

# Myth and Emotions



# Myth and Emotions

Edited by

José Manuel Losada  
and Antonella Lipscomb

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## PREFACE

Progress in the knowledge of thought and psychology brings to light dimensions that have remained hidden for centuries. In the contemporary era the most recognized researchers have demonstrated that our behaviour depends less on rational causes than on emotional causes. More than in any other period in history, individuals react as consequences of impulse, most of the time unexpected. Advertisements, which offer promises that are rationally unrelated to the product on sale, unquestionably make profitable the impulsive behaviour converted into a stereotype of the consumer society. Emotion—in its interaction with feelings, moods and affections—largely shapes our response to the world. It conditions our motivations, gives us energy and orders our private and social behaviour.

Myth cannot stay on the sidelines of this reflection. As a matter of fact, this is one of the meanings of literature, visual arts and performance: bringing to light the usual resource of our psychism to a purely emotional explanation that allows the achievement of the undeniable objectives of the human being. Rational logic and emotional logic complement themselves. There is a promising field for research on the relationship between myth and the biopsychology of emotion. Mythcriticism should include the description and analysis of the paths whereby the rhetoric of individual and social psychology intersects with the cultural practice of myths.

The emotive nature of myth lays the foundation of the research proposed for this volume, that adopts, as a work hypothesis, the following definition of myth: “explanatory, symbolic and dynamic account of one or various personal and extraordinary events with transcendent referent, that lacks in principle of historical testimony; that is made up of a series of invariant elements reducible to themes submitted to crisis; that presents a conflictive, emotive and functional character, and always refers to an absolute cosmogony or eschatology, either particular or universal” (JM Losada, *Mitos de hoy*, Berlin, Logos Verlag, 2016). This definition will be matched with other less canonical definitions, resulting in the mythification of characters, places and historical events.

The arguments of the literary and artistic productions studied here raise situations that our psychism interprets somehow or other. Thanks to the conference we have realized that these arguments and situations are usually interpreted according to positive or negative parameters, and that the negative perception can be classified differently according to a passive principle (typically identified by the weakness of the subject-victim) or to an active principle (typically identified by the violence of the subject-aggressor). We

have therefore distributed the “practical” contributions of the volume into three corresponding parts (Positivity, Traumatic-vulnerable Negativity, Violent Negativity).

Ultimately, this book aims to provide a study, as wide and thorough as possible, that brings guidelines and models capable of interpreting the mythical-emotional phenomena. Its implementation will be of great help to understand an important part of the writing and art of modernity and post-modernity, as well as cultures and thought of our current society.

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This book is not merely a compilation of the proceedings of the IV International Conference on Mythcriticism “Myth and Emotions” held at Complutense University of Madrid (24<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> October 2016). A numerous group of expert reviewers have assessed the one hundred and fifty papers submitted for our consideration, among which a rigorous selection has been made by the editors.

As a result of the three previous conferences (held in 2011, 2012 and 2014) the following volumes have been published:

1. *Myth and Subversion in the Contemporary Novel* (José Manuel Losada & Marta Guirao eds.), Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, xvi-523 p. ISBN: 1-4438-3746-6.

2. *Mito e interdisciplinarietà. Los mitos antiguos, medievales y modernos en la literatura y las artes contemporáneas* (José Manuel Losada & Antonella Lipscomb eds.), Bari (Italy), Levante Editori, 2013, 458 p., 80 ill. ISBN: 978-88-7949-623-0.

3. *Myths in Crisis: The Crisis of Myth* (José Manuel Losada & Antonella Lipscomb eds.), Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, xxix-441 p. ISBN: 978-1-4438-7814-2.

José Manuel Losada & Antonella Lipscomb  
Madrid & Cologne, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## PREFACIO

Los avances en el estudio del pensamiento y la psicología ponen de manifiesto dimensiones que durante siglos han permanecido ocultas. En la época contemporánea los investigadores más prominentes han mostrado que nuestros hábitos de conducta no dependen menos de motivos emocionales que de motivos racionales. Más que en otros periodos de la historia, hoy los individuos reaccionan como consecuencia de pulsiones, las más de las veces imprevistas. Los anuncios publicitarios, con la oferta de promesas racionalmente desligadas del producto en venta, rentabilizan de manera incuestionable el comportamiento impulsivo convertido en un estereotipo de la sociedad de consumo. La emoción—en su interacción con los sentimientos, los estados de ánimo y los afectos—configura en buena medida nuestra respuesta al mundo, condiciona nuestras motivaciones, da energía y dirige nuestra conducta íntima y social.

