

Response to Commentary

Response to the Commentaries of Maurice McCarthy and Matt Sharkie

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Since both these commentaries share the same issue with my responses to them, I have not had much time to write in detail, but also both commentaries require little response. It is for this reason I respond to both in this space.

I sincerely thank Maurice McCarthy for his extravagant praise at the beginning and ending of his commentary. How can I respond but with beaming pleasure to someone who writes that he “literally gasped” at what he was reading? However, McCarthy rather loses me in the middle sections with Biblical, legendary, and historical references I fail to grasp. I am in full agreement that we must realize our vaunted rationality is itself the myth of our times and we remain, in reality, mythmakers. Only in this way can we really get a sense of the conscious experience of our ancestors who felt themselves immersed in a sacred reality. We are creatures of *autopoiesis*: we create myths that in turn create us. All the logic and experimental science we can muster only work within this truth.

The above applies even more to the poetry-rich commentary of Matt Sharkie. I was moved to read Sharkie’s praise for the literary quality of my work since my point is exactly that: we are made of our myths, images, and arts as much as we are made of our cells, nerves, and fibre. I blush to see that I missed my opportunity to add quotations from Eliot’s “The Hollow Men” that surely should have been destined to be in “Hollows of Experience” in the issue “Hollows of Memory”. Moreover, since I have been accused of being anthropocentric by some, Eliot’s poem would make clear I deeply feel our ascension into the freedom provided via language and symbol has also in some ways enclosed our experience. We have sacrificed Dionysos on the altar of Apollo and too often dynamic – orgiastic or mystical – experience-in-the-moment is lost to us. We talk, talk, and talk, but remain the hollow men, too afraid to lose the selves we have struggled so long and so hard within cultures to construct. I close with my favourite lines from another modernist poet, Theodore Roethke, from “In a Dark Time” (1964) who had his own ideas on losing the self but finding the light:

*Death of the self in a long, tearless night,
All natural shapes blazing unnatural light.*

References

- McCarthy, M. (2010) A Compliment and a Supplement to Nixon. *Journal of Consciousness Exploration & Research*. 1(4): 449-450.
- Sharkie, M. (2010) Comments on Nixon’s Three Essays. *Journal of Consciousness Exploration & Research*. 1(4): 451-453.

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