LUND
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# Cosmos out of chaos

## A theory developing study on naturalising power and myth with illustrations from Russia

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# Abstract

Myth. Although the word is part of every-day life, it is more often than not used as synonymous to an amusing tale, or, worse yet, a lie. This thesis explores another, perhaps deeper, aspect of myth – myth as a shaper of desires and a definer of society. The main active component in this function is a covert power, here named the *naturalising power*. It's strength lies in its ability to make appear natural that which may not be so. The concept of naturalising power is based on the works of Steven Lukes and his theories on the three dimensional power, which are based on non-conflict and focus on inaction rather than action. Power, in this sense, does not seek to overcome or prevail in situations of conflicts, but rather to avert such conflicts from arising in the first place by controlling man's perception of 'the normal'. The thesis explores this covert power in myth and, furthermore, how myth can determine what is considered 'natural' and thereby immune from questioning. The two myths of 'fear' and 'the chosen ones' are used to illustrate the naturalising power of myths, with examples taken from the giant in the east – Russia.

*Keywords*: myth, power, fear, Lukes, Russia

# Table of contents

# 1  Introduction

> If a man is offered a fact which goes against his instincts, he will scrutinize
> it closely, and unless the evidence is overwhelming, he will refuse to believe
> it. If, on the other hand, he is offered something which affords a reason for
> acting in accordance to his instincts, he will accept it even on the slightest
> evidence. The origin of myths is explained this way.
> (Russel, B. www.quotationspage.com, 050705)

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"Cosmos out of chaos", political scientist George Schöpflin's neat summary of the prime product of myth (Schöpflin, 1997, p. 20). Myth helps us understand, helps us navigate our way in the world, and helps us make sense of that which we otherwise would not be able to understand. We tell stories which help us come together, describe our past and, never to underestimate, divert us. The role of myth in the creation of nationhood, otherness, and an "us" has been widely recognised by scholars for many years. Its ability to openly unite people around common stories and a common past is rarely challenged. This, however, is often treated as an "overt" ability. But myth also holds a covert power – a naturalising power. The power not only to help claim victory in situations of conflict, but to thwart such a conflict in its cradle by controlling our very wants and desires. And is it not "the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have – that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires."?(Lukes, 2002, p. 27).

## 1.1  Purpose and problem

The purpose of this thesis is twofold. Firstly, I intend to explore the concept of myth, its properties and functions. Secondly, I wish to connect the concept of myth to the concept of power, and to develop a theoretical power I have chosen to name the *naturalising power*. This concept will be fully explained later on, but can, in short, be said to be the power to make appear natural that which may not be so. The concept will be developed using Steven Lukes's theories on three dimensional power, and further explored through covert aspects of power in politics by way of myth. The problem, or rather problems, that follow on this purpose are subsequently: *what is the form and function of myth, what is the form and function of naturalising power, and, how, if at all, do they interplay?*

In order to make an otherwise exclusively theoretical thesis a bit easier to grasp, the theoretical development of naturalising power and myth will be

followed by an illustrative part with examples of myth and power in practice taken from Russia or, in some case, the former Soviet Union. Vladimir Tismaneunu presents a reason of interest in a far better wording than I could have hoped to conjure, when stating that:

> The post-communist landscape is a propitious soil for collective passions, fears, illusions, and disappointments. The old ideological certainties are dead. Instead, new mythologies have arisen to provide quick and satisfying answers to excruciating dilemmas. Political myths are responses to the sentiments of discontinuity, fragmentation, and the overall confusion of the post-communist stage.
> (Tismaneunu, 1998, p. 5).

This is not to say that myths exist exclusively in places where 'ideological certainties are dead'. Myths are part of everyday-life, I dare claim, no matter what the political, economic, cultural or ideological situation may be. As, however, the myths I have chosen to illustrate the coming theories, are based precisely on fears and illusions, Russia forms a grateful fund of myths to work with. In addition to this, I have chosen Russia for the simple reason that it is a country and a culture, or rather cultures, that have held my interest for many years and I am not late to take the chance to explore some of its many mysteries.


## 1.2   Theoretical and methodological approach


In the social science debate of late, the division between scientists who ascribe to a substantial and those who adopt a relational approach has gotten increased attention. The starting point of substantialism lies in various units – things, beings – which are to constitute the basic objects of analysis, whilst the dynamic processes are only secondary (Emirbayer, 1997, p. 282). Within this view, two types of action stand out. *Self*-action involves a inherent force, a free will that we can find in the theories of rational choice or methodological individualism. *Inter*-action focuses on action between entities, although these entities are, by nature, static. This view can be found in, for example, variable centred analysis.

Relationism, on the other hand, is concerned with a third kind of action, namely *trans*-action, where the action is both dynamic and constantly evolving. "Concepts" and "things" cannot be seen as independent units which exist outside of relations and processes. Identity and culture do not exist outside of the dynamic relationships that make the human society (Tilly, 2002, p. 19). This is the perspective that will be used in this thesis. Furthermore, the thesis follows on Kearney's statement that "historical truth is as much the property of 'narrative knowledge' as it is of so-called 'objective knowledge'. (Kearney, 2002, p. 128). Although we can account for events and dates, these are interpreted and put into context and are thus given meaning and made understandable. They are, in short, narrated.

My methodological starting point is a mixture of relational sociology and the strategic-relational approach. The strategic-relational approach states that external circumstances – structure, or rather relations – do exist but that the actor within this framework can chose strategies in order to deal with these circumstances:

> Actors are reflexive and formulate strategy on the basis of partial knowledge
> of the structure. It is possible for actors to formulate strategies which
> overcome the problems created for them by strategically selective contexts.
> (McAnulla, 2002, p. 280f)

This is to say that although we are affected by the relations in which we live, we are also able to form tactics in order to deal with these relations. This structure, however, is not a being of its own, it is created by man and for man. The point to be made here is that within structures, we can act and thus make use of our historical and cultural relations.

Throughout the thesis, there will be references to an interpretative espistemology. This is to say that the focal point is not a fixed reality but a pragmatic reality. What is important for this thesis is not to discover any kind of 'true reality', but rather to focus on that which is *perceived* as real. This will be addressed more thoroughly in part 2.2. [1]

## 1.3   Outline

The thesis is divided into a total of five sections. This first part contains an introduction, purpose and problem, a short theoretical and methodological discussion, and an outline.

Part two presents the myth, its history and its theorisation. The very term myth, or the Greek *mythos*, will be put into an historical context in order to demonstrate the varied meanings and implications the concept, or rather the phenomenon, myth has held over the centuries. After that the myth will be theorised through the works of scholars ranging from psychoanalysists, by way of sociologists, to political scientists. Part two rounds up with a short presentation of an important aspect of myth, the unknown, the much frowned upon but nevertheless fascinating aspects of magic. The concept of magic is grossly overlooked in the discussion of myth, even though magic is one of the cornerstones that make up myth. In this thesis the role of magic will therefore be presented solely by anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski who, regrettably, is one of the very few to grant magic importance beyond mere oddity.

The third part concerns the theoretical groundwork – the works of Steven Lukes – on which this thesis is based, as well as the concept of the *naturalising power*, which is this thesis own contribution to the debate, and which will then be

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[1] I have tried to keep the discussion on the theoretical and methodological approach short in order to leave room for the thesis's coming parts. There is however quite a bit of interesting works on relational sociology where the name Margaret Somers (1994, 1998) stands out.

followed throughout the remainder of the thesis. Lukes's theory on power forms a springboard for the further development of the concept of the naturalising power. I have chosen to lay this part third as its discussion requires the theorised concept of myth in order to be both understood and developed.

Part four serves as an illustrative part where myth and power meet in two examples of myth – the myth of fear and the myth of the chosen ones. This part should in no way be considered empirical evidence of the theories presented, but rather as illustrations of how a myth *can* employ naturalising power in practise.