El mito no puede quedar al margen de esta reflexión. De hecho, este es uno de los sentidos de la literatura y las artes plásticas y del espectáculo: sacar a la luz, evidenciar el recurso habitual de nuestro psiquismo a una explicación puramente emocional, que permita la consecución de los objetivos irrenunciables del ser humano. Lógica racional y lógica emocional se complementan. Hay un campo prometedor para la investigación sobre las relaciones entre la psicobiología de la emoción y el mito. La mitocrítica debe incluir la descripción y el análisis de los caminos donde la retórica de la psicología individual y social se cruza con la práctica cultural de los mitos.

El carácter emotivo del mito fundamenta el marco de la investigación propuesta para este volumen, que adopta, como hipótesis de trabajo, esta definición de mito: “relato explicativo, simbólico y dinámico, de uno o varios acontecimientos extraordinarios personales con referente trascendente, que carece en principio de testimonio histórico, se compone de una serie de elementos invariantes reducibles a temas y sometidos a crisis, presenta un carácter conflictivo, emotivo, funcional, ritual, y remite siempre a una cosmogonía o a una escatología absolutas, particulares o universales” (JM Losada, *Mitos de hoy*, Berlín, Logos Verlag, 2016). Esta definición será combinada con otras, menos canónicas, resultantes de la mitificación de personajes, lugares y acontecimientos históricos.

Los argumentos de las producciones literarias y artísticas aquí estudiadas plantean situaciones que nuestro psiquismo interpreta de una u otra manera. Gracias al congreso nos hemos percatado de que estos argumentos y situaciones son generalmente interpretados en función de parámetros positivos o negativos, y de que su percepción negativa se clasifica de diverso modo en función de un principio pasivo (habitualmente marcado por la de-

bilidad del sujeto-víctima) o de un principio activo (habitualmente marcado por la violencia del sujeto-agresor). Consecuentemente hemos distribuido las contribuciones “prácticas” del volumen en las tres partes correspondientes (Positividad, Negatividad traumático-vulnerable, Negatividad violenta).

Este libro persigue, en definitiva, disponer de un estudio, lo más amplio y exhaustivo posible, que aporte pautas y modelos capaces de interpretar el fenómeno mítico-emocional. Su puesta en práctica será de gran ayuda para comprender y ayudar a comprender una buena parte de la escritura y el arte de la modernidad y la postmodernidad, así como la cultura y el pensamiento de nuestra sociedad actual.

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Este volumen no resulta propiamente de las actas del IV Congreso Internacional de Mitocrítica “Mito y emociones” que tuvo lugar en la Universidad Complutense de Madrid (24-28 de octubre de 2016). A las ciento cincuenta comunicaciones presentadas ha seguido una profunda evaluación efectuada por un nutrido grupo de revisores y una rigurosa selección final por los editores.

A raíz de los tres congresos previos (celebrados en 2011, 2012 y 2014) se han publicado los volúmenes siguientes:

1. *Myth and Subversion in the Contemporary Novel* (José Manuel Losada & Marta Guirao eds.), Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, xvi-523 p. ISBN: 1-4438-3746-6.

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José Manuel Losada & Antonella Lipscomb  
Madrid & Colonia, 4 de junio de 2017



## PRÉFACE

Les progrès dans la connaissance de la pensée et la psychologie mettent en évidence des dimensions qui ont été ignorées pendant des siècles. À l'époque contemporaine, les chercheurs les plus reconnus ont démontré que nos habitudes de conduite dépendent moins de raisons rationnelles que de raisons émotives. Plus qu'à d'autres périodes de l'histoire, les individus réagissent comme conséquence d'élan, le plus souvent imprévu. Les messages publicitaires, en offrant des promesses rationnellement dissociées du produit en vente, rentabilisent de façon incontestable le comportement impulsif converti en un stéréotype de la société de consommation. L'émotion— dans sa relation avec les sentiments, les états d'âme et les affects— participe beaucoup dans notre positionnement au monde, conditionne nos désirs, se dévoile source d'énergie et dirige nos actes intimes et sociaux.

