. "Images are given but symbols are made. Made of what? Of the images, the content of perception and experience." The intellect takes images and makes them serve as symbols. This is quite plain in the case of language. Cassirer argues that language is an active, integrating factor that goes out and discovers reality. It is not a "word-for-thing symbolizing" but rather "a means to new knowledge and discovery" (Cassirer, 1953, pp. 51, 53).

Abstractions, symbols, story, all have a structure and form which underlie the structure and form of behavior. The role of story in empowering a symbol is called, by Carl Jung, an archetype, "a psychic organ present in all of us," a vital and necessary component in our psychic economy. This archetypal dynamic is not easily injured by ratiocination and intellectualizing. Jung maintained that "In the ordinary course of things, fantasy does not easily go astray; it is too deep for that, and closely bound up with the tap root of human and animal instinct. In surprising ways, it always rights itself again" (Jung, 1953, p. 66).

The old mythic stories of the culture contain long-forgotten millennia of paleolithic truth from which contemporary truths evolved. What passes for history is always a compendium of morality tales and myths, a secular mythology that has the same functions as sacred mythology in pre-industrial societies. Pluralism and multiplicity of claims in modern

civilization lead to secularization.

With the picture of little Britain, besieged by evil hordes during World War II, Churchill brilliantly recreated the myth of St. George and the dragon. Charles de Gaulle, both as wartime leader and as President of the Fifth Republic, consciously resurrected the ghost of Joan of Arc. Americans were long emboldened by the myth of the endless frontier, the notion that a new life could always be started out West.

Most of the myths of contemporary culture are built around internal political conflict, new technology, and private narratives of love and death. The founding myths of every group include "an enemy schema" which exorcized chaos by identifying as evil the forces that were overcome in the founding of the group and that continue to threaten its survival. By externalizing evil, the group reinforces its unity and its own processes for eliminating internal conflict—holding at bay the continuous threats of dissolution and divisiveness that arise from the daily tasks of survival. Internal conflict-resolution imposes high risk and cost, and therefore only the higher risks and cost of external enemies can serve to justify it.

For the common person, the enemy schema takes the form of legends and stories of history, as well as news of subversion and espionage. For intellectuals, the enemy schema is clothed in a verbal structure called ideology, which in essence is still a story-telling vehicle, though obscured by abstract language. Constant repetitions of the social myth, whether in popular culture or in ideology, are like pledging allegiance to the flag. Every formal and informal group demands such ceremonial demonstrations of loyalty.

Every small group is constantly telling itself how right and good it is, castigating its enemies, and reinforcing its foundation tales. In pop culture, this often takes the form of denying attention to culture forms that reflect the enemy schema, while reverently performing the rituals dictated by positive symbols. Do you prefer Patti Smith and Bruce Springsteen? Is Bob Dylan washed up? Is Kissinger in league with Capitalism and the CIA? All of these issues reflect the unifying and divisive tales that give meaning to membership in value groups. Such stories define the boundaries of different groups. The same process which creates taste groups can lead to political identifications and civil wars.

As social myth, story releases energy and sustains energy, making it available for large social undertakings. This is what is meant by the Greek word *Eidos*, the formal content of culture. The genres and archetypes of literature do not simply appear, they must develop historically from origins. Northrup Frye cites the role of the poetic impulse in civilization. In its earliest phase, every society sets up a framework of

mythology in which its verbal culture grows, including its language and literature. Culture consists of a group of stories which take on a "central and canonical importance." They are believed to have really happened, or else to explain or recount something which is centrally important for a society's values (Frye, 1971, p. 34). As the culture develops, its mythology tends to become encyclopedic, expanding into a total myth covering a society's view of its past, present and future, its relation to its gods and its neighbors, its traditions, its social and religious duties, its ultimate destiny. The stories are taken to be revelations from the Gods, of from ancestors, or from a period before time began. Every culture tends in its time to be dominated by what Spengler called "the great logic of genuine and invisible history" (Spengler, 1939, p. 151). These stories may be imprinted in the language and categories of thought rather than explicit in founding stories or biblical lore. They may, like the curvature of the earth on the horizon, be so fine they have to be sensed rather than seen.