## 1.4   A note on notes

The subjects of myth and, far more so, power are vast issues on which works of both great quality and quantity has been written. In order to prevent the confusion and disorder a too extensive presentation of such works can cause, I have tried to keep the numbers of works presented limited. Instead, footnotes, in addition to the references in running text, will be used to give suggestions on additional works related to the discussion.

# 2 Myth

## 2.1 The story of the eagle and the nightingale
- the history of myth

The term 'myth' is derived from the Greek word *mythos,* by many contemporary authors defined as some sort of tale or story with little or no truth. The opposite of this term is said to be *logos,* meaning truth or reason. By this we are to understand *mythos* as a giver of poetic amusement or a tickler of our imagination, but as saying little or nothing about the 'real state of things'. But according to Bruce Lincoln, professor of religious history, things have not always been so – quite the contrary. In the oldest Greek texts by Homers and Hesiod, the term *logos* is used to denote speech by women, the young, and the shrewd. A speech that is soft, delightful, charming, and alluring, but that may also deceive or mislead – the weapon of the weak. *Logos* is treacherous and without principle. (Lincoln, 1999, p. 3ff). *Mythos,* on the other hand, represents headstrong men who are proud of their strength and who want to conquer at every cost – the speech of the strong. In one of Hesiod's texts, *mythos* is represented by the majestic eagle while *logos* is the soft and alluring nightingale: "[the eagle's] discourse is typical of those most confident in their power, and confident also in the right of the powerful to prevail." (Lincoln, 1999, p. 13). Myth, in this sense, is "an assertive discourse of power and authority that represents itself as something to be believed and obeyed." (Lincoln, 1999, p. 17).

In the days of Socrates and, after him, Plato, the view of *mythos* and *logos* was dramatically revised and revalorized. Myths, they claimed, were told by poets and were not to be taken seriously. They were false, inspired, ignorant, and belonged to the art of poetry, whilst *logos* was true, reasoned, knowledgeable, and belonged to the science of philosophy. (Lincoln, 1999, p. 40). *Mythos*, or *mythoi*, was best suited for children or "those incapable of adopting the discourse and practice of the ruling elite, within an emergent regime of truth that called (and calls) itself 'philosophy'." (Lincoln, 1999, p. 42).

From Plato and up until the Renaissance, the myth was regarded an inferior form of narrative. But from the Renaissance onwards, old texts – myths – were, once again, revised and reinterpreted. A new, or rather rediscovered, use was found for myth – as a creator of nationalistic emotions. Texts, claimed to be written by poets of yore, were published, which celebrated the idealistic, noble and, not least, common past. (Lincoln, 1999, p. 50f)

By the 18th and 19th century, the myth was increasingly connected to the term *Volk*, meaning people. The concept was later exploited to its full extent during the Nazi regime, when the German *Volk* was rallied around both old and new myths.

The comprehensing narrative – 'The Third Reich' – was repeated indefinitely in pictures, speeches, symbols, academic texts etc. (Lincoln, 1999, p. 74f)[2]

What, then, is myth today? A diversion? Entertainment? Truth? A power tool? The next chapter will try and make way through the myth discussion of today as well as present the view of myth that is employed in this thesis.

## 2.2   The reality of the really made up
## - theorising myth

> Telling stories is as basic to human as eating. More so, in fact, for while food makes us live, stories are what make our lives worth living. They are what make our condition *human*.
> (Kearney, 2002, p. 3)

Many attempts, with some variation in both quantity and quality, have been made to identify and define myth. In order to better understand its power, and to lay the groundwork for the coming discussion, I will first give you a rather broad outline of the contemporary debate on what is myth, drawn on the works of scientists and theorists of a wide range of social science from psychoanalysis to anthropology.

In order to define "myth" and separate it from legends, folk-tales, and fairy-tales, Clyde Kluckhohn argues that 'myth' has "Durkheim´s connotation of the 'sacred' as opposed to the profane' (…)." (Kluckhohn, 1942 in Segal, 1998, p. 315). This suggests that myth contains elements beyond what is 'ordinary' or 'worldly'. It alludes that there are aspects to myth that we cannot explain or even fully comprehend and are perhaps not meant to do so.

Lincoln never defines myth as such, but he provides us with two observations. First, the term 'myth', like the Greek *mythos,* denotes a narrative discourse. Second, when someone refers to something as a myth, powerful and consequential assertions are made about its relative level of validity and authority compared to other kinds of discourses. These assertions may be positive (myth = primordial truth or holy story), negative (myth = lie or obsolete world view), or in between (myth = pleasant diversion, poetic fantasy, children's story). (Lincoln, 1999, p. ix) Right from the start Lincoln himself assigns myth meaning beyond a simple leisure activity, by stating that myth is "ideology in narrative form" (Lincoln , 1999, p. xii). Myth holds value far beyond the realm of entertainment and crosses into the realms of politics, economics, culture, and religion that form what we know as ideology.

Do we, then, have to believe in the myth in order to embrace the ideology behind it? According to social anthropologist Joanna Overing and the

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[2] A wide range of works have been written on nationbuilding and myth, see for example Benedict Anderson (1991); David Bar-Tal (2000); K Homi Bhabha (ed.) (1990); Anthony Smith (1991). On the construction of boundaries, identity and an 'us' see Anssi Paasi (1996); Bo Petersson, & Eric Clark (2003); Richard Kearney (2002)

'Durkheimian school', the function of the myth is not to offer metaphysical truths as its content is irrational and untrue. Rather, it works as a 'sticking plaster' for the social structure. It provides "a symbolic statement about the social order, and as such it reinforces social cohesion and functional unity by presenting and justifying the traditional order." (Overing, 1997, p. 7). Whether people believe in the myth or not is irrelevant. Its value is metaphorical and its function social. It has the function of "legitimizing the social structure (…)." (Overing, 1997, p. 8). Accordingly we do not have to believe in, or even be able to clearly identify, the ideology behind the myth. Its function is not to present us with truth per say, but to convey a message or a mould, if you so will, of the social order. Myth, so to speak, "creates cosmos out of chaos." (Overing, 1997, p. 10)

Political scientist Martin Hall aggress with Overing in that the truth content of myth is of little or no importance to the myth's impact on man or society: "[t]ruth and its characteristics are non-issues." (Hall, forthcoming, p. 5). Drawing on Lincoln, however, he presents a quite different view on whether or not the myth needs to be believed in, in order to function. He states that "what is important in [Lincoln's] studies is what is *believed* to be true by a group of people, and believed so firmly that the belief has some control over how they live their lives." (Hall, forthcoming, p. 5). Hall further draws on this element of belief when defining myth as:

> a story which is believed to be true by a group of people and which in general terms provides building blocs for this group's efforts in defining meaning, a purpose, and a collective identity. Myths, then, serve as the frame into which other phenomena are fitted and then interpreted.
> (Hall, forthcoming, p. 2f)

This thesis employs the view that in order for the myth to gain power, it does not require that it is believed in literally, but rather that the form or format of the myth is one recognisable or relatable to its audience. The plot of the myth needs to be easily understood and adopted as 'correct' albeit not necessarily 'true'. The virtue of the myth is thereby decided by and large by its relations to its society. This view finds support with the political scientist George Schöpflin, who states that "[m]yths is one of the ways in which collectivities (…) establish and determine their own being, their own system of morality and values. In this sense, therefore, myth is a set of belief, usually put forth as a narrative, held by a community about itself." (Schöpflin, 1997, p. 19). Similarly, the political scientist Murray Edelman states that myth is "an unquestioned belief held in common by a large group of people that gives particular meaning to events and actions (…)." (Edelman, 1971, p. 53). The idea of myth as a creator of identity is also recurrent in the works of psychologist Jerome Bruner. Bruner means that not only society but also individuals identify themselves through myths. Based on psychoanalytic theory, he argues that by choosing to believe in a specific myth, one chooses a

specific role and identity for one self. What we believe in, or chose to believe in, states who we are. (Bruner, 1960, p. 282 in Edelman, 1971, p. 53) [3]

