From Mythos to Logos: A Comparative Study of Rational Discourse in Ancient Greece and Ancient China

从神话到逻各斯：古希腊与古中国理性话语比较

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Abstract This article investigates the relationship between mythos and logos through a comparative study of ancient Greek and ancient Chinese intellectual traditions. It argues that logos did not arise from a radical break with myth but through gradual processes of reinterpretation and rational transformation. In Greece, philosophical reflection from the sixth century BCE onward progressively differentiated rational discourse from mythic narrative, yet myth persisted as a philosophically reworked element. In early China, by contrast, no sharp opposition between myth and rationality emerged; instead, mythic traditions were historicized, ethically reinterpreted, and integrated into cosmological and political frameworks, notably through concepts such as Heaven and the Mandate of Heaven. The article highlights an "inverted euhemerism," whereby Greek tradition mythologized history, while Chinese tradition historicized mythology. The comparison reveals two distinct patterns of rational development: critical differentiation in Greece and cumulative, practical integration in China.

Keywords Mythos; Logos; Rationalization; Ancient Greek philosophy; Ancient Chinese thought; Inverted euhemerism

Current research suggests that the earliest form of human consciousness was religious awareness. Earlier, Greek thinkers, represented by Hesiod (fl. 700 BCE), focused on myth, emphasizing the organization of divine genealogies (Hesiod, 2006). Around 6th/5th century BCE, logos, representing human reason, distinguished itself from myth, which had characterized Greek thought. The latter is represented by subsequent thinkers known as the "pre-Socratic philosophers," followed by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle (Buxton, 1999). During the same period, several civilizational spheres—Greece, the Near East, India, and China—witnessed the emergence of elements of enlightenment. Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) refers to this period as the Axial Age (500–300 BCE),

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during which human civilization underwent a transformation from myth to logos (Meier, 1980). This paper aims to explore the relationship between early Greek and Chinese myths and logos through comparison, to understand how these two ancient cultures perceived themselves, and to provide a new perspective for mutual learning between Chinese and Western civilizations.

1. The relationship between myth and logos in ancient Greece

An intriguing point is that Heraclitus (c. 540–480 BCE) was the first Greek philosopher to emphasize the concept of logos (Greek: Λόγος). He is well known for his doctrine that "everything flows," suggesting that the universe is in a constant state of flux. Yet, according to Heraclitus, this process of continuous change is governed by logos—a rational, cosmic principle that imposes order on chaos. He identified logos as the underlying force of the cosmos and maintained that conflict and contradiction are not only inherent in reality but essential to the world's harmony and development (Vernant, 1983).

One thing is certain: only logos, as the rational and logical nature of humans, can distinguish between logos and myth. In this light, logos primarily sees myth as a product of human imagination, which is closer to the world of the senses. Philosophy, on the other hand, built upon the strength of logos, opposed any form of fantasizing or what is known as "telling tales." Greek myths are numerous and highly diverse. The ranks of gods, heroes, demons, nymphs, satyrs, and centaurs inhabiting the mythological world are countless. One can attempt a certain chronology of myths, distinguishing three periods: 1. the period of the gods' reign; 2. the period of close coexistence between gods and humans; 3. the period of heroes, in which the activity of the gods is limited.

The oldest sources of knowledge about Greek mythology are the works of Homer and Hesiod (Hesiod, 2006), whose poems not only preserved early narrative materials but also shaped the conceptual vocabulary through which later Greeks understood the divine world. Homer's *Iliad and Odyssey* present a pantheon of gods intimately involved in human affairs, intervening in battle, guiding or obstructing heroes, and revealing the fragile yet meaningful structure of fate. Hesiod's *Theogony*, by contrast, offers a systematic genealogy of the gods, mapping the cosmic order from primordial chaos to the establishment of Zeus's sovereignty. Together, these works form the earliest literary framework within which Greek communities articulated their understanding of the cosmos, divine agency, and human limitations. Mythology, grounded in these foundational texts, stimulated artistic and literary creativity to an extraordinary degree. Vase paintings, temple sculptures, hymn traditions, lyric poetry, and later tragic drama all reworked mythic narratives, generating new episodes, characterizations, and symbolic motifs. Artists and poets repeatedly adapted inherited stories to different local cults, political circumstances, and performative contexts. For example,

