

TRUTH AND REALITY
IMAGES, MODELS, SYMBOLS

The purpose of this scrap of philosophical reflection is to bring a bit of clarity into commonly used concepts in the vocabulary of the spirit movement. That such clarity means clarity with respect to the whole historical process is presupposed.

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Introduction on truth and reality:

The concepts "truth" and "reality" point to a polar relation between the mental processes of the human being and that enigmatic process over against which the mental process operates. A polar relation is a relation between two terms neither of which exists without the other. The most obvious example of a polar relation is the relation between the individual human being and the community of human beings. There is no such thing as an individual self apart from the community, nor is there any such thing as a community save it is made up of and created by individual selves. Thus individual \leftrightarrow community is one reality with two poles, and that statement is the truth. Reality \leftrightarrow truth, like individual \leftrightarrow community, is a polar reality, and that statement is the truth about reality and truth. "Reality" points to the-way-it-is pole of this polarity. "Reality" indicates the enigmatic process over against which the mental process operates. "Truth" points to the intelligible content or form forged by the mental process of man. There is no truth save it is truth about the-way-it-is, and there is no reality save it is grasped in and through some formulation of truth.

Introduction on images, models, and symbols:

There are three dimensions of reality and three corresponding forms of truth. We will define the forms of truth as images, models, and symbols. The corresponding dimensions of reality will be initially indicated by these awkward phrases: (1) the given objective-subjective relations, (2) the possibilities for ethical decision toward bending the trends of reality, and (3) the deep, bottomless abyss of concrete self-consciousness. The following paragraphs point to these three dimensions more descriptively.

Images function to enable the basic intellectual grasp of the given

situation in which existing must take place. Images are the relative universals of the society, the taken-for-granted pictures, relations, and basic orderings which enable any social consensus, conversation, or argumentation. A revolution in images in the life of an individual or the life of society is always disturbing, for the relativity of human images is revealed and the primordial chaos out of which order is created is directly experienced. Images are not synonymous with linguistic terms, mathematical signs, artistic forms, or any other mental abstractions, but are a life-functioning of such entities.

Models function to enable the practical mastery of the trends and possibilities of the situation in which ethical decisions are to be made. The human community assumes the practicality of scores and scores of models and uses them without vivid self-consciousness of the fact that these models are selected and were in the first instance created to meet the needs of practical life. When society is undergoing extensive change such that practical problems which were never before experienced must be solved, the task of model building becomes an effort of intense self-consciousness. The 20th century is such a time; the entire population of spaceship earth is threatened with destruction unless adequate practical models can be created to give definition and solution to the overwhelming problems.

Symbols function to enable the individual self to make conscious decisions about the fundamental stance that he will take within the whole of existence. Symbols are parasitical in content on the images and models that make up the contemporary struggle of life. Even though the content of a symbol may also function as an image or model, the symbolic function is a separate function and points to a separate dimension of reality. For

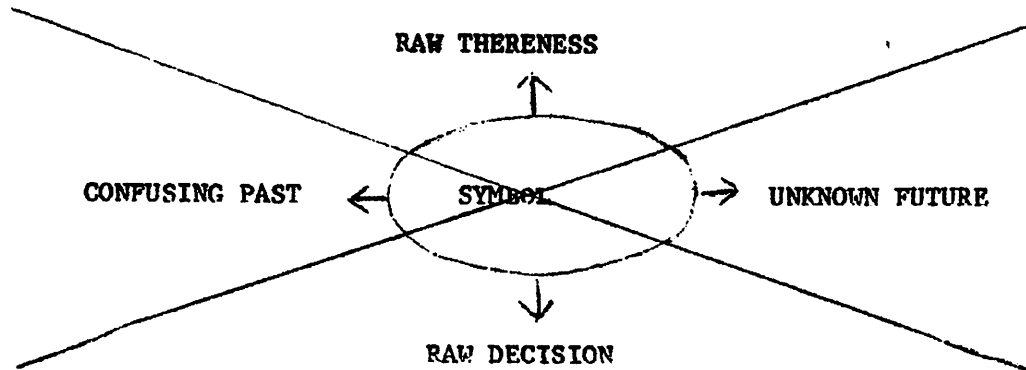
example, a map of Chicago may function as a sociological image for grasping social reality, or it may function as a model for guiding decisions in travel, and yet the same map may serve as a symbol of self-conscious stance, i.e. "I am a Chicagoan; I am tied into human history as a builder of the new Chicago." Usually the reality-function of the mental entity determines its form. A symbolic map need not have every street and alley on it to serve the function of holding one's concrete self-consciousness. A road map is designed to serve the needs of the vehicle driver. The map a sociologist uses to portray the reality of urban living will likewise take on the appropriate forms. The cross, like the guillotine, was a practical model designed for criminal control. But the cross as a symbol has the utterly different function of revealing the meaning of human life, and the symbolic cross is not designed for criminal control. If someone quips that the symbolic cross is related to criminal control because the symbol is effective in the redemption of human lives, he is but saying that his practical model for criminal control calls for an effective use of symbols.