So far the discussion has dealt with myth only, but something should be said on the relation between myth and its physical outlets – ritual and symbol. According to the myth-ritualist theory, myth and ritual operate together. In his *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (1889), the Victorian biblicist and Arabist William Robertson Smith pioneered the myth-ritualist theory. His approach is behaviouristic – the ritual both proceeds as well as reveals the myth. Myth, then, is only secondary to ritual and the mythology is not, by comparison, seen as an essential part of ancient religion. (Smith, 1997, p. 1f) Later on, myth-ritualist theorists have developed the theory, and among these we find one of the most influential theorists in myth studies as of this day – Bronislaw Malinowski. Malinowski argues that even though rituals may play a vital role in the anchoring of the myth, myth sanctions many cultural phenomena in addition to rituals. Myths are a fundamental part of our society, in cohesion with rituals or not.[4]

The relationship between myth, ritual, and their symbols is also noticed by Shöpflin as he states that:

> In simple terms, myth is the narrative, the set of ideas, whereas ritual is the acting out, the articulation of myth, symbols are the building blocks of myth and the acceptance or veneration of symbols is a significant aspect of ritual.
> (Shöpflin, 1997, p. 20)

Myths, he argues, are encoded in rituals, liturgies, and symbols, but the actual rituals needs no acting out. A mere reference to a symbol can be more than enough for the members of the society to recall the myth without the need of the actual ritual. (Schöpflin, 1997, p. 20). For my own discussion, I would like to broaden this argument and say that you need only make reference to that which is *symbolic*, it needn't be a symbol as such. The difference is that as opposed to a symbol, the symbolic does not have to be a physical object, but rather a 'mere' reference to something that conveys or represents more than the 'thing' itself. What's important here is the inclusion of the unseen, the untouchable, but highly symbolic *language*. Language holds a mythical meaning, words that trigger mythical references and that evoke certain responses. This will be further discussed in part three and four of this thesis.

We have now been given examples of what role, or roles, myth can play in society, its connection to rituals, and its function as a moulder of identity. What is the role of the people *behind* the myth, the so called human factor? A good myth, according to Jean-Pierre Vernant, scholar of ancient religion, contains entertainment value, it captures the attention of its audience by using the magic that is a story (Vernant, 1990, p. 206 in Overing, 1997, p. 2). The task of the audience is thus to be captured by the words and baffled by the magic. But what about the story*teller*? Philosopher Richard Kearney is one of the few to emphasise

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[3] On social control and narrative see Dennis Mumby (1993). On identities and narrative see Charles Tilly (2002).

[4] On rituals, politics and power see for example David L. Kertzer (1988).

the role of the storyteller. Each time a story is being told it's told by a *human* teller. The storyteller "tells stories for the gods, but his yarn is spun from the ungodly, human heart." (Arundhati, 1997, p. 229 in Kearney, 2002, p. 9). As obvious as this fact may seem, it holds important implications for the coming discussion. It draws our attention to the fact that not only lies there great power in the myth itself, but that this power can be tapped into by the *deliverer* of myth. Myths, stories, do not exist by nature, but are created by and for man. Events are being transformed into a meaningful social or political society – what Aristotle called *polis*. A transition from nature to narrative. Storytelling humanise time by coordinating an existence that otherwise would be spread over time. You thereby create a pattern, a plot, a *mythos*. (Kearney, 2002, p. 4) It is, in the words of Kearney, "only when haphazard happenings are transformed into story, and thus make *memorable* over time, that we become full agents of our history." (Kearney, 2002, p. 3)

In conclusion, this thesis views the myth as a narrative and ideological discourse. As a possessor of powerful value assumptions which can be negative as well as positive. As symbolic and pragmatic rather than true. As created and maintained by man. And, finally, as plotted rather than natural.

# 2.3   Hocus pocus
# - magic


> Myth (…) supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values, sociological
> order, and magical belief. (…) Myth is, therefore, an indispensable
> ingredient of all culture. (…) Myth is a constant by-product of living faith,
> which is in need of miracles; of sociological status, which demands
> precedent; of moral rule, which requires sanction.
> (Malinowski in Segal, 1998, p. 178)


Observed from the benches, many of the tasks taken on by the myth's hero appear to be close to, if not downright, impossible. The myth's function here is one of transforming the un-doable into the doable, the un-natural into the natural, the impossible into the possible. The time has come to consider the magical aspect of myth.

Magic is not often considered when speaking of myth in the sense of an active part of human, and especially modern, society. One of the few who gives magic attention beyond a mere mentioning, is the Polish-born anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, mentioned above. In his classical essay *Myth in Primitive Psychology*, which was originally published as a book (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1926) and later reprinted in his *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1948), Malinowski addresses the active role of magic in myth. In his study he states that magic is found "wherever the

element of chance and accident, and the emotional play between hope and fear have a wide and extensive range" (Malinowski in Segal, 1998, p. 174). The key words here are *hope* and *fear*. When faced with a great and possibly highly dangerous obstacle, magic interplays in the binary struggle between that which we hope and that which we fear. Magic isn't found for the most part where rational methods and technological processes make the pursuit reliable and well under control, but where the outcome is uncertain and the element of danger is present or imminent. That is not to say, however, that magic and myth cannot not be highly present in the sphere of technology, but again that when they are, it is when we cannot explain, grasp, or perhaps fathom neither the possibilities nor the limitations of technology and myth needs to step in to relieve our anxiety. This is what Malinowski terms "the psychological factor" – myth as a dampener of anxiety. (Malinowski in Segal, 1998, p. 174).

Furthermore, Malinowski addresses the question of power when stating that in addition to the psychological factor, magic also fulfils another and highly important sociological function, namely that of providing the main controlling power in the pursuit of game. His reasoning here is worthy of a more lengthy quotation:

> Magic is an active element in the organization of labour and in its systematic arrangement. (…) The integral function of magic (…) consists in the bridging-over of gaps and inadequacies in highly important activities not yet mastered by man.
> (Malinowski in Segal, 1998, p. 174)

Magic, in other words, makes us, and perhaps more importantly others, think we can do that which otherwise would seem impossible. Magic gives us the power to be able to, or appear to be able to, do that which by all likelihood cannot be done. As Malinowski doesn't give any example of this kind of magic in modern political society, I will allow myself a small anecdote as an illustration of the magic of which he speaks. Several years ago a politician, when asked how, exactly, he was to prevent inflation, answered 'I don't know, it's magic'. Although I, alongside the reporters, laughed, he did have a valid point. Magic, in this sense, is not that which *is* supernatural, but that which *seems to be* supernatural. It is, like the lady sawn in two, magic in the sense that it is beyond our grasp of understanding. We know it not be 'real' magic but rather incomprehensible and therefore *magical*. The hold on inflation, in this case, is magical in the sense that it is beyond the understanding of what can and cannot be done and, not least, how.