myths of Athena, Herakles, Dionysus, and Artemis proliferated as poleis developed their own civic identities and ritual calendars. This continual reinvention of mythic material reflects not only the richness of the Greek imagination but also the social function of myth as a flexible medium capable of expressing communal values, anxieties, and aspirations.

In general, we can say that the collection of Greek myths, i.e., Greek mythology, consists of stories about gods and heroes transmitted through ancient Greek tradition, which also explain the place of humans in the world, as well as the origin of the world, its creation, and its history. However, the knowledge derived from myths, which were so varied, diverse, and contradictory, could never become something as "revealed truth." That means the earliest Greek mythological stories represented the Greeks' primitive or intuitive understanding of the world. For example, in Greek mythology, Zeus, the chief deity of the Olympian pantheon, is associated with thunder and lightning, which he wields as symbols of divine authority and retribution. This mythological association reflects an early attempt by the Greeks to interpret meteorological phenomena, such as storms and thunderclaps, as expressions of divine will. By attributing such natural occurrences to the actions of a supreme god, the Greeks articulated a form of cosmological order that was both intelligible and morally charged, thereby transforming the unpredictability of nature into a structured, anthropomorphic narrative. Another example is Poseidon, the god of the sea, earthquakes, and storms, who embodies the volatile and destructive aspects of the natural world, particularly the dangers of maritime life.

In the context of an ancient seafaring society, the capricious temperament of Poseidon served to personify the perilous and uncontrollable nature of the sea. Through this divine figure, the Greeks sought to explain shipwrecks, sudden tempests, and seismic activity not as random misfortunes, but as the result of divine displeasure, thus rendering the world morally intelligible and ritually negotiable. Beyond their explanation of natural phenomena, certain Greek myths also reflect the early Greek understanding of the foundations of human social order. The myth of Prometheus, who defied Zeus by stealing fire and giving it to humankind, exemplifies the Greek attempt to explain the origins of civilization and technological advancement. Fire, as a symbol of knowledge and creative power, represents the boundary between nature and culture. By attributing its acquisition to an act of divine transgression, the myth articulates a view in which human progress is inseparable from moral ambiguity and divine punishment. The eternal torment of Prometheus—chained and subjected to daily suffering—underscores the dangers of overstepping cosmic order, while simultaneously affirming the human capacity for foresight and innovation. This narrative encodes a cultural ambivalence toward technology, portraying it as both a gift and a transgression. These

myths reflect an early Greek attempt to explain the world around them in anthropomorphic and narrative forms, offering a form of intuitive knowledge before the rise of rational inquiry.

Those "Mythical" knowledge in ancient Greece was subjected to continuous discussion, polemics, and criticism. This process led, among other things, to the development of logos, which gave rise to mature philosophy at the turn of the 6th and 5th centuries BCE (Burkert, 1985; Guthrie, 1962; Parker, 2005).

In this context, an intriguing question is the relationship between Greek mythology and the religion of ancient Greeks. Of course, Greek mythology was an essential part of Greek religion. However, religious life in ancient Greece was largely based on orthopraxy, rather than orthodoxy. The distinction between myth (μῦθος) and reason (λόγος) can also be characterized as the difference between what is passively heard and received, and what, after being heard and received, is actively reconstructed or represented through one's own thought. Unlike mythos, logos implies active speech rather than merely repeating received content. This implies that logos involves more than simply recounting what has been heard; it adds a reflective dimension, where one deliberates on the received content and articulates it in a way that interprets and elucidates it.