Le mythe ne peut rester en marge de cette réflexion. Voilà un des sens de la littérature et des arts plastiques et du spectacle: mettre au jour le recours habituel de notre psychisme à une explication purement émotionnelle, qui permet la réussite des objectifs auxquels l'être humain ne peut renoncer. Logique rationnelle et logique émotionnelle se complémentent. Les relations existant entre le mythe et la biopsychologie de l'émotion s'avèrent un axe de recherche inestimable. La mythocritique devra considérer la description et l'analyse des voies où la rhétorique de la psychologie individuelle et sociale se joint à la pratique culturelle des mythes.

Le caractère émotif du mythe constitue le cadre de la recherche proposé pour ce volume, qui adopte, comme hypothèse de travail, cette définition du mythe: "récit explicatif, symbolique et dynamique, d'un ou plusieurs événements extraordinaires personnels avec référent transcendant, qui manque en principe de témoignage historique, se compose d'une série d'éléments invariants réductibles à des thèmes et soumis à une crise; qui présente un caractère conflictuel, émotif, fonctionnel, rituel et renvoie toujours à une cosmogonie ou à une eschatologie absolues, tantôt particulières tantôt universelles" (JM Losada, *Mitos de hoy*, Berlin, Logos Verlag, 2016). Cette définition sera suivie par d'autres, moins canoniques, résultant de la mythification des personnages, lieux et événements historiques.

Les arguments des productions littéraires et artistiques étudiées ici évoquent des situations que notre psychisme interprète d'une façon ou d'une autre. Grâce au congrès, nous avons découvert que ces arguments et situations sont, en général, interprétés selon des paramètres positifs ou négatifs, et que cette perception négative se classe de façon différente selon un principe passif (habituellement marqué par la faiblesse du sujet-victime) ou selon un principe actif (habituellement marqué par la violence

du sujet-agresseur). Par conséquent, nous avons distribué les contributions “pratiques” du volume en trois parties (Positivité, Négativité traumatique-vulnérable, Négativité violente).

En définitive, ce livre a pour but de poursuivre une étude, la plus ample et exhaustive possible, qui puisse établir des règles et modèles capables d’interpréter le phénomène mythico-émotionnel. Sa mise en pratique permettra de comprendre une bonne partie de l’écriture et de l’art de la modernité et postmodernité, ainsi que de la culture et pensée de notre société actuelle.

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Ce volume n’est pas issu à proprement parler des actes du iv<sup>e</sup> Congrès International de Mitocritique “Mythe et émotions” qui s’est tenu à l’Université Complutense de Madrid (24-28 octobre 2016). Cent cinquante communications furent présentées lors de cet événement. À la suite d’une évaluation approfondie effectuée par des examinateurs externes, les éditeurs ont parachevé une sélection finale rigoureuse.

Suite aux trois congrès précédents (célébrés en 2011, 2012 et 2014), ont été publiés les volumes suivants:

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José Manuel Losada & Antonella Lipscomb  
Madrid & Cologne, le 4 juin 2017

**PART I:  
THEORY**



# CHAPTER ONE (I)

## TOWARDS A MYTHCRITICISM OF EMOTIONS

JOSÉ MANUEL LOSADA

Since time immemorial, human beings have attributed emotional and affective properties to the material world. The different uses of the four elements bring this to light. Air or fire usually represent constant forms and effects. This is not the case with water (fresh / salt, cold / hot, clear / muddy water...); and still less with earth, in its infinite potentialities (chemical composition, orographic accidents...). The limitless appearances that the stones can adopt undoubtedly explain the faculties attributed by humankind throughout history. Let us take a look at the lapis lazuli: symbol of power for the Egyptians, medicine to treat melancholy for the Greeks, aphrodisiac for the Romans, liberation of intuition and conscious for the Hindus.

Adding to these emotive-affective properties that popular wisdom attributes to particular stones, are the legendary ones—for example, those properties resulting from historical accidents. Think of the curse on the precious jewellery stones. The famous legend set around the Black Orlov, a diamond that supposedly featured as one of the eyes in the statue of the Hindu god of creation in the temple of Pondicherry (India); its theft caused the curse on the thief and its future owners. Thus, this “Eye of Brahma” travelled to Russia, France, and the United States, causing numerous fatal victims (the suicides—real or presumed—of Princess Leonila Viktorovna-Barjatinsky, of J. W. Paris, and of Princess Nadežda Vygin-Orlov), until Charles F. Wilson, its owner in the mid-twentieth century, decided to cut it into three to exorcise the evil...