Malinowski furthermore identifies three essential ingredients which compose, according to him, all magic, and which help clarify the illustration just given. There are always certain words, spoken or chanted, in its performance; certain ceremonial actions are always carried out; and the ceremony always contains an officiating minister. In his study he demes the spoken part, or spell, the most important of the three. (Malinowski in Segal, 1998, p. 174) I agree that the speech function is highly central in the overall myth function. Key words function *de*

*facto* in somewhat the same way as spells and knowledge of the spell requires some knowledge of the magic behind it. Let us look more closely at the nature of such key words or "spells". As noted above, magic is found in the interplay between fear and hope and where rational methods and technological solutions fail. Words of magic, then, should contain elements of fear, hope, and mental and practical limitations. It is my claim that we have several such words in the myths of political life. Words that evoke fear but which actual content we cannot grasp and which subsequently make us turn to the speaker, or "officiating minister", for hope. Words such as "opposition", "enemy", "war", "security dilemma", arms race, "inflation" "interdependence" and "global threat" to name a few of the catch phrases from the contemporary political tradition . For many, if not most, of us these words evoke a sense of uncertainty and perhaps fear, although few of us could give a satisfactory explanation as to what these words actually mean. At the same time as the words evoke fear, using these words in the role as an "officiating minister", or "hero" in the more familiar terminology of myth, evoke a sense of knowledge and in some cases even bravery. It gives the notion of knowledge of magic through knowledge of spells and thus creates a language of political magic. In this sense, therefore, the politician evoking magic as a solution to inflation, may not have been too far off after all. [5]

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[5] On political language see for example Murray Edelman (1971); Paul E. Corcoran (1979); Michael J. Shapiro (1981). On political language in Soviet Russia see Bo Petersson (2001); Michael G Smith, (1988)

# 3 Power

The presentation of and discussion on power is divided into three part. Firstly a presentation will be given of Steven Lukes's theories on three dimensional power. After that the concept of naturalising power will be presented and explained. The last part brings together the concepts of naturalising power and myth.

## 3.1 One, two, three
## - Lukes's three dimensional power

In order to lay the groundwork for the three dimensional power, a very short presentation will be given of what Lukes calls the first and second dimensions of power. The section on the two dimensional power is concluded with two points of critique which form the transition to Lukes's third dimension.

Lukes's theories were first presented in 1974. It was not much more than a booklet, but it gained enormous attention and roused much debate on the subject of power and its faces and functions. In 2002 he reprinted a fuller edition of his theories including some of the critique as well as a richer version of the original writings. Both versions have been used for this thesis, although the fuller version of the 2002 edition has been working as the main source.

**1st dimension**

Robert Dahl, Nelson Polsby and Raymond Wolfinger are by Lukes chosen to represent the one-dimensional view of power. The mind and the method of this view is shown in Dahl's classical study presented in *Who Governs?* published in 1961, and vigorously debated ever since. In this study power was measured in terms of successes and failures defined as adopted and turned down proposals (Lukes, 2002, p. 17). The view is thus both behaviouralistic as well as that it does not merely imply, but necessitates an actual and observable conflict. Furthermore it is centred on issues, preferably crucial issues, where different interests meet which then leads to said conflict. Interests are seen as 'policy-preferences' and the view is opposed to the idea that interests may be unspoken or non-observable and, particularly, to the idea that people can be mistaken or unaware of their own interests. (Lukes, 2002, p. 18)

## 2<sup>nd</sup> dimension

The two-dimensional view first came to be by way of critique against the one-dimensional view. It develops the concept of power by giving it two 'faces', as Bachrach and Baratz, leading spokesmen of the two dimensional view, put it. The first face is the one briefly explained above, where A makes B do something B otherwise would not have done. But it should also be stated as power when A creates or amplifies social or political values and institutional praxis which limit the scope of the political process for public consideration to those issues which are relatively innocuous to A. Their central point is that "to the extent that a person or a group – consciously or unconsciously – creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power." (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970, p. 8 in Lukes, 2002, p. 20). Furthermore, they state that "if there is no conflict, overt or convert, the presumption must be that there is consensus on the prevailing allocation of values, in which case nondecision-making is impossible. (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970, p. 49 in Lukes, 2002, p. 23).

To this view, Lukes gives two principal points of critique:

1.  the two-dimensional view of power is still too committed to behaviouralism, i.e. the study of overt behaviour where concrete decisions in situations of conflict are seen as paradigmatic. (Lukes, 2002, p. 25)

2.  the perspective is insufficient because of its association of power to actual observable conflict and, as Lukes himself puts it, "[t]his insistence on actual conflict as essential to power simply will not do (…)." (Lukes, 2002, p. 26). In Bachrach and Baratz own analysis, two types of power can be identified as non- conflictual – manipulation and authority, which they conceive as "agreement based upon reason" (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970, p. 20 in Lukes, 2002, p. 27). Lukes, however, states that 'reason' cannot be said to rule in situations where all parties may not be, or rather are unable to be, fully aware of their desires as these can be controlled and/or limited. Indeed, he states that "is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have – that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires." (Lukes, 2002, p. 27). He goes on by stating that the most effective and insidious use of power is not to prevail in situations of conflict but to "prevent such conflict from arising in the first place." (Lukes, 2002, p. 27).

## 3<sup>rd</sup> dimension

*A* exercises power over *B* when *A* affects *B* in a manner contrary to *B*'s interests, or, in a catchphrase, three dimensional power is the power to secure the consent to submission by willing subjects (Lukes, 2002, p. 109).

As the subjects are labelled "willing", power, in this sense, is not to be understood as domination, but rather as persuasional, non-obvious and consentional. To speak of power as domination is, according to Lukes, to speak of power as an imposition which is somewhat the calling card of the first and second dimension of power. Domination is a constraint upon an agent's desires, purposes or interests.[6] These views of power are however not interested in how desires, purposes and interests are created, only whether or not we can act accordingly. Lukes's view, on the other hand follows in the footsteps of the 17<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Baruch Spinoza who claimed man to be rendered less free when he is prevented to live as his "nature and judgement dictate" (Lukes, 2002. p. 114). Note, however, that the 'nature' of which Spinoza speaks should not be perceived as a pre-socialised or biologically given nature, in the case of the individual, or a primordial nature, in the case of ethnic or cultural groups. Rather it is a notion of the *human* nature of which Spinoza speaks, a pragmatic nature.

Lukes's equivalent to Spinoza's 'human nature' is what he terms 'interest' or rather 'real interests'. The view of the very concept of interests Lukes employs is what he terms the radicalist's view, who:

> maintains that men's wants may themselves be a product of a system which
> works against their interests, and, in such cases, relates the latter to what
> they would want and prefer, were they able to make the choice.
> (Lukes, 1974, p. 34)

This view of interests lies at the very heart of the matter. Once you have accepted the claim that there are real interests which may be counteracted by the very system in which you live, you can understand the initial claim that *A* exercises power over *B* when *A* affects *B* in a manner contrary to *B*'s interests. Moreover, the concept of power and interests is not universal, it is tied to values held by those who use it. Lukes argues that "both its very definition and any given use of it, once defined, are inextricably tied to a given set of (probably unacknowledged) value-assumptions (…)." (Lukes, 2002, p. 30).

The three dimensional view of power does, however, involve several difficulties. First of all, justifying the relevant counterfactual is not always easy. How can you, for example, assume that victims of injustices would have, had it not been for the exercise of power, sought justice and equality? What about culturally relative values? Is not such an assumption ethnocentric? Lukes, however, claims empirical indications to exist in support of the claim that cases of consensus can be justifiably called *imposed* as opposed to *real*. This support can

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[6] On power and domination see for example Angus Stewart (2001); Dennis K. Mumby (1993); Stewart Clegg (1973).

for example be found in situations where people get the chance to break free and act differently than the system tells them to. For example the times in history when so called "untouchables" have converted to Islam, Buddhism or Christianity when they have proclaimed egalitarian principles and given hope to escape caste discrimination. (Lukes, 2002, p. 49ff)

Secondly, the term itself brings with it problems in the form of connotations. According to Lukes himself, the term has an individualistic and intentional tone, making the exercise of power a matter of individuals who consciously act in order to affect others. But power, he states, can also be exercised by groups, institutions, collectives etc., and they can do so unconsciously. (Lukes, 2002, p. 41f)

But the main critique on Lukes's theories is perhaps that given by Polsby when asking how one can claim to observe the non-observable. How, he asks, can one study, let alone explain, that which does not occur? How can you decide which non-events are important and how they came to be or, rather, not to be? (Polsby, 1963, p. 96f in Lukes 2002, p. 41). These are valid questions indeed. As Lukes points out, however, this critique goes from a methodological difficulty to a substantive assertion: "It does not follow that, just because it is difficult or even impossible to show that power has been exercised in a given situation, we can conclude that it has not." (Lukes, 2002, p. 41). Lukes, furthermore, believes the exercise of power of this type to be possible to identify by way of real interests. Whether or not this is true will not be discussed in this particular thesis, as I agree with Lukes that that the problem is methodological rather than 'real'. As this thesis is theoretical, the question of how we are to transform theory into practice will have to be left to future study. Lukes's suggestion to empirical studies, that is by way of 'real interests', will not be pursued further in this thesis. Instead the concept of covert power will be discussed in connection to myth in the parts to follow.