The transition from mythos to logos can therefore be understood as the emergence of active individual thought. In this transition, the passive acceptance of all received content is increasingly accompanied by critical reflection. This active engagement not only leads individuals to question and analyze the content they encounter but also fosters further discussions within the human community. Within this context, logos evolves from mere speech into a mode of expression enriched by independent thought, characterized by inquiry and doubt directed toward previously held beliefs. The transition from mythos to logos in ancient Greek thought was also not a simple replacement of fantasy by reason, but a complex process of reinterpretation, integration, and critique. While logos challenged the epistemic validity of myth, it also drew upon mythological material to shape its own discourse. Greek philosophy did not reject myth entirely; rather, it recontextualized myth as a cultural narrative to be examined, rationalized, or even transformed. This interplay between mythos and logos marks not a rupture but a dialectic—where imagination and reason, tradition and inquiry, coexisted and shaped the birth of Western philosophical consciousness.

This dynamic can be observed with particular clarity and vividness in the tension between Athenian public religious life and classical philosophical reflection. To begin with, from the perspective of polis religion, religious identity in ancient Greece was acquired primarily through participation in prescribed ritual practices rather than through adherence to a fixed body of doctrinal

beliefs. An Athenian citizen who regularly took part in festivals such as the *Panathenaea*, the *Dionysia*, and the highly secretive and influential Eleusinian Mysteries, and who duly performed the required acts of sacrifice, purification, procession, and communal feasting, was regarded as a practitioner of *Eusebeia* (εὐσέβεια, "piety"). Whether such a person genuinely believed that Zeus caused rain or that Demeter had instituted agriculture was of little consequence; what mattered was that the ritual actions were carried out correctly. The focus, in other words, lay not on what one believes, but on what one does. This ritual-centered religious structure reveals with great clarity the primacy of orthopraxy over orthodoxy in Greek religious life.

It is equally noteworthy that Greek religion permitted mutually contradictory myths to coexist without anxiety. For instance, the birth of Aphrodite is narrated in entirely different ways by Homer and Hesiod: the former presents her as the daughter of Zeus and Dione, while the latter depicts her arising from the foam of the sea. Athenians did not perceive such contradictions as problematic. Rather, they employed different versions in different cultic or poetic contexts as needed. This "tolerance of contradiction" demonstrates that Greek religion was not oriented toward the construction of a unified theological system.

From the 5th to 4th centuries BCE onward, however, philosophical writings reveal a growing tendency to subject myth to critical scrutiny through the emerging discourse of logos. Plato (429–347 BCE), in particular, undertakes a systematic critique of Homeric and tragic poetry in *Republic* 377b–398b. He argues that poets portray the gods in exaggerated, anthropomorphic, and morally objectionable ways—depicting them as engaging in deceit, adultery, revenge, and acts that, if performed by humans, would be reprehensible. To present such stories unfiltered to the young, he claims, would corrupt their moral development. For this reason, Plato advocates strict censorship of poetic content in the ideal polis and, where necessary, the exclusion of certain mythic narratives altogether. Here, logos challenges mythos: philosophy demands that myth conform to ethical and rational standards and no longer accepts it as an unexamined authority.

Yet, more significantly, Plato does not abandon mythic form altogether; rather, he reconstructs it philosophically. He creates a substantial corpus of philosophical myths to express abstract doctrines that are difficult to convey through purely discursive argument. Among the most prominent examples are: the "Myth of the Metals" (*Republic* 414b–415d), which uses mythic imagery to justify social differentiation and political hierarchy; the "Allegory of the Cave" (*Republic* 514a–520a), which employs a mythic narrative structure to illustrate intellectual ascent and the transformation of cognition; the "Myth of Er" (Republic 614b–621d), which presents a vision of the afterlife to explore the immortality of the soul and the moral consequences of choice; the myths

