

# The Space Between

by Michael Gambino • [www.natureandspirit.org](http://www.natureandspirit.org)

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**M**any things can influence our perception and our experience. Our personal reality can shift in a heartbeat to a vastly different one, equally real as the first. Meditation can produce this sort of shift in awareness. For me, meditations occur spontaneously and are often dynamic rather than static (i.e. sitting somewhere “meditating”). Most often it is when I am walking or hiking while in a state of heightened sensory awareness.

At one point during my pre-dawn walk this morning around my neighborhood, I stopped short – something had shifted in my consciousness. But how do I describe it? The world around me just felt different – as if I had passed unawares through an invisible threshold between worlds. A place where different realities were superimposed upon the other, separate – yet existing side by side. Simultaneously I experienced both realities; I was not merely having two thoughts or points of view about one reality. On the surface, an object or action in one world looked the same as in the other, but something about it felt very different.

All around me I experienced the world as night and day met in transition. I imagined a kind of conversation taking place between the two great powers of the world. In ancient Greece, the goddesses of Night and Day, Nyx and her daughter Hemera, personified potent aspects of life. Perhaps, in such a mythical conversation, Nyx spoke of the comings and goings of all night creatures and of the changes in their lives: some ending, others just beginning. It may be that she told her daughter of the dreams of the world as it slept beneath her velvet cloak. Hemera, for her part might reveal what she herself dreamt of during the night, and in her dreaming what possibilities and hope she brought forth for the new day she ushered in. Such ancient, elemental goddesses did not speak in the language of man, of course, but conversed using the primordial language of

light, sound, and movement.

I witnessed their conversation flourish overhead, reflected in the warm yellow-white clouds touched by vibrant pink and accented with tones of deep rusty red and gray. I saw the clouds as sky-dancers, honoring and celebrating the eternal nature of renewal and change. Spellbound, I watched their movement across a stage set in both the fresh blue advancing from the east and the smoky shades of night receding to the west.

Captivated by this grandeur I paused awhile, opening

my soul to the magnificence of this daybreak. Tears filled my eyes – perhaps the most suitable response to the moment. So much of life’s beauty receives only a cursory glance when it begs to enter us deeply. Artist Georgia O’Keefe once said, “Nobody sees a flower – really – it is so small it takes time – we haven’t time – and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time.”

As I walked on in this state of in-between,

several female deer with their sweet fawns by their side continued to forage close by, confident that they had some time yet before commuter traffic and dog-walkers would fill the roadway, breaking the day for sure. Their wet, shiny black noses sniffed in my direction while soft ears flicked away persistent mosquitoes. Moths fluttered about the still vigilant street lamps, and a large black beetle scurried across open asphalt looking for a place to hide from the approaching light of day (and hungry birds that would soon be out and about). A little further on, I stopped to relocate from the road a tiny, torpid frog, cold to the touch. A male cardinal – a herald of dawn – sang his piercing and powerful song. Soon after, the cardinal’s music was joined by a raucous murder of crows celebrating the arrival of the day high atop the trees. These creatures and I – each within our own perception of the world – have passed through the transition from night to day together. We regarded each



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other it seemed with a knowing gaze – as though I had just discovered what they’ve long known about the nature of the world.

Like awakening from a potent, vivid dream (where for a time both the dream world and the waking world are equally real), I found myself back in the ordinary and dense world of my daily life. As the sun climbed higher in the sky, I experienced a certain sadness tempering my elation.

Beneath the surface of simple, ordinary events such as a morning walk, there flows a current of ancient mythological and spiritual power. Some people might regard myths as a defunct system of knowledge or simple metaphors. As entertainment, we like mythologies as they appear in movies or books, but have no idea how to apply them to our lives anymore.

Today, hard science and logic seem to have dethroned the kings of old that once ruled our hearts and guided our actions. But myths are not necessarily the same as fantasy. True myths are not trivial imaginings, but are powerful methods for people to access and comprehend the world of forces greater than themselves. Today, mythological themes and archetypes have been mined, processed, and formulated to fuel the entertainment industry. Whether done well or poorly, this effort speaks to our culture’s deep desire for myth in our daily lives ( *de sire*, meaning “of the Sire”, or the King’s wish: the heart’s wish).

Nature used to surround us where we lived. Today, we have surrounded nature, leaving small islands of broken habitat and a disconnected sense of our relationship to the wild. This fractured understanding often leads to poor choices and negative consequences. Science tries to make sense and put the pieces back together (like food that is processed to a non-nutri-

tive state and then “fortified” to put some vitamins back into the product). And science is mostly successful at this – but then, Frankenstein’s Monster was “mostly” a success, too).

Where is our connection to the invisible forces that call to us in the whisper of dry leaves and grasses, or in the silent passing of clouds? What society has forgotten, by and large, is that we are eternal spirits in a temporal and material world.

So many myths handed down from the past attempt to make sense of the powers in the world that influence us from cradle to grave. Some are encoded with acquired knowledge of survival and proper conduct in all our relations. Other myths reached deeper still, but were not meant as scientific explanations of natural phenomenon, or factual accounts of creation. Rather they were methods for slipping past the gatekeepers of the mind – Fact and Logic – to reach our inner world; the place where we are in touch with the Source, and realize our common bond with all life.

Mythology and storytelling have an important place in our lives. We live in the Age of Technology and the Machine, and we have become quite powerful. Enamored of this power, we may also walk the edge of ruin both as an individual as well as a species. We may have power, but where is the potency? The embedded wisdom of deep mythology is needed to keep us from tumbling off the cliff.

Clearly not everyone is inclined to be a storyteller or a scientist, yet we have all benefited from the practitioners of both disciplines. I am more a teller of tales than a scientist, though science has helped me to see the world in a way that enhances my storytelling and personal mythologies. We still need myths to help make sense of our own journey through life in a way science will never do alone. This is a

prime function of mythology. Science can tell you why day follows night and night follows day, but it can’t explain the stirring of your soul at witnessing sunset or dawn. Some things are meant to remain intangible and mysterious in spite of scientific explanations. We must learn to trust the wisdom of our heart, because our heart has not forgotten what our minds have.

Our deeper connection with the natural phenomenon around us can add so much to life. Myth and mystery are not less important or powerful than logic and reason. This morning’s walk would have been considerably less moving, less informative, less revitalizing had I only seen it through the lens of science: the earth’s rotation and curvature relative to the sun, or to view the deer as destroyers of our forest’s understory. Had I been caught up in the crackling bombardment of anxious thoughts concerning my future, I’d have walked through mists of wonder and remained unaffected. Nature is greater than the sum of its scientifically explained parts, and there is more to life than doing and achieving.

We must be careful that in wielding our science and logic as a flaming sword to banish demons and subjugate natural processes for “better living”, that we don’t also sever our connection to the true source of power: our spiritual nature.

As Walt Whitman, author and skilled naturalist and observer once stated, “*You must not know too much, or be too precise or scientific about birds and trees and flowers and water-craft; a certain free margin, and even vagueness-perhaps ignorance, credulity – helps your enjoyment of these things.*” ❖

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