Three dimensional power, in summation, is then a covert and inherent power which forms and controls the very desires of man. It is non-conflictual and relative to values – cultural, political, economical, religious – as well as to relations.

## 3.2 Why let things be difficult when, with just a little more effort, we can make them seem impossible? - naturalising power

> [Power] can be deployed to block or impair its subjects' capacity to reason
> well, not least by installing and sustaining misleading or illusory ideas of
> what is 'natural' and what sort of life their distinctive 'nature' dictates, and,
> in general, by stunting or blunting their capacity for rational judgement.
> (Spinoza in Lukes, 2002, p. 115)

"Why let things be difficult when, with just a little more effort, we can make them seem impossible?" (Lukes, 2002, p. 59). I have taken Lukes's words to heart perhaps a bit more vigorously than he may have intended, as I plan to not only illustrate, but also to somewhat narrow down his theories on three dimensional power. My addition is not so much a critique of Lukes's theory as a continuation and an example or illustration of the kind of convert power of which he speaks. As mentioned above, I have chosen to call this kind of power *naturalising power*. In this section I intend to explain the properties and functions of this power in a mere theoretical way. In the parts to follow, the naturalising power will be connected to the realm of myths, bringing together part two and three of the thesis. In part four, the concept will be put in a more concrete, albeit still mainly theoretical, context through two examples of political myth – the myth of fear and the myth of the chosen ones.

I would like for the reader to note that the theory presented here is not a conspirational theory. I am not claiming that any kind of ruling elite is plotting to lead us all into damnation. Nor do I propose that the naturalising power is an evil power, merely that it *is* and that it *can* be used. That it is in fact being used is nothing I can say for certain, not having put my theory through any kind of empirical, or otherwise, testing.

First off, let us clarify what, for this thesis, is to be labelled 'natural'. The term doesn't aim to identify that which is 'truly natural'. Rather it is, once more, a pragmatic view of what's natural that is employed in the coming discussion, i.e. natural is that which is *perceived* as natural based on time, place, culture etc. The term is thereby value-laden and culturally defined rather than final or universal.

The basic idea of the naturalising power is seemingly simple: it is the power to make that which could be questioned pass unnoticed, that which could be perceived as out of the ordinary seem mundane, that which is constructed appear natural. This is all good and well in theory, but how does this connect with power, and how, in its turn, does this power connect with myth? These questions take us to the issue on how widely the concept of power is to be extended? Should it include issues and contexts, and if so which? Should it include unintended consequences and inaction? According to Lukes, as stated above, disagreement over these types of questions usually arises from methodological concerns – *how* do we study it? (Lukes, 2002, p. 110). But methodology, I, alongside Lukes,

claim, does not determine existence. Just because it cannot be easily studied that does not naturally entail that it does not exist, no science can be brought forward on such principles. My view of power includes all the aspects mentioned above. When mechanisms of power are set into action, power is at work whether the consequences that follow are intended or not. Furthermore, to inspire to inaction can be far more effective than to inspire to action. Again, the best way to win a conflict is to avert the conflict from arising in the first place. To be able to do this must, in my view, be deemed as having power.

Once the concept of power has been made to include unintended consequences and inaction, the next question to ask oneself might be how this power works? Naturalising power can function in many ways, all of which I have no intention to try to account for in this thesis. One of the ways, however, can be related to what Hayden White (1973) calls 'emplotment'. In the art of history, events, according to White, are not only chronologically compiled but are also given an internal connection. Chronologically, A occurred before B which, in its turn, took place before C. The internal relation is given by adding that A led to B which then led to C. The events are thus given a plot, a storyline. (Hall, forthcoming, p. 5) What we have now is a neatly organised story of that which, just a while ago, was set of events haphazardly scattered through time and space. By forming this chain of events, the events are given meaning and, what more, they appear to be *naturally* interconnected. To this I add that several analogous chains of events put together form patterns – when A occurs, B follows. A pattern of reference is thus created which can be used in order to sanction actions or inactions. That, which, under other circumstances, may have appeared odd, passes unquestioned and unchallenged. This is the function of the naturalising power.

Naturalising power can be exploited by way of many means, but the most common and perhaps the most effective is through our symbolic communication – language. As cited in part 2.2, Schöpflin states that a mere reference to a symbol is for society members to recall a complete story, plot, myth. To this I added that a reference to that which is *symbolic* would generate the same effect, which then would include the language. I now further propose that not only history, but also the symbolical language can be plotted. White states that the formation of a story requires a poetic act as well as a chronological (Hall, forthcoming, p. 5). Undoubtedly, the poetic act *is* the language, but I suggest that the language itself can be formed in much the same way as events into a story, where the sum is greater than the parts it's made of. Words, like events, are compiled to form a flow. The combination of certain words comes to hold certain meaning beyond that which the actual words give us. Repetition of similar flows of words, like chain of events, create patterns, rhetorical patterns – a plotted language. The words 'time', 'once', 'a' and 'upon', for example, all hold meaning to us. Compiled together, however, as 'once upon a time' it gives us connotations and set mechanism into play which far outpowers the individual words. The power of myth is created this way.

## 3.3   Naturalising power and myth

A mans judgement can be influenced in many ways, some of them hardly
credible.
(Spinoza in Lukes, 2002, p. 116)

Power in the form of Lukes's third dimensional power and my own naturalising
power can be seen, I claim, through our myths, our narratives, that which we
create and uphold. Firstly, let me once again reaffirm this thesis view of myth as a
construction of society, or, to go back to the words of Schöpflin: "myth is a set of
beliefs, usually put forth as a narrative, held by a community about itself."
(Schöpflin, 1997, p. 19). Myths, then, are created by the community and are
upheld in order to create and sustain the image the community holds of itself.
Myths are constructions or products of their time and place.[7]

 If we can create myths, cannot we also, then, use them? In order to answer this
question, we first need to identify the naturalising power in (political) myth.
According to Tismaneunu "[p]olitical myths are not systems of thought but rather
sets of beliefs whose foundations transcend logic; no empirical evidence can
shatter their pseudo-cognitive immunity." (Tismaneunu, 1998, p. 9). Furthermore:

[political] [m]yth has the power not only to offer relatively facile
explanations for perceived victimhood and failure but also to mobilize,
energize, and even instigate large groups into action. (…) The principal
function of myth is not to describe but to imagine a reality in accordance
with certain political interests. (Tismaneunu, 1998, p. 9)

Schöpflin, in his turn, speaks of a process of standardisation where rituals create
patterns of social behaviour. For this process it is not necessary for the people
involved to believe in the ritual and the myth it has derived from, its
rationalisation is only secondary. Nor is it necessary for the people sharing the
myth to be in consensus. People, he states, can act together without consensus.
Consistency is created through communication and action even though the
participants may have different or even opposing beliefs. In the political sphere
this is crucial as it "creates potential means of allegiance on the basis of social
identification." (Schöpflin, 1997, p. 21). He goes on by stating that:

Those who control the standardization process derive power from doing so
(…). (…). Those who can invoke myth and establish resonance can
mobilize people, exclude others, screen out certain memories, establish
solidarity or, indeed, reinforce hierarchy of states and values."
(Schöpflin, 1997, p. 22).