of the soul's ascent and reincarnation in the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, which articulate the tension between the realm of Forms and human desire. These philosophical myths do not merely replace traditional myths; they constitute the rational reinterpretation and refunctionalization of mythos by logos. Plato appropriates the traditional narrative form of myth but invests it with new ethical, epistemological, and metaphysical meanings. Myth thereby ceases to be an unreflective tradition and becomes a pedagogical instrument in the service of philosophical inquiry. From this example, a dual movement becomes evident: At the civic level, religious life continued to depend on traditional myth as the narrative and ritual background of cult, emphasizing continuity of practice (orthopraxy); At the philosophical level, logos required that mythos be scrutinized, selected, transformed, or even replaced by new forms of "rational myth" aligned with ethical and intellectual norms. This demonstrates that the transition from mythos to logos was not a linear process in which philosophy simply supplanted myth. Rather, it was a prolonged period of coexistence, interaction, competition, and mutual adaptation between traditional narrative and rational reflection. Traditional myth retained its social and religious functions, while philosophy turned myth into a cultural resource that could be analyzed, criticized, and rewritten. Mythos and logos thus stand in a continuous and internal dialectical relationship, forming one of the foundational dynamic structures in the emergence of Western thought.

2. The rationalization process in ancient Chinese thought

In Chinese mythology, many events are said to have taken place during the time of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors. These mythical rulers were believed to have governed China 5000 years ago, preceding the semi-legendary Xia dynasty (c. 2070–c. 1600 BCE). This mythological period held particular significance in Confucianism, the dominant ideology of imperial China. Confucius (c. 551–c. 479 BCE), the founder, regarded the era of these mythical rulers as the golden age of Chinese civilization, asserting that future generations should look to their ancestors as unparalleled exemplars. The Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors period thus became the foundational myth of Chinese civilization, with its rulers credited with various civilizational achievements, including the establishment of marriage, agriculture, medicine, and writing traditions. This era symbolizes the beginnings of Chinese culture and civilization.

But where is the place for so-called prehistoric myths, such as the creation of the world or the origins of humanity? Chinese civilization emerged in the middle reaches of the Yellow River, at the intersection of two distinct geographical regions: the loess highlands and the flat plains formed by river deposits stretching to the sea. It developed in the area where the Wei River (the largest tributary of the Yellow River), flowing from west to east, joins the Yellow River, which flows

southward from the Ordos Desert. From the earliest days of Chinese civilization, these two geographical regions were characterized by different types of agriculture, leading to distinct forms of economic activity. Western sinologists have long observed a significant distinction between the mythological traditions of the pre-imperial period (before 221 BCE) and those of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE).

The issue of chronology in Chinese mythology deserves to be mentioned (Allan, 1991: 57–73). Unlike Greek mythology, it is impossible to determine the time of origin for fragments of classical Chinese mythology. Some sinologists use the concept of euhemerism in this context. According to Euhemerus, the Greeks mythologized their own history (hence the term "euhemerized"). Applying this to Chinese culture, one could say that the Chinese historicized their own mythology. Thus, in ancient China, we observe a reversal of the euhemerism phenomenon found in ancient Greece. In China, mythology transforms into history, meaning gods become humans. For this reason, the earliest period of Chinese history is often referred to as the era of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors. Traditional Chinese historiography identified the beginnings of Chinese civilization primarily with the activities of the Five Cultural Heroes: 1. Fuxi, who laid the foundations of family structure and domesticated animals; 2. Shennong, who invented agriculture; 3. Huang Di (Yellow Emperor), who invented the bow and arrow, carts, and pottery, unified tribes, and allocated lands along the Yellow River, with his wife credited for the discovery of silk; 4. Yao, who developed a calendar and established religious rituals; 5. Shun, who endeavored to control flooding with the assistance of the official Yu. This Chinese euhemerization—namely, the historicization, chronological ordering, humanization, and rationalization of myths (the realm of gods)—can be regarded as a product of Confucian hermeneutics. Some sinologists, such as Wolfgang Münke, have undertaken efforts towards the so-called "de-euhemerization" of Chinese mythology (Münke, 1998). In this way, it turns out that Chinese myths from classical literature are used as "parables" and examples of philosophical thought. The "older" the myth (e.g., the creation of the world or the cosmos), the later it appears in Chinese literature. For instance, the earliest versions of the myth of Pangu—an immensely powerful being who created the universe—appear only in the 3rd century CE. The myth of Nügua, the sister and wife of Fuxi, who in Chinese mythology is the creator of humanity, also dates back to the 3rd century CE. The myth of Houyi, the excellent archer and husband of the Moon Goddess Chang'e, who shot down ten suns, originates from the 4th century BCE. The issue of the chronology of Chinese myths, as well as the lack of systematic categorization among their mythological elements, leads scholars to adopt an opposing relationship between logos and myth in European (Greek) and Chinese culture. According to early Chinese literature,

metaphysical speculations preceded myths in China, which seems to stand in contrast to what happened in European culture. Of course, this brings up an additional problem regarding the relationship between metaphysical speculation (thought) and logos, as well as their content in the Chinese tradition. As mentioned earlier, logos gives voice to the active element of an individual's thought. The passive, all-receiving narration (myth) began to be accompanied more by the active thought of the individual, which inevitably led to further speculations with other members of the human community, also independent thinkers, asking questions and expressing doubts about what had been believed so far. The view concerning the understanding of the cosmos and the human world can be found in the ancient religious ethos of China, which de Groot referred to as "universism." (De Groot, 1912)

The term "universism" refers to the all-encompassing (i.e., universal) harmony between the macrocosm and microcosm, and the corresponding form of human life and thought derived from it. De Groot found this in two indigenous spiritual traditions of China, namely Daoism and Confucianism. In the family or clan, where the religious roots of Confucian morality lie, which, as the guardian of proper human relationships ("Five Cardinal Relationships"), built a ritualized form of daily life sanctioned by the Confucian canon; the family, understood in this way, became, through ancestor worship, the foundation of unity in Chinese society. In the local-neighborhood community, which was a natural and closest extension of the family unity, the old earth cult continues in the belief in the institution of the heavenly, transcendent bureaucratic system, representing the earthly governance in the respective region. Over time, the belief in tutelary deities, worshiped since the dawn of history, was supplemented with belief in the spirits of meritorious officials and their ancestors. However, all of them had to demonstrate the ability to care for the people; if their inefficacy was proven (for instance, in the face of a series of disasters and calamities), they were replaced. This cult was sanctioned by the state. In state cults, in which the emperor played a key role, this cult was the culmination and highest form of all cults since the first unification of China in 221 BCE. It combined elements of earth and ancestor worship, with the foremost sacrifice to Heaven (Tian), second to Earth (Di), and separately, to the imperial ancestors. The emperor acted as the representative of Heaven (Tianzi, "Son of Heaven") and the sole representative and intermediary of the Chinese people. This type of religious ethos could also be called cosmotheism. It is the view that the world/cosmos is granted the primary role of the organizing and creative force, which is not understood as a volitional act of the Creator God but as an inherent force existing eternally. Here, there is no distinction between the natural and the supernatural. The concept of *Dao* ("Way") in philosophical Daoism, which emerged after the concepts of Highest Ruler (Shangdi)

and Heavens (Tian), is more reminiscent of the Christian concept of God as the Creator.

From the beginning, the Chinese oriented themselves according to three regularities: 1. the cyclic nature of cosmic processes, such as the cyclical progression of the day and seasons; 2. the regular cycle of vegetation and life, with growth and decay, and various phases (such as the lunar phases); and 3. the bipolarity of nature. The most well-known example of the third category is the bipolarity of *yin* and *yang*. This describes two primal and opposing yet complementary forces that can be found throughout the universe. The mutual interaction of *yin* and *yang* is the cause of the creation and transformation of all things. From them arise the five elements that constitute the universe ("Five Elements/Transformations": fire, water, earth, metal, and wood), and from these, all other things. Within the forces of nature, the states of *yin* and *yang* are in constant movement (Kirkland, 2004: 75–83). This mode of thinking certainly includes the concept of *feng shui*, literally "wind" (invisible) and "water" (elusive), as a life force in nature that is invisible and intangible. *Feng shui* is the planning and arrangement to achieve harmony with the natural environment. Traditional *feng shui* in ancient China included the general layout of cities, villages, and residential and agricultural buildings. Earlier, *feng shui* was also translated as Chinese geomancy, as these practices involved issues such as protecting buildings from evil spirits or the influence of shapes on their surroundings.

A representative and concrete example can be found in the treatment of Heaven's Mandate (Tianming) and political legitimacy in texts such as the *Book of Documents*, the *Spring and Autumn Annals,* the *Commentary of Zuo*, and the *Analects*. In early China, the concept of Heaven carried an unmistakable mythic–religious dimension and, in the early Western Zhou period (c. 1046–771 BCE), even possessed quasi-anthropomorphic characteristics: kings such as Wen and Wu are depicted as rising to power by virtue of receiving the "Mandate of Heaven." By the Spring and Autumn (770–476 BCE) and Warring States periods (475–221 BCE), however, this divine volition was increasingly reinterpreted as a natural and moral order governed by generalizable principles. Thus, in the *Commentary of Zuo*, Duke Zhao Year 7, the statement "The Way of Heaven is distant; the Way of Man is near" indicates that "Heaven's Way" no longer denotes the will of a personified deity but rather a set of political and ethical regularities accessible to rational discernment. Similarly, the *Analects*, in the chapter "Wei Zheng," asserts that "To govern by virtue is like the Pole Star," where Confucius employs the constancy of celestial motion as a metaphor for political authority grounded not in supernatural sanction but in observable and rationally evaluable moral order. An even more tangible example appears in Warring States interpretations of disasters and anomalies. During the Shang period (c. 17–11 cent. BCE), natural calamities were typically understood as signs of divine anger. Yet texts such as the *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu*), the *Yi Zhou shu*, and

especially the *Xunzi* increasingly construed such phenomena as "portents" or "indications" of human misrule—symbols that reflect political and ethical imbalance rather than punishments inflicted by an anthropomorphic deity. The *Xunzi*, in the chapter "Tianlun," explicitly denies any intentional agency on the part of Heaven, declaring: "Heaven's processes are constant; they do not endure for Yao, nor do they perish for Jie." This statement marks a decisive shift from mythic notions of divine will toward an understanding of Heaven as natural order governed by inherent principles (*li*): disasters are natural occurrences, and political success or failure belongs to the realm of human responsibility, not divine judgment. This example illustrates that early Chinese thought did not achieve rationalization through a dramatic rupture with myth or a rejection of religious concepts. Rather, it gradually internalized mythic categories—such as Heaven, Heaven's Mandate, and Disasters and Anomalies—into ethical categories (virtue), political categories (rectification, governance), and cosmological categories (*dao*, *li*). This hermeneutic transformation preserved cultural continuity, allowing ritual-based cosmology, ancestral religion, and emerging philosophical reasoning to coexist and gradually converge. The result is a form of accumulative rationalization, distinct from the sharper mythos–logos tension characteristic of Greek intellectual history.

In sum, the development of reason in ancient China did not proceed by establishing a sharp opposition between myth and rational discourse, as some narratives suggest for the Greek case. Instead, mythic and religious elements were gradually reinterpreted and internalized within ethical, political, and cosmological frameworks. The movement toward something analogous to logos—conceived here through terms like *li* (principle) and *dao* ("way")—reflects a transition from direct divine sanction to natural and moral order, from shamanic performance to discursive philosophy, but without disowning the underlying cosmological and ritual matrix. This internal transformation is characterized by cultural continuity rather than epistemic rupture. Rationalization proceeds by integration and symbolic reinterpretation, not by iconoclasm. Within this process, myths often function as illustrative narratives or moral exempla rather than as autonomous accounts of divine action detached from ethical reflection.

