

Shaun Berke: Mythos & Logos
July 1–30, 2017

Why Norse mythology?

Norse mythology is very deliberate in its conception of gods. It's distinctive among pagan cultures in that it anticipates death—the gods themselves face their end at Ragnarok. Whereas the Greeks have a dynamic underscoring how 'the deathless ones' live and how they regard 'the dying ones.' A people from a harsh land—'baptized in fire and ice'—is tempered to face life with vitality and strength. When Fenris is bound Odinn does nothing to escape his own death—the father of the slain had gained understanding in the foresight of his death and the deaths of all gods and giants. This is an example of coming to terms with time, with ephemerality. Heidegger's conception of being, Dasein, is one that acknowledges that we are thrown into existence and we are bound with death. In Norse mythology and German philosophy we find beauty in temporality, wisdom in being.

Are you a pagan?

If there is anything that deserves worship it is nature. However, I would take care to not do so blindly. Nature gives zero fucks if you live or die so make the best of it—learn to be hardy. What I love about the pantheism is that it exalts all that is human in us—an everliving reminder of where we come from, what we are, and what we might become if we can overcome our selves. Pantheism is a reminder that all things change and to feel the blood coursing through your veins—to be alive while you are alive! HEATHEN!

Where did you start with philosophy?

In Norway with Odd Nerdrum, his family and his students, I began in a dialectic. I suggest that for anyone interested in philosophy to start by reading histories that survey the landscape of the subject but take care to not let the opinion of the author misguide you. Once you have a feel for who thinks what, pick one to read; take the time necessary for good digestion; read it again. When the opportunity avails itself, have a conversation where you test out some of the answers you have been thinking about. We have our own inherent perspectives—intuitions that may resonate with someone who came and went, just as we do. I tend to favor Heraclitus over Parmenides; Aristotle over Plato; Spinoza over Theologians; Schopenhauer over Hegel; Nietzsche above most; Heidegger over Russell.

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- dichotomy through the ages: Heraclitus and Parmenides
 - duality of man: Apollonian and Dionysian
 - irrelevance of time: physics, philosophy, painting
 - gallery layout: from nihilism to self-overcoming; between narrative and subjective
 - all-change in mythology (Norse); everliving fire in philosophy (Heraclitus)

Amor Fati • The love of fate, the veneration of what it means to be all too human. Not animal nor god, but everliving fire. Always becoming. In light of black and white values, the full spectrum of the human being is uncovered. In shedding an aversion to suffering is the affirmation of overcoming. The beautiful necessity of ending and beginning, the love of fate.

¶ A work in progress; an aside and homage to Friedrich Nietzsche; a theme revisited to better convey the intentions of my early paintings. In an appropriated composition, a woman of the faith is arrested by her brothers and sisters of the cloth. The flesh luminously contrasts the surrounding darkness—indicating a conflict between humanism and monotheistic morality. The disrobing signifies a movement toward acceptance of human nature—in loving fate despite pain. In the central nun's gaze toward the nearest father is hope, and in hand of a nearby sister is a blade, our peril. A question left for the viewer.

Urbemensch Triptych • Three slices to represent the ephemerality of the present and the eternities of past and future. A gaze inward, downward to grasp fragments of what came before. A gaze outward, beyond the frame of reference and beyond the horizon. A gaze at ourselves, affirming that for a moment we understood something of becoming. A temporal being thrown into existence—reaching out from the abyss. Three images to mark a path into philosophy by way of representational painting—drawing on Heraclitus,

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Nietzsche, Heidegger; retelling Titian's Allegory of Time and Memling's Christ. "Hearts in the past, minds in the present, eyes on the future."

** Untergehen: down-going, as the sun sleeps; descent into the underworld, dissemination of understanding; death and communion.*

** Zarathustra: a reflection on becoming, a view from the abyss—sub specie aeterni; self-portrait at age 33, the appropriation of Memling's Christ as Nietzsche's appropriation of Zarathustra; "What finally comes home to me is my own self."*

** Uebergehen: over-going, as the sun rises; conquest of the spirit of gravity; rising after the long night; sight to dispel nihilism.*