At the risk of falling into simplicity of identifying myths, legends and superstitions, I wish to tackle the study of myth and emotions from an apparently material perspective; emotions and affections that convey them are like level gauges that indicate our vital values. The relationship between myth and emotion is extremely strong and tense: it illustrates our personal identity and our social belonging.

### 1. Necessity and risks of an emotional study

Virgil recounts how Eurydice died from the bite of a “monstrous hydra” (“*immanem [...] hydrum*”) or water-serpent (*Georgics*, IV, 458; 2008, p. 380). Afflicted and seeking consolation in song, Orpheus entered the

Underworld through the caverns of Cape Tenarus, searching for his beloved Eurydice. Virgil, and with him Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, x, 10: “*serpentis dente recepto*”; 1994, p. 171), relates an incident that appears to contradict rational logic: it seems unreasonable to go beyond death to search for someone. Yet emotional logic readily accepts the Orphic katabasis. In fact, there is nothing more natural than wanting the return of one’s beloved, and undertaking any means—even an irrational one—to make it happen.

Orpheus’s sorrow was such that the pitted “chorus of Dryads [...] flooded the mountains with tears of compassion” (*Georgics*, iv, 460), and similar compassion seized the “souls with no blood”, Tantalus and the Eumenides (*Metamorphoses*, x, 40-46). Like all these characters, the reader also feels compassion for Orpheus. Emotion has a cathartic dimension: the reader and audience become emotionally involved in the plot and experience the character’s emotions and passions. What emerges from this suffering (*commoveo*) is a greater understanding of oneself. The functioning of this emotional logic allows other mythical stories to reach hidden dimensions of the human mystery. In this case, for example, something reveals—in an undoubtedly confusing way—that physical death (one’s own or that of a loved one) is never a satisfactory explanation of the person, that the person is more than just his or her life or death. This is why the character feels compelled to transgress, beyond rational logic, the limits of human condition, desire and common scenario in the mythical story.

Any study of Mythcriticism remains incomplete if it does not at some point tackle emotional logic. This component of myth is no less important than narrative, historical or structural aspects. At some stage of the mythocritical analysis there should be space for our psychology and its manifestations. In fact, literature and arts are an extension, through substitution or transposition, of our psychological perception: a metaphorical or metonymic perception of the world.

In this psychological assessment of the world one has to include the biological aspect: we are also body, bones, viscera, organs and skin that react to sensorial and intellectual stimuli; this is why we are compelled to exteriorize, through external senses, our most intimate reactions. Perception, reaction and expression are combined.

What is being discussed here is whether there is a relationship between emotions and myth. This reflection is not a simple one, mainly because any analysis thereof runs the risk of focusing on the emotive aspects of the story or the mythical scene in question, leaving to the benefit of inventory the relationship between actual myth and the human affective dimension.

In fact, since the beginning of literary criticism, emotion has been studied in its manifestations both through the character’s reactions to the development of the story and through the emotions of the recipient, reader or

spectator. Thus, in his *Poetics*, Aristotle defined tragedy as the “imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself [...] with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions” (Aristotle, *Poetics*, vi, 1449 b 24-8). I have deliberately reduced the sentence in order to emphasize the last words that are the object of our study. The translation that I use literally says “the catharsis of such emotions” (“τὴν τῶν τοιοῦτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν”). The interpretations of the noun at issue (“παθημάτων”) have been countless. According to Bonitz’s *Index Aristotelicus*, the Greek philosopher refers to the movement or change produced by the patient (the one that endures compassion and fear). Other editions have translated the term as “disruptions”, “affections”, “feeling”, and also, obviously, “emotions” (Butcher, Hardy and Sousa editions). I will indistinctly refer here to “emotions” and “affections”, a word that García Yebra restricts to the “effects produced by the soul for such causes, and [...] *affections*, painful and harmful states of mind” (p. 386). For our study, which unlike Aristotle’s, is not limited to tragedy, I will include the pleasant impressions derived from positive situations: mythical stories embrace all kind of feelings, positive as well as negative.