3. Summary

At the beginning of this paper, I expressed a strong belief that the earliest human consciousness was religious consciousness. Only over time, through the process of the autonomy of human life, did the arts become detached from strictly religious content, and even later, the autonomy of human reason emerged, leading to the formation of philosophy, which eventually gave rise to modern sciences. In Western culture, this context is often referred to as the discovery of logos. Logos, as the force of human reason, was always present wherever humans—homo sapiens—existed,

whether in ancient China or ancient Greece. The relationship between logos and myth seems to have unfolded differently in ancient Greece and ancient China. Early classical Chinese literature suggests that metaphysical thought in China preceded myths, which seems to be the reverse of what occurred in ancient Greek culture.

One particularly interesting discovery made during these studies is the inverted euhemerism in China: while the ancient Greeks mythologized ("deified") their own history, the ancient Chinese historicized ("humanized") their own mythology (the world of gods). However, there are also similarities. Religious life in ancient Greece was largely based on orthopraxy (as unity in key religious practices), rather than orthodoxy (as unity and logical coherence of religious beliefs, among which there were many and highly diverse Greek myths). Orthopraxy is also a fundamental characteristic of Chinese religiosity. Chinese religiosity was—and continues to be—more based on orthopraxy (literally "correct conduct," here meaning "actions that prove themselves in life") than on orthodoxy ("right belief," "doctrinally correct formulations of one's religion"). Religion and religious experience must be reflected in daily life, meaning that, in the Chinese view, they should yield tangible results and benefits (pragmatism in life). It is not regulated by clergy or dogmas.

Religion in Chinese culture appears to be something akin to an instinct, much like food, shelter, and clothing, which are essential elements of daily human life. This stems from a particular view of human life, in which loyalty and reverent respect for ancestors, belonging to a family, and individual effort, accompanied by an awareness of the presence of many spirits and possibly even a sense of the presence of the Supreme Being (known as *Shangdi* or *Tian* in classical China), serve as a means for the Chinese to secure happiness for their families. This happiness is primarily understood as wealth (prosperity), longevity, and success in life (high earnings). Such an attitude leaves little room for theological reflection or debate. Even in religious Daoism, what is more common are descriptions of religious experiences rather than theology in the Christian sense.

Furthermore, the development of the relationship between logos and myth has progressed unevenly within a given culture, and it must be emphasized that this is still the case today. In ancient Greece, myths were important throughout their entire ancient history, even during the early stages of philosophical (logos) development. In contrast, for the Chinese, an interesting summary can be found in the thought of the German sociologist, economist, and religious scholar Max Weber (1864–1920). He believed that in traditional China, i.e., up until the early 20th century, there was tolerance, even care, for magic, which led all attempts at rationalization in traditional Chinese culture to move toward a magical worldview. Weber sought to justify this conviction by examining the history of scientific thought development in China, where astrology, pharmaceutical arts, and

geomancy (*feng shui*) played significant roles (Weber, 1951). Moreover, the Chinese reflection on myth was shaped by a fundamentally pragmatic orientation. Unlike the Greek tradition, in which myth increasingly became an object of theoretical critique, allegorical interpretation, or philosophical reappropriation, early Chinese thinkers tended to evaluate myth in terms of its practical efficacy within ethical, political, and ritual life. Mythic motifs—such as Heaven's Mandate, ancestral origins, or cosmological patterns—were not primarily subjected to speculative demythologization; instead, they were reinterpreted insofar as they could guide concrete action, legitimate political authority, regulate ritual behavior, or sustain social cohesion. As a result, myth in the Chinese context functioned less as a cosmological hypothesis to be refuted or rationalized and more as a symbolic resource embedded in lived practice, enabling the articulation of moral norms, administrative order, and cosmological harmony. This practical orientation reinforces the cumulative and continuous nature of Chinese rationalization, distinguishing it from the sharper theoretical opposition between mythos and logos characteristic of Greek intellectual history.

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