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[7] On identity and power see Manuel Castells (1997)

Although Tismaneunu identifies several key points of political myth, he is still somewhat too centred on action and conflict. He rightly states that the contents of myth are illogical and, what he calls, 'pseudo-cognitively immune', but he identifies the function of myth as that of a mobiliser or energiser and that it inspires to action rather than inaction. As stated above, however, naturalising power is at its strongest when inspiring to inaction. Schöpflin, on the other hand, introduces the standardisation process by which society's values are defined, or, as he puts it, "[m]yth creates an intellectual and cognitive monopoly in that it seeks to establish the sole way of ordering the world and defining world-views." (Schöpflin, 1997, p. 19). The naturalising force in myth is, then, the ability to form and define what is to be perceived as standard or natural, all while enjoying logical immunity.

Once we have defined the *function* of the naturalising power in myth, we can next identify the myths naturalising *form*. As briefly discussed in part 2.2, symbols and rituals form two of the mediums of myth. The more commonly used channel for myth is, nevertheless, the symbolic language discussed above. I have claimed the language to form patterns of flows which yield meaning greater than that of its individual parts. Myth is a *prima facie* example of precisely such a pattern. White claims there to exist four standard forms of emplotment in Western literary tradition – romance, satire, tragedy, and comedy. These funds of myth is what we draw from in order to make sense of a chronology. Furthermore, authority, states Hall, "is anchored in these myths: we are thus dealing with authority by recognition, authority by 'common sense', or authority by compatibility with the greater world." (Hall, forthcoming, p. 5f). Myths, in my words, gain power by recognition of what is perceived as 'natural'.

It is important to note that although the myth gains power through its form, flow, or pattern, myth is not restricted to the shape of 'a bedtime story' or 'a tale told by the fire'. According to Kearney, stories need not begin with the words "once upon a time" in order to be called stories. Stories don't die, they simply change their "habitation and their name" (Kearney, 2002, p. 127). Stories are told when an existence, which otherwise would be scattered over time and place, gets coordinated and you get a pattern, a plot, a *mythos* (Kearney, 2002, p. 4). Are we not, by this definition, subjects to as well as employers of political stories or myths every day? The story of the shifting business cycles, the monster threatening to devour us all; the story of the strong politician, the hero who will save us. These are not facts, but guesses, hopes and fears, the yarn from which stories are made. They are coordinated and put into context so as to make sense of them. They are given rhyme and reason and are thus made recognisable. They are, in fact, plotted. Again, these stories need not be true in order to have impact. In fact, according to Bruner, the power of the myth lies in that "it lives on the feather line between fantasy and reality. It must be neither too good not too bad to be true, nor must it be too true." (Bruner, 1960, p. 271 in Edelman, 1971, p. 54f).

The words of Bruner end the theoretical presentation of naturalising power and myth. Next, key elements presented in the thesis's first parts will be put into context, and the concept of naturalising power hopefully made a little less diffuse.

# 4    Myth and power in practice

Children, only animals live entirely in the Here and Now. Only nature
knows neither memory nor history. But man – let me offer you a definition
– is the story-telling animal. Wherever he goes he wants to leave behind not
a chaotic wake, not an empty space, but the comforting marker-buoys and
trail-signs of stories. He has to go on telling stories. He has to keep making
them up. As long as there's a story, it's alright.
(Swift, 1992, p. 62f)

The two myths of fear and the chosen ones will be explained and then illustrated
by a mixture of both political and 'traditional' myths taken from Russia and/or the
former Soviet Union.

The first myth – the myth of fear – is found in several academic writings and
is given consideration in fields of all from psychoanalysis to political science. My
contribution, therefore, lies not so much in the 'discovery' of the importance of
fear in human dynamics, but rather in the importance of the interplay between fear
and myth and, of course, its role in the naturalising power.

The second myth – the myth of the chosen ones – is a creation of my own.
That is, of course, not to say that I have invented the myth as such, rather that I
have given a common name to a group of myths with the common themes of
enlightenment, exclusion, inclusion, and brilliance above the normal, all of which
will be more closely explained below.

## 4.1    Fear

Fear is a universal biological instinct. It can never be completely overcome
or suppressed, but it can change its form. Myth is filled with the most
violent emotions and the most frightful visions. But in myth man begins to
learn a new and strange art: the art of expressing, and that means organizing,
his most rooted instincts, his hopes and fears.
(Ernst Cassier, 1946, p. 47 in Tismaneunu, 1998, p. 6).

Fear is perhaps the most frequent and familiar denominator in myth – fear of the
many-headed creature, the enemy warriors, the apocalypse. But what function do
these myths have in society? Kluckhohn states that myth and ritual, operating

together or separately, serve the psychological function of alleviating anxiety arising from the physical world, from society, and from oneself. Myths do so by "providing fixed ways of understanding" and rituals by "providing fixed ways of behaving". (Segal, 1998, p. 313) Kluckhohn furthermore claims that "in every society (…) there are those components of 'anxiety', those 'threats' which may be understood in terms of 'reality principle' of psychoanalysis: life *is* hard (…)." (Kluckhohn, 1942 in Segal, 1998, p. 334). He goes on by suggesting that these 'neurotic anxieties' vary in form and that to some extent, each society has its own type of anxiety. In 'our' society (and by this I can only assume that he is referring to the western world or perhaps simply the states) this anxiety, he claims, is mainly sexual, although he points out that this may only be true "of those segments in society who are able to purchase economic and physical security". (Kluckhohn, 1942 in Segal 1998, p. 334). However much I may disagree with this statement, the key word here is 'anxiety or what I have chosen to name simply 'fear', whether physical, economic, psychological or, indeed, sexual.

Similarly to Kluckhohn's division of the myth function following geographical and/or economical conditions, Tismaneanu claims the function of myth to be crucially different in totalitarian versus non-totalitarian systems. In ideological dictatorship, "myth penetrates every part of the social fabrics, motivates and orients mass enthusiasm, generates fanatic regimentations and no less fanatic persecution of dissenters." (Tismaneunu, 1998, p. 25). In democracies, on the other hand, "its power is curtailed by the existence of communities of reflexive communication, the rational organization of political structures, and the university of legal arrangements. (…) In other words, the most glaring impact of political myth can be detected in the expressions of the two totalitarian systems of the twentieth century, communism and fascism." (Tismaneunu, 1998, p. 25). The impact of the myth in both the communist and the fascist regime will in no way be disputed in this thesis. The reason behind it and the differentiation from the democratic regime, however, will. Tismaneunu misses the fundamental element that is fear. The impact of political myths in communist and fascist regimes may well be connected to the mechanisms stated above, but it cannot be sufficiently explained without the consideration of fear. In illustration of the importance of fear, I would first like to refer to the works of Hall (forthcoming) where he addresses the myth-form of good versus evil. He states that fear, i.e. evil, need to be properly named in order to have best effect:

> "If evil was un-nameable – if we understood it as the absence of good, for
> instance – there would be much less that could actively be done about it.
> The absence of an antagonist would render the protagonist slightly bizarre –
> not entirely unlike Don Quixote."
> (Hall, forthcoming, p. 13)