In order to focus this study from a mythocritical point of view, I will refer to a paradigmatic example of the emotional narrative: *Iphigenia in Tauris* (c. 414 b.C.) by Euripides. During the Trojan War, Iphigenia (victim offered by her father Agamemnon) had been transported through the airs by will of Artemis to Tauris, in Scythia (on the southern coast of the Crimean peninsula). Obeying the orders of Apollo’s oracle, Orestes goes to the coasts of Tauris with his friend Pylades to carry off the statue of Artemis and bring it back to his homeland. Unfortunately for him, he is made prisoner and handed over as a sacrificial victim to the temple of the Goddess (as was the custom with any foreigners landing on the coast). We have reached the climax of the tragedy: the sister—who now serves as Artemis’ priestess—has to sacrifice her brother. The spectator feels, at that moment, compassion and fear, the two affections mentioned by Aristotle. While Iphigenia prepares the sacrifice, she orders Pylades to return to Mycenae to deliver the news of Orestes’ sacrifice. In so doing, she coincidentally reveals her identity to her brother Orestes, who hears the order and immediately comes forward. After casting aside her disbelief, Iphigenia confesses the emotion that seizes her:

O dearest, for you are my dearest, none other, I have you, Orestes, far from our country of Argos, my darling [...] I left you still a baby, young in the arms of your nurse, young in the house. O my soul, you have been more fortunate than words can say. I have come upon things that are beyond wonder, far from speech [...] O my friends, I have found an extraordinary joy; I am afraid that he will fly from my hands into the air. O Cyclopean hearths; o my

country, dear Mycenae, I thank you for his life, for his nourishment, because you brought up this light of the house, my brother.

*ὦ φίλτατ', οὐδὲν ἄλλο, φίλτατος γὰρ εἶ,  
ἔχω σ', Ὀρέστα, τηλύγετον χθονὸς ἀπὸ πατρίδος  
Ἀργόθεν, ὦ φίλος.*

[...]

*τόδ' ἔτι βρέφος  
ἔλιπον ἀγκάλαισι νεαρὸν τροφοῦ  
νεαρὸν ἐν δόμοις.  
ὦ κρεῖσσον ἢ λόγοισιν εὐτυχοῦσά μου  
ψυχά, τί φῶ; θαυμάτων  
πέρα καὶ λόγου πρόσω τὰδ' ἐπέβα.*

[...]

*ἄτοπον ἄδονὰν ἔλαβον, ὦ φίλαι:  
δέδοικα δ' ἐκ χειρῶν με μὴ πρὸς αἰθέρα  
ἀμπτάμενος φύγη:  
ἰὼ Κυκλωπὶς ἔστια: ἰὼ πατρίς,  
Μυκίνα φίλα,  
χάριν ἔχω ζῶας, χάριν ἔχω τροφᾶς,  
ὅτι μοι συνομαίμονα τόνδε δόμοις  
ἐξεθρέψω φάος  
(v. 828-849; 1913 ed.).*

The anagnorisis triggers multiple feelings: immense joy, satisfaction at being reunited, speechlessness, childhood memories, refusal of any understanding, gratitude to the homeland... Facial expressions and arm gestures undoubtedly accompany the eruption of joy in this scene. Meanwhile, the enjoyable feeling contrasts with a painful one due to the dramatic situation: Iphigenia has to sacrifice her own brother, a mission all the crueller as they have only just found each other again. The heroine's pity and fear are conveyed to the spectators. The consequent crisis of feelings expressed by the characters (a combination of joy over the encounter and sorrow over the sacrifice) disappear thanks to the final dénouement (brother and sister flee together to their homeland).

However, this kind of analysis—reduced to the emotions triggered in characters and spectators by a dramatic situation—, even when undoubtedly useful, is not truly mythocritical: when confined to the psychology of characters, the myth disappears. It is unfortunately a common mistake to confuse the study of emotion in the mythical story with the study of emotion as a consequence of the myth: in the Opera *Ariadne auf Naxos*, by R. Strauss, the emotion that invades the composer during the encounter between Bacchus and Ariadne has no connection with the myth of Ariadne. It is a structural emotion, dependent on a story, not a mythical emotion, arising from the myth.



To this end, it is useful to recall Cassirer's approach:

Myth cannot be described as bare emotion because it is the expression of emotion. The *expression* of a feeling is not the feeling itself—it is emotion turned into an image (1946, p. 43).

The philosopher clearly distinguishes the fact (emotion) from its manifestation. Against this misguided study of myths as emotions or emotions as myths, Mythcriticism should indicate where myth is, and where emotion is<sup>1</sup>. Without being lured by the emotions expressed in the rhetoric of the text, one has to answer the question: is there a relationship between emotions and myth? The aim of the following pages is to explore the relationship that exists between myth and emotional logic, one of the most insightful keys to understand our contemporary society.