Because of these close interrelationships between symbols, images, and models, we have tended to become confused about the distinction between them and to use the words interchangeably. The civilizing process can decide to use these words any way we choose, but only when we define each of these three forms of truth in accordance with the three respective reality functions can our chaos of insights be ordered into powerful philosophical gestalts. Form and reality pictured as a spacial dichotomy is an image which has served western philosophy for millenia. Even though its inadequacy is now seen, it is a difficult image to get disentangled from. Images, models, and symbols are part of a more adequate philosophical image in which mental form is

categorized in terms of its functioning as truth in the living relationship which is reality. Truth↔reality is a polar relation. If either term of a polar relation is considered apart from the other, both poled become mere abstractions and the living, illuminating power is lost.

PART I SYMBOLS - ICONS, RITES, MYTHS

The symbol holds RAW THERENESS and RAW DECISION together in a unity of meaning, thus rendering the confusing past a providential election and the unknown future a destinal calling. The following diagram depicts these relationships.



The symbolic form that grasps and holds the sense of time or history is the form, myth. Raw thereeness is grasped through the form, icon. Raw decision is grasped through the form, rite. A consistent system of myth, icon, and rite holds the unity of reality: the mystery of time, the mysterious encounter with raw thereeness, and the equally mysterious psychotic depths of raw decision.

A mental entity is symbolic only if it functions in one or all three of the above ways. These three forms and these three mysteries are operative whether the symbolic system binds the believer to a reduced vision of reality or whether it liberates the believer into a more adequate vision of reality. No symbol has power to be a symbol unless it reveals reality in some measure. The most destructive symbols are powerful "half-truths" alienating the believer from crucial dimensions of reality through giving him certainty about other crucial dimensions of reality. The most liberating symbols are those that

reveal "half truths" to be "half truths" by revealing the comprehensive reality that unites the "half truths", affirming their validity while judging their limitations.

A symbol is therefore defined as any entity produced by the mental process of man which functions to unite man in conscious relation to these three inseparable dimensions of reality: the mystery of time, the mystery of raw thereness, and the mystery of raw decision. The corresponding forms of symbolic truth are myth, icon, and rite. Since the arts are rooted in the symbolic for their power, the forms of art may be associated with the forms of symbol thus illuminating further the forms of symbolic truth as well as the ontological foundations of art.

Reality Function	Symbolic Forms	Forms of Art		
		Thereness	Time	Decision
The Mystery of RAW THERENESS	ICON	Sculpture	Architecture	Painting
The Mystery of TIME	MYTH	Proverb	Story	Poetry
The Mystery of RAW DECISION	RITE	Dance	Drama	Music

Soren Kierkegaard in the following mathematical cryptogram gives the clue for a further elaboration of the relations between icons, myths, and rites.