Today many commentators fear that the great culture myths of the present are being supplied by street actors and the mass media, rather than by the books of the philosophers and the teachings of scientists and academicians. The new public myths of the media possess great power to induce imitation. One successful and dramatic hijacking induces ten variations. We are constantly re-living dramatic events that we watch on the TV news or in drama. The media-mills manufacture a continuous confrontation of good and evil, grabbing our fascinated attention, and stimulating fantasy for some, performance in the streets for others. Media dramas become public myths instantaneously and irresistibly by the old immemorial processes.

### **How to Construct a Paradigm**

Reality and truth are the product of social invention, fantasy, and ritual, governed by the requirements of dramatic unity and symbolic power. So-called scientific theory is a contrivance of the human mind. Occam's Razor holds that the truth of a scientific theory arises from its economy and grace. Truth also complies with the ethos of the age. Many philosophers of science recognize that it is quite feasible to build into any kind of conceptual material an operational code for manipulating the levers and indicators of technology and the physical world. By rationalizing the experimental and laboratory results ("saving the appearances"), one might compose an operations manual for nuclear reactors based on the metaphors of extrasensory perception. There is nothing inevitable in any scientific theory; indeed, contradictory theories can and have co-existed in time, and drastic revisions of theory are always possible.

Reality paradigms that are taken for granted acquire the feel of objective truth and can be confidently used as the basis for planning future actions, for rationalizing and excusing past actions, and for communicating about common enterprises. Reality created by dramatic versimilitude need not be adaptive or functional in any "objective" sense. Rather, it is sufficient if it achieves confirmation and reinforcement through the social uses which it serves and symbolizes. This is "objective truth enough"—and all that one can hope to realize.

How to construct a paradigm? It springs from a foundation story that identifies heroes and villains, good and evil, marks the identities of key factors and malefactors. It ends by demonstrating the power of good (solution, cure, efficiency) over evil, through the practice of an implicit moral discipline (following the precepts of knowledge).

A paradigm establishes a causal sequence by asserting a particular link to be first cause in the seamless web of events. That link is assigned a negative value as "evil" or "problem." Everything else then becomes positive factors, the good guys and our friends, who "are not to blame for what happened." True, they are part of the linkage, but their intentions and motives were good, and they were only reacting "justifiably and in kind" to provocations by the evil source. In every story line, it is the identification of positive and negative factors, good guys and bad guys, which lays down schematic structures. Such polarities create the middle part of the story with its oppositions and ambivalence, its churning energy of variation and development. Blame and credit through these dangerous interactions are apportioned in terms of the original definition of characters. When the good guys win, it confirms the truth of the paradigm. When they lose, it is "a tragedy," and a fault must be found in elements of destiny, details of ambivalence, and tragic flaws against which the good guys could not protect themselves. We can see that the definitions of tragedy and comedy are in effect probes into the reality paradigms (the foundation stories) of a culture.

Culture stories are one's true medium. There is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by them. This includes personalities, styles of speech, clothing, how problems are solved, how cities are planned, how transportation systems function and are organized, how economic and government systems are put together and function.

Dramatic forms are universal in all art and experience. They provide structures which embed emotional bonds in the symbolic repertoire of a culture, internalizing them in the psyches of individuals, endowing language and acts with meaning, transforming symbolic artifacts into living presences. Collective dramas (the founding of states and nations, wars and civil wars, economic crises and internal conflicts, natural disasters and accidents, the growth of children, of crops in the fields, the



building and decay of cities) provide political and social bonds, aggregates, and purposes.

The power of story arises from its ability to abstract symbols from events, investing in those symbols the great bonding forces of the story. The symbol can recapitulate the action time-and-time-again in the thoughts, acts, and utterances of those who have been bonded. The symbols can be communicated, exchanged, preserved, held, protected. Every reality paradigm, from the scientific to the occult, are creations of balanced universes, in which causality, factors and malefactors, reflect such assertions. There is a strong tendency in real life for parties to a social transaction to act out the dramatic unities, in order to achieve a condition of balance and rest, at the just point. The whole set of mismatched components, an encyclopedia of misalliances, entropic ambiguities with which life must cope, are brought into balance.