## 2. Bio-psychology and theory of emotions

Emotion can be defined as an impression (of senses, ideas, imaginations or memories) of diverse nature (intense, transient, pleasant, unpleasant) that provokes immediate effects (somatic commotions and mood agitations) and that manifests itself in different ways (gestures, attitudes or other forms of expression). I am aware that this definition, although general and traditional, is not universally accepted, especially when an entire discipline (bio-psychology) focuses on explaining how emotions are produced and what their meaning is. I will hereafter provide—not without first confessing an eventful journey through the varied material of *Wikipedia*, corrected when needed, and begging the indulgence of the specialised reader—a synthesis of the most representative milestones in the study of emotions, direct or indirect origin of contemporary theories.

1. Darwin (1809-1882): the expressions of emotion develop from behaviour: if they are beneficial, they will increase, otherwise they will decrease.

2. James-Lange: as opposed to popular opinion—perception leads to an emotion and this in turn provokes a physiological reaction—, William James (1842-1910) and Carl Lange (1834-1900) argue that emotions are the result of physiological responses of the autonomic nervous system (muscular tension, tearing, cardio-respiratory acceleration) to experiences and stimuli.

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<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, the reduction of Cassirer according to which myth “constitutes the *expression* of an emotion”, is not entirely acceptable as it would mean identifying it with a “symbolical form” (title of a major study by the philosopher on myths: *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, 1953). Clearly, the distinction is double: the mythical event produces the emotional effect that adopts a determined expression.

3. Cannon-Bard: according to Walter Cannon (1871-1945) and his disciple Phillip Bard (1898-1977), the feeling of the emotion in the brain and the expression of the emotion in the autonomic and somatic nervous systems are the result, in a simultaneous and independent way, of the stimulating effects of external stimuli.

4. James Papez (1883-1958): before an external stimulus, emotions and physiological reactions occur simultaneously, but they mutually feed one another and help the brain to understand the stimulus.

5. Stanley Schachter (1922-1997) and Jerome E. Singer (1934-2010) bring back the theory of the feedback of physical activation (W. James' theory) as an indicator of something significant. The cognitive evaluation of the situation classifies the physical activation and determines the emotion. The procedure would be the following: Stimulus → Activation → Cognition → Feeling.

6. Magda B. Arnold (1903-2002): before any stimulus, the brain firstly assesses its meaning and subsequently guides the tendency towards action; the tendency to turn towards desirable situations and to turn away from undesirable situations reflects the conscious feelings.

7. Robert Bolesław Zajonc (1923-2008): emotional relationship precedes cognition and is independent from it; therefore, the emotional processing can occur in the absence of conscious knowledge.

*Auctores disputant...* At the beginning, I stated that perception, reaction and expression are very closely connected. An in-depth study on the elements that these theories add to the emotional process as well as on the order and succession of its phases would also be worthwhile. From this discordant symphony, we can at least gather three common points to all emotion:

- a) Existence and perception of a previous event.
- b) Intense, transient and interconnected psychosomatic manifestations.
- c) Distinction, with attraction or rejection, between the pleasant and unpleasant.

But emotion on its own is not enough; it is not a “prêt-à-porter” product that we can simply dispose of. Instead, it closely interacts with a plethora of intimate arrangements of emotional life: feelings (subjective representations of emotional life that designate changes of sensitivity, emotion and passion), sensations (phenomena related to somatic and hedonist perception), moods (diffused conditions of longer duration and less intense than the emotions), passions (particularly intense affective dispositions characterized by persistence), impulses (psychic representations of an excitement originating from inside the body, unlike instincts that are limited to pure biology), affections (instinctive reactions in our relationship with others)

and an endless number of bio-psychological states: desires, inclinations, tendencies...<sup>2</sup>.

Affections are particularly relevant here as they create values that direct the choices of the individual, appoint him to specific groups according to the concept of belonging and manifest the latter's relationship with the exterior through a corporal rhetoric. Emotions and affections therefore represent the responses of individuals towards the intimations of the world. They both seriously condition his motivations: they grant him energy and conduct his intimate and social behaviour.

I think this minimum basis is enough to tackle, at least temporarily, the relationship between the emotional world and myths. I will approach this relationship in two phases. The first phase will deal with the relationship between emotions and the two mythical periods *per se*: the origin and the end of the individual (there are no myths without cosmogony and eschatology). The second phase will focus on the relationship between emotions and two literary categories that are often confused with myth and which are however essentially different: the uncanny and the fantastic.