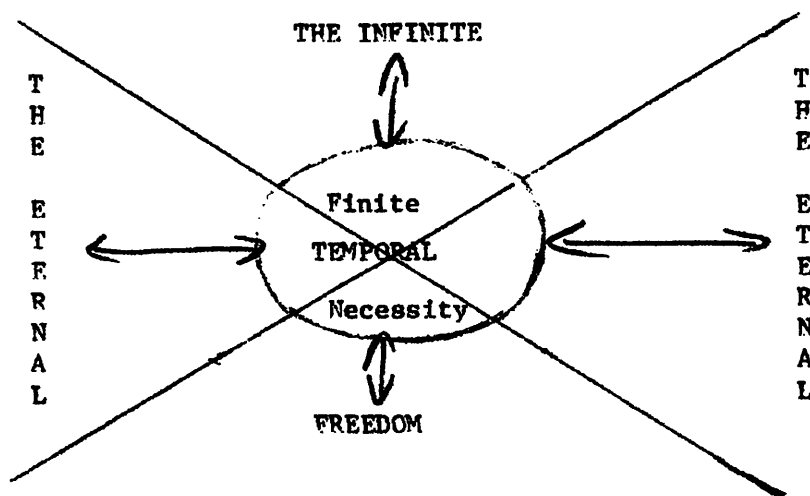
"Man is a synthesis of
the infinite and the finite
the temporal and the eternal
freedom and necessity

A synthesis is a relation between two factors. So regarded man is not a self"

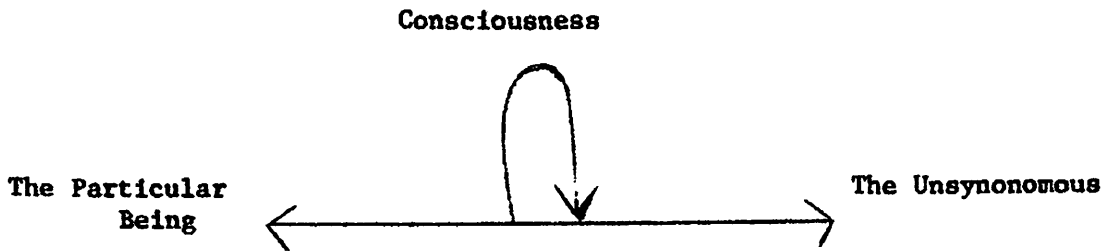
"the self is a relation which relates itself to its own self, or it is that in the relation (which accounts for it) that the relation relates itself to its own self; the self is not the relation but (consists in the fact) that the relation relates itself to its own self."

from Sickness unto Death

Consider this diagram: Let \leftrightarrow be a sign which indicates polarity.

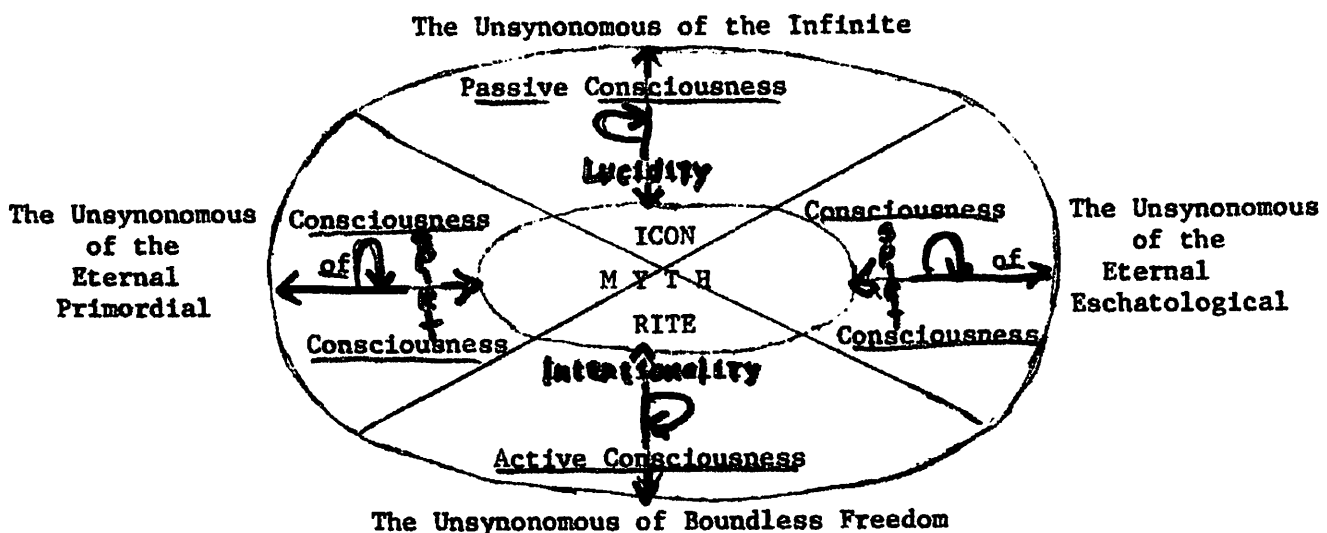


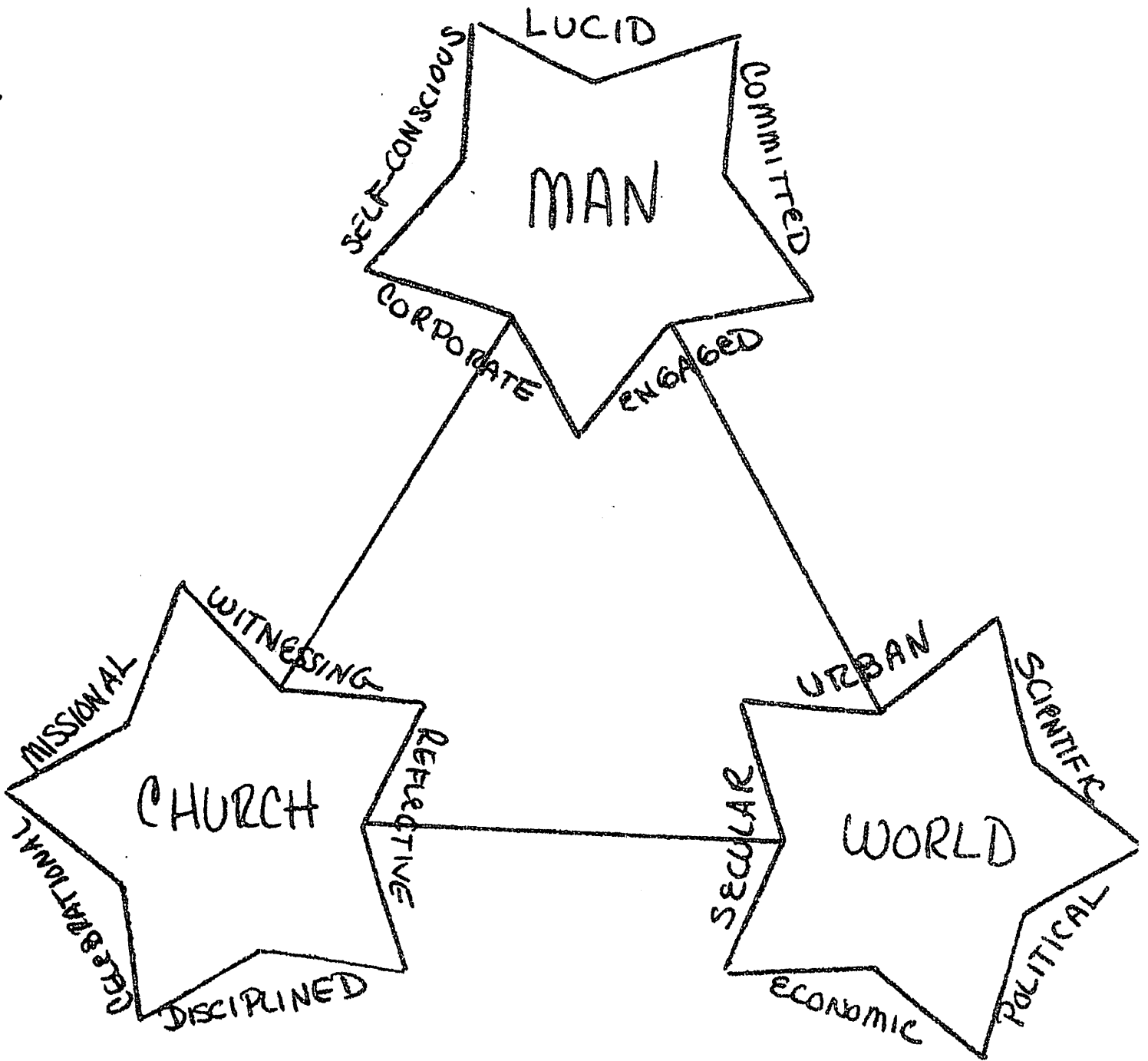
So regarded man is not yet a self. The self comes into being through the symbols which allow the self to consciously relate to being this relation between the three dimensional unsynonomous and this particular limited being living at this particular time and at this particular place. Consider this diagram:



Where  is a sign which indicates the relation of a polarity to itself.

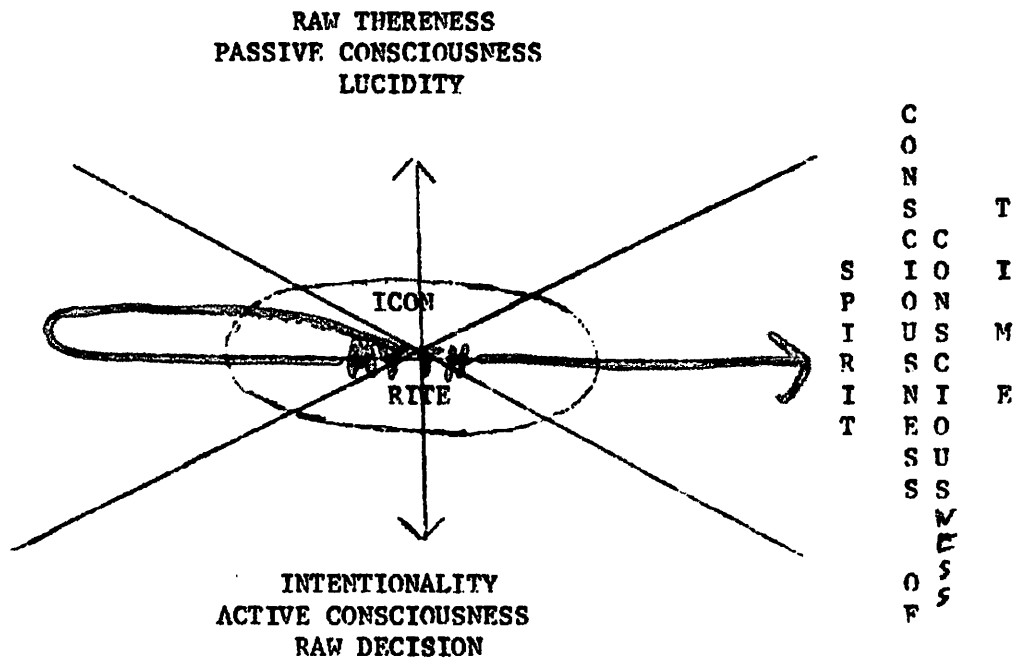
So regarded man is a self or conscious being. Consciousness is the relation between the unsynonomous and the particular being that knows itself to be such a relation and takes an attitude toward it. Symbols are the vehicle of that conscious attitude. Icon, myth, and rite are finite temporal forms of the human being; therefore they are not the unsynonomous. Yet without these forms, the human being cannot be conscious of its being relationship to the unsynonomous, cannot relate itself to itself, cannot be human as conscious selfhood. Therefore symbol and selfhood exist together. Symbols can become dead, but no selfhood exists without living symbols. Consider this diagram:





GOALS

Spirit points to the relation which the passive and active consciousness takes toward being the passive and active consciousness it is. Spirit is the struggle for a fundamental life stance in time. The time dimension enables consciousness of consciousness, or spirit. Myth is the vehicle in and through which the struggle for a fundamental life stance takes place. Myth is the symbolic form that orders the icons and rites into a unity of meaning. Myth holds the fundamental life stance that interprets the reality held by icons and rites. Hence this diagram:



"But this relation (the relation which relates itself to its own self) is in turn a relation relating itself to that which constituted the whole relation." S.K.

The God beyond all Gods is the MASTER OF TIME.

The Symbol beyond all symbols must take the form of myth.