The paradigm is a self-fulfilling circle, providing prescriptions, mandates, admonitions, models, examples, frameworks, and concepts—the symbolic artifacts of the sonata form. By means of story, the paradigm bonds the imagination to the Holy Trinity—Reality, Behavior, and Values.

Leites' wrote a long critique of contemporary psychoanalysis which left the whole profession in rags and tatters (Leites, 1971). His most painful and effective technique was to take a sentence with an apparent load of meaning, cross out the words that were only fillers, transform other words into their synonyms, and then see the sentence collapse before our eyes. The same technique can be leveled against any theoretical system with the same apparently devastating effect. This fact arises from the very structure of paradigmatic tautology, which characterizes all symbolic discourse.

Since all symbolic formulations are tautologies, whether hidden, extended, or obvious, we may turn our attention to the hooks and handles which the symbols provide for actions and communications about actions, between conflicting or cooperating people and groups. The enquirer provides the paradigm implicitly in the very form of the question undertaken to answer. Frequently, the paradigmatic universe implied in the question also contains the answer without the addition of a single contingent proposition about facts and relationships.

The paradigm of Darwinian evolution, for example, attacks the notions of Divine Creation and divine sanctions to maintain morality. In its place, it creates an impersonal tale of random accident which causes struggles for existence; there is no personal God who favors any particular outcome. Random mutations change the genetic material, but these are sorted by a principle or natural selection, the "survival of the fittest," which, even without God, justifies a morality of competition,

free enterprise, self-interest and self-preservation. The theory-tale emerges clearly with identities and plots, totally rejects the official mythology of medieval Christianity.

The founding myths of Freudian psychology can be summarized similarly. The uncontrolled drives of human nature are shaped and governed by organized society; repressed, they often break out of their bonds in malignant and unhealthy symptoms. Mental illness reflects not "original sin" (which empowers religion and the church), but the amoral biology of nature (which empowers the psychoanalyst). Human understanding that morality is not absolute, but merely convenient, liberates people to suit their own conveniences when they can get away with it.

The theory-tale of Freud is discovered to be much like that of Darwin. Both are stories of "the Creation," like that of the Old Testament, but drastically altered are the *dramatis personae*, the apportionment of good and evil, and the assertion of what constitutes forces and things in the universe.

Every paradigm is essentially a structural hypothesis. Define a bunch of factors; relate them together as part of a dramatic development. Sketch the contradictions and inconsistencies as a dialectic play of variables. Resolve them into a not-surprising finding that the assumptions and definitions with which you started enable you to unify the oppositions into an integral whole. Now assert the unified theme as if it were a discovered truth, using the bunch of factors of the narrative as a causal analysis that proves the case. That is how to construct a paradigm.

The basic paradigm of Behaviorism is such another theory-tale. The Skinnerian shibboleth of operant-conditioning depends on a metaphysic of pain and pleasure and assumes some irreducible hard-core in experience that communicates itself to "reality" by counting its pains and pleasures and learning to minimize the former while maximizing the latter. This scheme lies at the heart of all modern-day scientific ideologies, behaviorist and behavioral, and has provided the matrix of legitimacy for public education until recent times.

Like all paradigms, those of simple pragmatism can be patched up and made serviceable. But our faith is shaken. We have discovered that pain and pleasure are themselves reducible. Cultural values, love and legitimacy, human purposes and strategies, may make certain "pains" not only bearable but coveted and cherished.

The pinch or the bite of a stranger is loathsome and painful, but those of a lover give sweet accent. The flash of anger from a legitimate leader leads to soul-searching and renewed loyalty; the flash of anger from the illegitimate boss leads to revolt. The young James Joyce mortified himself by filling his nostrils with the stench of a urinal; young acolytes glory in lepers and filthy feet; St. Theresa found exultation by physical

contact with every kind of affliction. The assumption that people avoid pain and maximize pleasure is dubious. One is forced into tortuous interpretation of terms in order to derive some notion of pleasure from the willful and voluntary pursuit of pain which kills, maims, or mortifies. The definition of legitimacy might be "a willingness to accept pain when one believes that pain is necessary or beneficial," as when one submits to a doctor. The difficulty of classifying pains and pleasures convinces us that we are face-to-face with the underlying paradigm, that the definitions are tautologies; what we seek, we call pleasure; what we avoid, we call pain.

The paradigmatic process at work becomes more transparent in the adversary proceeding of a courtroom. The attorneys for prosecution and defense summon, examine, and cross-examine witnesses. The witnesses are forced to respond positively and negatively in terms of the questions they are asked. Every question reflects the underlying paradigms of distinct and contradictory versions of the same event. The defense puts questions which imply and support its contention of innocence. The prosecution puts questions which imply guilt. Cross-examination is designed to achieve the opposite effect for each side, against the other. Each tries to undermine the dominating story line which is supported by the bits and pieces of the direct examination. Result, the jury ends up with two paradigms of truth that are diametrically opposed, mutually exclusive, and both rest upon ample and persuasive "evidence." It is usually possible to assemble equally good evidence for both sides. How does the jury determine an outcome?

### Values

We assert the reality of our paradigms by means of our behavior, rather than justifying our actions as the results of some objective force of physical truth. "My action is justified, therefore such and such is true." Science is no exception. Its concepts are myths and stories in the same sense. All of its utterances are argumentative. Crypto-propagandist insinuations sneak into every scientific assertion, even if only by providing the *dramatis personae* of the paradigm, such concepts as force, energy, matter, velocity, instinct, motive, complex, power, nation-state, personality, creativity, sensitivity, on and on. The whole Panglossian vocabulary of the multiple sciences is derived from a set of morality tales concerning confrontations of good and evil, although disguised in terms of functional/dysfunctional, useful/useless, healthy/unhealthy, stable/unstable. As is the case with all culture myths, scientific paradigms take on a decidedly architectonic thrust when applied to the future. There is always implied prediction, feedback, and advocacy,

open or covert, of a particular course of action of social policy, providing the makings of a self-fulfilling prophesy.

In all paradigms, "explanation, reasons, and causes," are used ambiguously. In colloquial language, *explain* means to make what appears strange and outlandish understandable, relating what appears to stand outside the familiar and incorporating it into familiar categories. We satisfy the need for explanation by the act of subsuming the accepted and approved categories whose paradigmatic dimension assures us that we need not pursue an infinite regress beyond this point.

The very concepts of explanation, reason, and cause return us to a concept of equity/legitimacy that we may have trouble recognizing as an objective parameter of nature. Sometimes mere reference to a code word satisfies the requirement. Sometimes more elaborate and instrumental strictures, which we dub scientific, must be located and linked before the anxiety provoked by the strange and unfamiliar is quieted.

The assertion that motives and goals are sufficient causes to explain behavior reflects prevailing myths of consensus which actors exploit to justify their actions and claims. Most theoretical disputes, far from being purely intellectual debates about the heuristic value of propositions and usages, boil down to disputes about the right to the exclusive use of approval-eliciting sounds to induce a favorable attitude in the listeners toward the regime or policy of one's choice.

All of social mythology has this autistic property. Karl R. Popper reminds us of the influence that scientific prediction may have on the event which he calls "the Oedipus Effect" (Popper, 1957, p.13). Bertrand de Jouvenal describes the process: "Any so-called prediction is always a starting point for examination of what *should be done on the assumption that it is true*, but always is also an outcome of assumptions concerning what will have to be done to make it true" (Young, 1968, p. 120).

In modern societies intellectuals are ritual figures. Their primary role is in the elaboration and supply of authoritative symbolic material. Intellectuals express the symbolic dimension of social life in much the same way as the organized priesthood did in Medieval Europe. All specialists and experts compete in maintaining authority.

### Shadows and Fantasies

In a long series of books, Erving Goffman argues we are all essentially living paradigms. We spend less time making things, getting and spending, than we do trying to put the stamp of our own individuality on them. Our main business is the fabrication of our own identities, that of our time and that of the meaning of events. When we are not "on-stage," we are "back-stage," and the stage area of our family and friends is a

theater in its own right, with its own performance standards. "Self" is an emanation created by the actor, in Goffman's terms, "an imputation," whose authenticity is a matter of performing style and verve. We convince ourselves and others of our sincerity to the extent that we mean to play the role well. We adopt a mask to cover our faces but behind the mask is only another mask, a learned part in the psychodrama of everyday life.

Reality presents itself to the individual through a system of "frames," a context or reference, Goffman's synonym for "paradigm." Clues of style and behavior establish the frame. Participants may contest the right to program each others' roles. We *are* what we succeed in performing, what we convince others to let us perform (Goffman, 1974). Individuals are also capable of sustaining "subordinate channels of activity,"...with a range of disruptions—anticipated and unanticipated—while giving them minimal attention. This is "a basic feature of interaction competency, one seen to develop with experience" (Goffman, 1974, p. 219).

Each group has "a framework of frameworks," its cosmology or belief system. Taken together, the primary frameworks of various social groups constitute a central element of culture, especially insofar as understandings emerge concerning principal classes of schema, the relation of these classes to one another, the sum total of forces and agents that these interpretative designs acknowledge to be loose in the world.

The Kuhn/Goffman rubric has been attacked as a form of "reductionism." There must be a face behind the mask. There must be a *real* person playing a role. There must be some *reality* out there which is mediated by our paradigm/framework. There must be some *real* events that we seek to approximate in our ritual dramas. Where is the touchstone for authenticity? Where is the solid ground upon which a stage must ultimately be built?

These questions raise again the issue of legitimacy. Both Kuhn and Goffman are *pluralists*—expressing doubt against all claims of absolutism. While they immunize their followers against faith, they offer no basis for self-confident belief in anything. Self-doubt and self-indictment are symptoms of the deep malaise of Humanism which afflicts all of the Western World.

The paradigmatic approach expresses the blurred plural vision of our times, ineluctable and interesting, but founded on a collapse of belief in progress and transcendental goals.

Faith and trust cannot be generated by test-thumping or exhortation. The paradigmatic universe with its cool relativism, passivity, and indifference, encompasses our daily lives, our communications, our art, and our sciences. Behind the mask, a mask; behind the veil of paradigmatic knowledge, another paradigm; the old infinite regress. "Where does God

stand when the world was created? Who created God?" It is not hard to realize how little has changed, is changed. The mystery remains, and one becomes once again a child, regaining innocence—in spite of technology and centuries of discovery.

How then do we escape from a world of shadow and fantasies? The escape is the same route by which we untangle the labyrinth of tautologies: the equities of action and response, social conflict and collaboration. The hard and irreducible inventory of acts and events. This is the fundamental paradigm—when all is said and done, when all the conversation and bargaining is concluded, what actually changes hands? What are the perceived equities of action/reaction which bring about closure in a social exchange of values?

Rationality has lost much of its authority and aplomb, and we have seen a resurgence of ritual invention borrowed from prescientific epochs. The ground has been laid for greater attention and respect to the imaginative and emotional nature of humankind, and to the process of story-telling and dramatic necessity which shapes the unities of culture. Fantasy is no longer dismissed as lying outside of significant experience. The ambiguities of dream imagery, the dynamics of wit and cunning, the baffling utterances of psychotics are analyzed to discover clues to the structure of society and the normal psyche.

While we live and die like orchids and birds, surrounded by blind and impersonal forces, we rationalize ourselves and our fate upon the center of the stage, as the apple in the eye of the universe. Our main task in mastering the materials of life is to master ourselves and to give our energy form and purpose. In this way, we create a coherent world. Though we may be undergoing severe cultural fatigue, we do not escape this relentless task.

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