### 3. Myth and emotions of the individual in society

The example of *Iphigenia in Tauris* has shown us the power of the sense of belonging: the young woman, exiled in Chersonesus Taurica, only sees her life as a desire to return to her homeland and loved ones: "Bring me to Argos, my brother, before I die" ("Κόμισαί μ' ἐς Ἄργος, ᾧ σὺναίμε, πρὶν θανεῖν", v. 774; 1999, p. 283), she begs Orestes even before she recognizes him. Any individual maintains a number of ties with the others, whether in wide circles (community, city, region, nation) or narrow (blood ties, family, friendships). This social dimension takes up different forms (language, culture, religion) that provide the individual with a sense of belonging, with serious implications for his existence. The awareness of belonging to a group implies connections of different nature (genetic, instinctive, collective and civilizing) that, extended in time, form a psychological identity. So much so, that without them, the individual runs the risk of losing a crucial part of his identity. This is precisely where the link between emotions and the individual in society lies.

Two prior appraisals must be done now:

a) All social dimension includes its countervailing opposite: the asocial conception, antisocial approach and the repudiation experienced by certain individuals in relation to their family, race, language, culture and religion.

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2 On these notions, see Korichi, ed., 2000; Goddard, dir., 2006; and particularly the small volume *Qu'est-ce qu'une émotion?* by J Deonna and Teroni, 2008.

b) Religion accounts for our origins and destinies; it grants us a strong awareness of being a people. The Egyptians or Greeks, for example, integrated their people according to their political, economic or social choice, but also according to their beliefs, which they adopted by conviction, tradition, blood links or even through imposition (*cuius regio, eius religio*).

### 3.1. *The absolute origin*

The social dimension of the individual is inseparable from its origin: everyone carries along parental genes throughout life and, in a vague but not less real way, the memory of former places and times: not without reason the flashbacks of childhood memories, even unconscious, trigger the deepest emotions. But these reminiscences belong to the origin of a relative time: the passing of days, months and years. There are others that connect with the origin of absolute time, those that tie each individual with his birth or even with his species (human, angelical, demoniacal, divine). We are thus dealing with anthropogony, angelogony, demonogony, theogony... and, generally speaking, cosmogony. One should not forget that according to the proposal of Cultural Mythcriticism, all myth refers to an absolute cosmogony, either individual or universal (of one or of all).

This is precisely where the link between the social dimension of the individual resides, his emotions and the myth: in the passage from his relative origin to his absolute origin. This is why the stories that reinforce, from an emotional point of view, the belonging of the individual to species, race or religion (i.e. belonging to an original group in the absolute sense) are likely to acquire a mythical dimension.

Two texts will help deepen our reflection: an ancient poem and a contemporary novel.

1. A significant part of *Works and Days* (VIII century b.C.) by Hesiod revolves around the origin of man and evil in the world. The story of Prometheus and Pandora is followed by the story of the human races that preceded us. The poet tells his brother Perses that at the beginning the Immortals created a “golden race of mortal men” that “lived like gods, without sorrow of heart, remote and free from toil and grief: miserable age rested not on them; but with legs and arms never failing they made merry with feasting beyond the reach of all evils”. Then followed another race “of silver and less noble by far [...] A child was brought up at his good mother’s side a hundred years, an utter simpleton, playing childishly in his own home. But when they were full grown and were come to the full measure of their prime, they lived only a little time and that in sorrow because of their foolishness”. Then came a “third generation of mortal men, a brazen race [...] they ate no bread, but were hard of heart like adamant, fearful men”. A

fourth race followed, “nobler and more righteous, a god-like race of hero-men who are called demi-gods”. After them, comes the human race:

For now truly is a race of iron, and men never rest from labor and sorrow by day, and from perishing by night; and the gods shall lay sore trouble upon them. But, notwithstanding, even these shall have some good mingled with their evils.