To illustrate this point let us turn our eyes to a contemporary example of how fear, formed in the myth-form of evil versus good, can function in a democratic society when faced with an outer threat. After 9/11, the USA, and indeed most part of the world, was in turmoil after what appeared to be one of the bluntest attacks in

modern history on a non-fighting country during peace time. Fear ruled. The face of the enemy, however, was not only unclear, but also twofold. The USA was set with two enemies – the Al-Qaida and a more diffuse group of enemies represented by Saddam Hussein. This, according to traditional western myth, cannot be. The enemy can be one and one alone. The Al-Qaida and Saddam Hussein where soon said to be one and the same and just like that it all made sense. The binary system was set into effect with the terrorist organisation on the one side and the allied on the other – *the* good versus *the* evil. I do of course realise the vastness of this simplification, but the example serves as a vivid illustration of the importance of fear and the mechanisms of the myth of good versus bad set into play. The working factor here, then, may not necessarily be the ideological dictatorship, as suggested by Tismaneunu, but the common fear of the common enemy and the binary play between them.[8]

## 4.1.1  Baba Jaga
## - fear in Russia

Fear in Russian myth plays a vital yet at times diffuse role. Fear can liberate itself from the actual myth to become a power of its own, fear just for the sake of fear. Let me give you an example. In Russian myth, many beings wander the woods, lakes, and even houses. Beings who, should you not be careful, will somehow pose a threat to you or the people you love. The creature *domovoj* lives on your farm or in your house and has the capacity, but not always the will, to help you in your daily doings, much like the Nordic Santa or *"gårdstomte"*. But beware. Should he feel less than pleased with your work or should he feel mistreated, he has the power to make your animals sick, your crop turn rotten and your children come down with the chicken pox. The *ovinnik* is the unreliable spirit in the barn who can set your barn on fire and cause all sorts of misfortune simply because he just can't help himself. Further on we have the *rusalka* who is a woman spirit which resides in lakes and rivers. She lures men into the water with her song only to make them drown for having given in to the temptation. They can even attack their victims on land by sneaking up on them from behind and tickle them to death. (Bently, 1999, p. 74ff) All these creatures have their own kind of treacherous minds and although very few ever claim to have seen them, many fear them and tell tales of how the *domovoj* will come and get you if ever you give him half a chance. The fear gets a life and a power of its own and it is taught that you should always beware, always both look and think twice before going into the territory of the creatures of myth.

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[8] There are inumerous works on fear and politics, for a few case-specific works see for example Barry Buzan (1991) or Kanan Makiya (1998). In the genre of popular science Piero Camporesi's *The fear of hell : images of damnation and salvation in early modern Europe* (1991) is an intriguing, although quite gruesome, book on how  the concept of 'Hell' has been used as a keeper of social order.

What "use" can you make of this? How can you make the fear for the sake of fear work in your favour? The uses are many and herein lay the great power of the myth of fear. The creatures of the woods, lakes, and houses are used as an incitement to behave, "don't run around in the woods or the *rusalka* will get you!". But the myth of fear is much used even in contexts where mythic creatures, in the common sense of the word, are not a factor. A direct translation of the mythic creatures described above into political terms are the post communist mythologies of what Tismaneanu, describe as a merge of the 'Jacobin-Leninist' logic of vigilance and intransigence with themes taken from the xenophobic extreme right in interwar periods. The 'other' is portrayed as a demonic figure that lives all around us and thus invokes constant fear. Instead of the sneaky *ovinnik* we now have "'the Eternal Jew', the 'bloodthirsty Hungarian', the 'overbearing Czech', the 'cheating, promiscuous Gypsy' (…)." (Tismaneunu, 1998, p. 8).

Common myths in direct relation to fear are myths of *salvation*. The object or objects in need of salvation differ through time and space, but some forms are recurrent. Tismaneunu gives the example of the post-communist myth of a "fatherland in danger". A threat lurks in the shadow, looming to destroy the land of our ancient fathers and end our way of life. The threat is the direct and only reason to our misery and our only way out is by destroying the threat itself. A concrete example, apart, of course, from the example of 9/11, is the case of Slobodan Milošević and his scapegoating or demonising of minorities for imaginary plots and betrayals. According to Tismaneunu, the primary function of these myths is "to unify the public discourse and provide the citizen with an easily recognizable source of identity as a part of a vaguely defined ethnic (or political) community." (Tismaneunu, 1998, p. 7). The myth identifies the threat and gives a clear-cut answer to the solution and thus salvages the object(s) in danger.

For those who feel threatened by the gap between what they feel entitled to and what they in reality get, attachment to a myth, according to Edelman, replace the feeling of insecurity and rootlessness with a story of who the enemy is, who your friends are and what type of action is needed in order to protect yourself and others. The myth canalises individual anxieties into a widely shared set of expectations. The individual is thereby released from responsibility for its threatened or unfortunate place in society. The level of attachment to the myth depends on the level of anxiety that the myth rationalises, and the intensity by which the certain expectation that shape the central premises for the myth is held. (Edelman, 1971, p. 54f) The role of the myth here, is one of a simplifying character. It "gives meaning to the complex and bewildering sets of observations that evoke concern." (Edelman, 1971, p. 65). Not only does the myth intensify some perceptions, it also screens others out of action. In the centre of this process is the language through which one can create, intensify or change peoples' perceptions. In the language lies the power of naturalisation. Not only are the language forms a critical element in the shaping of beliefs, they "do so in ways we do not consciously experience and so are nonobvious." (Edelman, 1971, p. 67). The language is thereby the bearer of what Lukes classify as the most effective power, namely the least observable (Lukes, 2002, p. 1).

An example of this language based fear-salvation myth in Russia, is the dealings in the Chechnya wars. Putin's rise to office coincided with an aggressive resurgence of the war in Chechnya in august 1999. Both in Russia as well as abroad, the picture of Putin was that of a harsh dealer of the dire challenges posed by Chechen terrorists. During the autumn campaign for the Duma in 1999, pro-Kremlin politicians accused Putin's biggest rivals to be 'soft on terrorism' and ratcheted up accusations of the Chechen military campaign to be supported by western intelligence agencies bent on humiliating and weakening Russia. When Putin got the post of president on December 31, 1999, he proceeded on a previously scheduled visit to North Caucasus and carefully orchestrated public relations coverage showed him presenting soldiers with hunting knifes. (Wikipedia) The role of fear is showed clearly in his many comments on the war, for example when a reporter from *Le Monde* in November of 2002 asks a critical question about the conduct of the war in Chechnya , Putin snapps back:

> If you are a Christian, you are in danger. Even if you are an atheist, you are in danger, and if you decide to convert to Islam, this will not save you, either, because traditional Islam is inimical to the conditions and objectives set by them [the terrorists].
> (Wikipedia)

He goes on by giving a suggestion as to what to do

> If you are prepared to become a most radical Islamist and are prepared to circumcise yourself, I invite you to Moscow. I will recommend having the operation done in such a way that nothing will grow for you there anymore.
> (Wikipedia)

The quotation was rendered innocuous by Putin's interpreter, but was recorded on audio and widely reprinted in Russia. Putin here uses, consciously or not, the myth of fear from which he gains both authority, superiority, and legitimacy. Fear is meant to be understood as a rational state of mind considering the current situation. At the same time, complex circumstances are narrowed down to a 'simple' question of religion, a case of us versus them. In other words: there *is* an enemy, the danger is 'real', and that 'we' should fear 'them' is only natural.


## 4.2   The chosen ones


Closely connected to the myth of fear is the myth of the chosen ones. But just as common as the theme of fear is in academic literature, just as rare is the explicit discussion of the chosen ones.

The chosen ones is a group of people who, for their remarkably good qualities, have been chosen from the masses to perform some form of higher bidding. I have identified five characteristics of the chosen ones. First, the chosen ones have, as

the name suggests, been actively chosen out of a larger number of possible candidates. This can be in the form of an active choice of the chosen ones, or in the form of a revival (religious or otherwise). The basis of the choice is the chosen's specially suited quality in relations to the job at hand. The quality can be a certain mentality or a trait that makes the chosen especially suited. Second, the knowledge or a part of the knowledge belonging to the chosen ones is internal, meaning that it cannot be freely given to people outside the group. There can even be elements of blunt secrecy, either to shield the chosen ones from threats or in the name of the best interest of the masses. The knowledge is past on from one chosen one to the next. Third, it is common but not necessary that the chosen ones have, or feel that they have, a mission to save the unknowingly and sometimes unsympathetic masses. The mission need not be shared by the masses or even understood, and the threat may thus be seen and understood by the chosen ones alone. The masses may even be downright ungrateful for the "help" they are given. Forth, the plot is linear – it has a beginning and an ending. The beginning is usually the ascent of an external threat, the end the solution or salvation of said threat. This is in direct relations with the last characteristic, namely determinism. The chosen ones are part of a process bigger than themselves. They have, of course, not been chosen by themselves, but by a higher authority that can appear in numerous forms – God (in all variations), the people, a king, divine intervention, etc. Words like "faith", "destiny", and "path" are used to demonstrate the intervention of a higher authority than one self and to emphasise how this role was not taken but given and sometimes even forced upon the chosen one. You cannot stray from your destiny, you cannot change what you are, you cannot run from your responsibilities.

Examples can be found high and low throughout society, but let me give you just a few. Most, if not all, religions are based on the concept of the chosen ones. There is an original saviour who, himself, is chosen from a large group of candidates and by a higher divine authority – usually the one true God. The religion's knowledge need not be restricted to its members, but in order to fully understand it you more often than not need to be a chosen one and vice versa – 'to know is to believe'. A mission is nearly unavoidable and it is often no less than the salvation of mankind, or at least of the chosen ones. There can be several beginnings and on different levels – the creation of earth; the creation of mankind; the birth of the saviour; the first contact with the god or gods etc. – but there is a beginning. The story has an ending although this ending is not always clear – doomsday, apocalypse, salvation day, nirvana etc. Finally, all of the above is steered by a pre-determined destiny, even though it might be beyond our ability to fully comprehend the reasons behind our part in the grand play, a fact which is legitimised by countless variations of "God works in mysterious ways".

Religion is of course a very grateful illustration of the chosen ones, but the form can be found throughout society. In legends, we find the examples of the Knights Templar and the Knights of the Round Table; in society, the Masons or the MENSA; in politics, all political government from authoritarian dictatorship to representative democracy; in culture, academies of endless variation. French Philosopher and literary critic Roland Barthes makes one reference to what can

qualify as a group of chosen ones in his chapter *Blind and Dumb Criticism*, where he notes the critics who fortify the intellectual and cultural superiority which makes them what they are. They do so by 'confessing' that "one is too stupid, too unenlightened to understand a book reputedly philosophical." (Barthes, 1970, p. 34). They do not do so, he claims, out of modesty, but to make it clear that "one believe oneself to have such a sureness of intelligence that acknowledging an inability to understand calls in question the clarity of the author and not that of one's mind." (Barthes, 1970, p. 34). Barthes does not discuss the notion of the chosen ones explicitly, but he, unintentially provides us with an example of a self-proclaimed group of chosen ones with all the necessary characteristics – the intelligentsia.


## 4.2.1  The Empire
## - the chosen ones in Russia

The myth of the chosen ones draws on one of the perhaps best rooted myths, mentioned above, of our history, of which we find inumerous variations in most if not all types of stories, legends, and myths of today – good versus evil. The myth is employed worldwide, but we find one of the more blunt examples in the former Soviet Russia.

Cynthia Weber, in her book on the mythic aspects of international relations theory, makes quite a few interesting points which can help illustrate the myth of the good versus the evil in Russia, or rather the former Soviet Russia. Through the works of Hardt and Negri (2000) she shows how a binary play is created by dividing the world into two juxtaposed groups – 'the multitude' and 'the Empire'. According to Hardt and Negri, the Empire is "the materialization […] of political, social, and economic global processes of exploitation that repress […] the 'multitude' a sort of globalised, postmodern proletariat." (Weber, 2005, p. 125). Weber claims that by recasting the oppressor as 'Empire' and the oppressed as 'the multitude', Hardt and Negri "restore the basic binary on which Marxism has so long been based." (Weber, 2005, p. 125). Both the evil (the Empire) and the good (the globally fragmented resistors of oppression) are identified as single powers, although, the concept of Empire is of a very mixed character. It is described by both quite tangible attributes such as "a political subject" or "a sovereign power" as well as by such elusive characteristics as "a non-place" and "a virtual center" (Weber, 2005, p. 128). The concept is thereby given enough substance to make it recognizable or traditionally plausible using traditional political science terms such as "sovereignty", "political subjectivity" and "world order". But the concept of Empire also gives room for the unfathomable, the "beast unseen", the "non-place" that still is all places, everywhere. So if the Empire is the global beast, what, then, is the multitude. It is a concept reminiscent of 'the masses' in (neo)Marxism. In Hardt and Negri's presentation, the multitude, however, is not merely class-based. Like the Empire, the multitude is a postmodern agent. It is not territorially defined or restricted, but fragmented, fluid, and without foundation. (Weber, 2005, p. 131). The multitude is much defined in

an 'if the shoe fits' sort of way. Are you an enemy of the oppressing 'Empire'? Then you are a member of the multitude. The multitude is however not always aware of the fact that they share this globally fragmented identity, which means that they cannot always organize their resistance as effectively as one may have whished. Weber sums it up by saying that:

> In the end, what Empire leaves us with is not an unruly world composed of illogical, anarchic, fragmented forces. Instead, we are left with a single logic (the logic of the Empire) and a single contradiction (between Empire and the multitude). We are left, in other words, with a classic Marxist encounter between oppressor and oppressed.
> (Weber, 2005, p. 132f)

This is one example of a theorised group of chosen ones. Russia, like the rest of the word, has however wide range of examples groups of chosen ones – the intelligentsia mentioned above, the KGB, the red and the white, the princes of the earliest *Kievan Rus*, and so on.[9] The point to be made here, is that the very form of the chosen ones are such a big part of human society that although the function or the members of the chosen ones may be questioned, the form is not. It is *natural* for man to form various groups of chosen ones, so natural, in fact, that he is willing to bestow authority and power to such groups – academies, political formations, law enforcing bodies. We are thus back to Lukes's definition of power by concluding that man's wants and desires can, by way of naturalising power, be formed and defined and that power is not merely power to prevail in situations of conflicts, but to avert such conflicts by turning man into a willing subject consenting to submission.

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[9] For additional literature on myth, art, and the creation of Russian society see the works of Bruce Lincoln: *Between heaven and hell : the story of a thousand years of artistic life in Russia* (1998) and *Sunlight at midnight : St. Petersburg and the rise of modern Russia* (2001).

# 5  Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to present, discuss, and develop the concepts of naturalising power and myth. A red line was to be drawn between the narrative (myth), its characteristics (power and pragmatic reality), and its function (naturalisation of constructions). Even though this thesis has shifted form many times, due to existing, or rather non-existing, material, the aim was always to contribute a deepened understanding for covert power and its form and function. Although there may be loose ends, as is always the case in theory developing studies, I feel that the concept of naturalising power provides sufficient grounds for further study. The theories of Steven Lukes have formed a good base on which to develop the concept, and myth has not only been a rewarding concept to work with interest-wise, but also proved to be highly valuable in giving the naturalising power a face.

When first I got interested in the concept of myth, my plan was to study actual use of mythic forms in contemporary Russian politics. As it turned out, however, there was call for taking the step *prior* to such a study, to lay the theoretical groundwork. Consequently, a continuation based on this thesis could well be an empirical study on myth and naturalising power in practice.

Of course, the interpretations made in this thesis are open for debate. Both power and myth are vastly complex topics, and perhaps covert power and naturalising myth even more so, and this thesis too is its own story. But, in the words of Swift, "[a]s long as there's a story, it's alright." (Swift, 1992, p. 62f)

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