*νῦν γὰρ δὴ γένος ἐστὶ σιδήρεον· οὐδέ ποτ' ἤμαρ  
παύονται καμάτου καὶ οἰζύος, οὐδέ τι νύκτωρ  
φθειρόμενοι. χαλεπὰς δὲ θεοὶ δώσουσι μερίμνας·  
ἀλλ' ἔμπης καὶ τοῖσι μεμείζεται ἐσθλὰ κακοῖσιν  
(v. 176-179; 1914 ed.).*

After disappearing from the earth, the metallic races followed different fates: the men of the golden race became minor divinities, (“δαίμονες”, v. 122), those of the silver race became blessed spirits (“μάκαρες θνητοῖς”, v. 141), the brazen race “passed to the dank house of chill Hades, and left no name” (“βῆσαν ἐς εὐράνευτα δόμον κρνεροῦ Αἴδαο / νώννημοι”, v. 153-154). As for the heroes, some died at Thebes, others at Troy, while others were taken to the “islands of the blessed” (“ἐν μακάρων νήσοισι”, v. 171).

A detailed analysis of the text will show us the relationship between this architecture of the cycle of ages (closer to the construction of storeys in a building than to a chronological succession of races) and the model of a timeless hierarchy inherent in Indo-European religious thought: the first floor of Hesiod’s construction defines the level of sovereignty with which the king fulfils his legal and religious activity; the second, the level of the military role where the brutal violence of the warrior imposes his power; the third, the level of fecundity, where the farmer is in charge of providing the food necessary for life (Vernant, 2007, 1, p. 274-276). To put it more formally, we are dealing with the multiform divine triad (e.g. Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus), extensively studied by Dumézil in his system of three functions: sovereignty, military strength and work (1995, p. 1273-1373). Kings, heroes and workers: the “stratified” men according to their origin. The origin—which until recently has been the main dividing rule of western society—implies an undisputable mythical significance: it ties us with our most intimate principle, with our own life. There exists a mythical ontology of the origins.

In this respect, *Works and Days* reveals an interesting bio-emotional progression of the different races: the purer they are, the freer they are of any cares. The golden race lives “without sorrow of heart, remote and free from toil and grief”; throughout most of their lives, the silver race grew up in negligence, enjoying maternal peace, before a brief moment of “sorrow because of their foolishness”; the brazen race, dedicated to war and pride,

have no need to feed themselves (“they ate no bread”); and as for the heroes, “they live untouched by sorrow” (at least the inhabitants of the blessed islands: nothing is said about those who die in Thebes and Troy). A very different picture is drawn for our race, those who “never rest from labor and sorrow by day, and from perishing by night; and the gods shall lay sore trouble upon them. But, notwithstanding, even these shall have some good mingled with their evils”. Unlike the immortal gods, the metallic races and the heroes, men, endowed with hearts of flesh, feel and suffer, experience emotions. It would be superficial not to see in these readings a first link between the typology of emotions and the typology of absolute origins. More specifically, this link allows us to establish a first mythical ontology of the human race based on biology, that is, blood, family, tribe or, as Hesiod says, race.

2. Let us move on to the contemporary text that I mentioned above. I have chosen different examples of a novel that is apparently not related to myth: *The Magic Mountain* (1924) by Thomas Mann, the story of young Hans Castorp in a Swiss sanatorium. One night, after dinner, under the light of a small lantern, Professor Settembrini circulates a paper that reads:

But bear in mind the mountain's mad with spells tonight  
 And should a will-o'-the-wisp decide your way to light.  
 Beware—its lead may prove deceptive.

*“Allein bedenkt! Der Berg ist heute zaubertoll,  
 Und wenn ein Irrlicht Euch die Wege weisen soll,  
 So müßt Ihr's so genau nicht nehmen”*  
 (v; 1981 ed., p. 456).

The Professor's words spark off an “uproar” among the diners. It is not by chance that the event takes place on the eve of Mardi Gras, and that the chapter is entitled “Walpurgis Night”. In this context of religious and pagan beliefs, everyone reacts sardonically to the allusion of the “will-o'-the-wisp”, a natural phenomenon that popular tradition identifies with the soul of the deceased. There is in this sarcasm a sort of disaffection among the diners, who relate to a religion but who mock their spurious beliefs.

One could refer to other examples, such as Naphta's argumentation on the fight between God and Satan, or on his comparison between Christianity and Communism, both in the chapter “The City of God and Evil Deliverance”. Settembrini is sceptical and does not identify with Christian religion, on the contrary, he reacts with astounded and inquisitive questions that suggest his denial: “I have to admit that I am shocked”. I will conclude with a passage that clearly illustrates how two traditions are confronted depending on the whether they are approached from the Jewish religion or the Christian religion, in the childhood memories of Naphta: