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THE FIRST GODS OF MARS

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ABSTRACT

Humans will soon be setting foot on Mars. They will be exploring, terraforming, mining, building settlements, forming communities, and as development continues, welcoming more people to the Red Planet.

Man is as much an explorer as we are anything else. Curiosity seems built-in to almost every personality. It is in our nature to seek, to examine, to understand and as a natural consequence of that, in the last seventy years or so, to expand our exploration out into the universe, including sending humans to set foot on other heavenly bodies.

There's a typical transformational arc that moves from real people into larger-than-life heroes into long-lasting legends and eventually into deities. These gods will reflect the real people who had come to the new land and in turn these deities will influence later generations.

So eventually, as is the way of humans, gods will be created based on the experiences and observations of those first humans on Mars.

Examples of this tendency in action can be seen in *The Aeneid*, an epic poem commissioned by the Roman Emperor Augustus to get a one-up on the Greeks and give Rome a noble founding myth. The poet Virgil wrote a fictional account of the Trojan Prince Aeneas leaving the smoking ruins of Troy with his aged father, young son, and a bunch of warriors to go found Rome. Along the way they stopped off in Carthage where Aeneas had a romance with Queen Dido that ended rather badly and was used in retrospect to justify the long-lasting enmity between Rome and Carthage. [*Carthago delenda est* – Carthage must be destroyed.]

The Maori of New Zealand rather quickly mythologized their recent ancestors who had seemingly miraculously charted their way across the Pacific in the late 13th century and settled as the first humans [as far as we know] to set foot on these southern-most paradisiacal islands. Their founding hero is the demi-god

Maui who pulled up the islands known as Aotearoa from the depths of the sea with an enchanted fish hook.

Creation myths from around the world in many cultures offer fascinating stories about how a particular place was discovered and settled. No doubt the same process will occur with Mars.

There will be a long list of criteria for deciding which people get onto the first ship to Mars. Of course they must include those with the necessary scientific, technological, and engineering skills. If staffed like the starships in our science fiction stories, they'll also include a complement of other skills: medical, support systems, emotional-spiritual, and for sake of sanity and enrichment, the artistic as well. How clever Patrick O'Brien in his *Master and Commander* novel series was to have the ship's surgeon Dr. Stephen Maturin also be a musician, naturalist, and intelligence agent. He and Captain Jack Aubrey often played cello and violin out on the high seas and made a duo similar to Captain Kirk and Mister Spock, or Holmes and Watson. Kim Stanley Robinson in his *Mars* trilogy has 100 original colonists with a wide range of skills, personalities, friendships, rivalries, and bondings. No doubt such relationships will be formed among the first settlers on Mars. And no doubt these outstanding personalities in exceptional situations will become mythologized.

Part of the selection criteria then should be not only about their immediate skills but also a recognition of the fact that they will eventually, and perhaps sooner rather than later, given the exceptional nature of what they are doing and where they are going and the massive exposure their actions will have back on earth, transition from humans to heroes to legends to deities.

Knowing the process that naturally occurs, how much better to be quite conscious of the myths we are creating and what we want them to accomplish.

This then, is about the First Gods of Mars.

What are Myths anyway?

Myths are not just the dusty old stories of the Greeks and Romans. Nor are they other people's religions. And it's not what a 3rd grader once said, "A myth is a female moth".

Myths are the stories we tell ourselves to explain the world around us and within us. And often also to justify the world we have created, shaped, and influenced to our own advantage.

Noted mythologist Joseph Campbell pointed out that nature influences spirituality and religion. In locales like triple-canopy forests or verdant hills and valleys

teeming with life there are typically complex pantheons and besides the major deities, lots of nature spirits, sprites, demons, and personifications of natural events. He points out that the three major monotheistic religions come from the deserts where there is little sign of life other than sand, wind, the occasional critter scurrying across the wide expanses, and humans and their livestock. From these herding cultures evolves a sheparding god with strict rules around food, loyalties, and hospitality necessary for survival in such harsh climes. In contrast to the diverse deities of more lush landscapes, the austerity of desert landscapes is often reflected in the austerity of the sole deity.

In explaining the world around us, oral and written traditions pass down storied accounts of actual events, be they geological or sociological. A sky deity and a below-ground deity battling with fire, rocks, thunder, and storms over a beautiful red-haired princess may hold the account of a volcanic eruption. Barber & Barber note in their book *When They Severed Earth from Sky – How the Human Mind Shapes Myth* that differing proximities to an event creates different myths.

The eruption of Thera in 1625 B.C.E. in the eastern Mediterranean spawned stories that varied according to the chronicler’s distance from the devastating event. In widening rings moving away from the epicenter you find exciting stories about the explosion itself with ear-splitting noise, pyroclastic flow, poisonous gasses, and flying rocks. Both there and further away you’ll get the ominous stories of shaking ground and the disappearance of the sea and its devastating resurgence as earthquakes and tsunamis roiled across the Mediterranean.

Yet further afield people would observe the mysterious lightning-riven ash column, which may well have been the “pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night” said to have accompanied the Israelites fleeing Egypt. Even the parting of the Red Sea is speculated to refer to a tsunami. In these varying accounts of a major geological occurrence we see how perspective plays a huge role in creating myths.

Centuries from now, will our first Mars-nauts be credited with creating the 85,000 feet high Olympus Mons or the four miles deep Valles Marinaris canyon? Will the eventual terraforming, as speculated in Robinson’s *Mars* trilogy, be seen as magic of the Gods, or will science hold sway for explanations? If human history gives us any clues, as countries, cultures, and civilizations rise and fall, the facts of human actions will become mythologized and preserved in story.

Will some sports contest gone awry among the first settlers explain Mars’s small moons Deimos and Phobos?

A dynasty of rulers may over time become just one very long-lived ruler. Millennia from now there may be just one regent named Plantagenet, succeeded by a sole individual named Tudor who also lived for many generations on the islands west of Europe. And there’d be just one warrior king named Khan who over the

centuries conquered and held sway over China, central Asia, and the Middle East and almost moved into Europe.

Likewise, the First Gods of Mars may eventually be delineated by the compression of each Mars Mission involving multiple people into just one individual. There may be the founding deities of Rover, Viking, Pathfinder, Sojourner, Spirit, Phoenix, Curiosity, Insight.... And then those humans who actually are the first to set foot on the Red Planet in the Mars One missions – they’re sure to be the conquering Gods who rose above the others to take control, like the Greek Olympians conquered and rose above the Titans.

To explain the world within us, our emotions, our inner drives, and our spiritual aspirations many myths tell very personal stories of the deities. A group of people, particularly if together in a concentrated or isolating situation, begin to form strong bonds of friendship, enmity, courage, loyalty, romance, and often, betrayal. You can see this in heightened form on expeditions and campaigns, on media projects, in companies and corporations, and quite vividly in small towns. Because these emotional connections often cross lines of acceptable behaviour they can become cautionary tales...or sometimes guidelines on how to get away with unacceptable behaviour.

In the Olympian pantheon, king god Zeus had a tendency to fall madly in love rather often and often with dire consequences for the women involved. An inveterate romancer, he even changed himself into animals (like the swan to seduce Leda) and objects (like the shower of gold to Danae, mother of Perseus) to capture or often just coerce goddesses, demi-deities, and mere mortals. His cavalier attitude and actions were opposed by his jealous wife, the imperious queen god Hera, whose vengeance tended to take a blame-the-victim approach that left the poor girls in tatters, or ashes, or in one case, bedeviled by gad-flies when she was turned into a heifer.

Just looking at the liaisons in your own circle – or in the supermarket tabloids -- you can see how some of them might be exaggerated to legendary status over time, and then eventually into myths. Will Brangelina or Billary eventually turn Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie and Bill and Hillary Clinton into just one androgynous deity? How much more so those early couplings and de-couplings, rages of desire and remorse that may well be part of the first years of the first humans on Mars. Will the captain of the crew be like James Tiberius Kirk, who like Zeus, seems quite intent on experiencing as many humanoid (or at least mostly humanoid) females as time and duty allows?

Will a romantic rivalry between these First Gods explain why the north polar cap is made of water ice and the south polar cap of frozen carbon dioxide?

As for myths being used to justify our self-created systems, recall the poet Virgil’s epic origin story for Rome, commissioned by the Emperor Augustus. You can

see this sort of thing played out yearly in a country’s celebration of its national heritage, a replaying of its founding myth. In the U.S., Columbus Day and Thanksgiving have lost much of their mythic luster as actual fact has replaced the golden glow of discovery and the exploits are revealed to be more bumbling and fraught with colonizing cruelty.

As far as we know humans landing on Mars will not find indigenous intelligent life-forms they must either befriend or destroy. Those three ‘A’s of exploration – Accommodate, Assimilate, or Annihilate -- will play out quite differently against a truly blank canvas.

This gives us now the very rare opportunity to envision and create the myths we want to imbue into the minds and hearts of those astronauts who will become the First Gods of Mars, as well as all the rest of us who will be observing and also be influenced by their actions, both in the present and out into the distant future.

Why else do we have myths and religions and what do we want to do about them in the future?

The most obvious reasons are:

1) Palliative -- to comfort us from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune and to cling to some sense that the seemingly chaotic cosmos ultimately makes some sense that applies to us mere mortals, and,

2) Weaponization -- to enforce our own will on others in order to create orderly, controllable, societal groups. Myths can certainly be weaponized. See more at propaganda and we will take a look at that in this section, as well as how this tendency might work on Mars.

Belief systems have often been called ‘the policeman on your shoulder’, whether it’s Jiminy Cricket trying to keep Pinocchio on the straight-and-narrow or angels taking notes of your every thought and action towards some day of reckoning. Santa Clause and the Shelf Elf even get into that act of behaviour modification via punishments and rewards. Note how many religions have deities who create laws of behaviour and then stir in enforcer gods and punishing gods.

Given the exceptionally powerful effect of stories on our feelings and our actions, it’s no wonder that myth-makers take advantage of this.

Given that on Mars we can start with a somewhat clean slate, though of course we’ll be influenced by our past, it is an amazing opportunity to use mythology to shape and support the kind of people, society, and world we want to see develop there.

Let's look more at how myths/religions affect our real lives, with an eye to what sorts of deities and concepts we might want to cultivate on Mars.

Many pantheons include diverse deities that personify our very human emotions, drives, and tendencies. Just look at the Greco-Roman pantheon. Zeus is the alpha male, Hera the jealous wife, Ares the bully boy, Aphrodite the seductress, Hermes the trickster, Artemis the remote huntress, Hephaestus the techno-geek, and so on. You see this reflected in many other pantheons from the Norse to the Polynesian and more.

Scottish anthropologist Sir James Frazer wrote a twelve volume series on Comparative Religion and Magic. It's a rich treasure-trove of research about how humans use myths.

Stories about deities and their actions and the consequences of their actions can be tales of inspiration or cautionary tales and occur in most cultures around the world.

Given the extreme physical challenges of Mars as it is today, what cautionary tales would be most valuable? Do we need a story about the brash explorer who braved the open land only to freeze to death or asphyxiate? It'd be a sort of Medusa tale, as that Gorgon's gaze turned humans into stone. Do we need a deity who did or did not take excessive precautions before venturing out into the vast unknown? In the Tarot the Fool steps cheerfully off a cliff into thin air with just a walking stick, a bag, and a small white dog, which hardly seems like enough to support an adventure into the Martian unknown. There are certainly plenty of very steep cliffs on Mars so maybe a version of the Fool will become one of the Gods of Mars. Shall we link moral or ethical principles to their actions? Will we need to make up demons and boogey-men to frighten children into safe behaviours?

Do remember that myth-makers, be they primitive society shamans or advanced culture priestesses, have been doing these sorts of things for thousands of years in order to help humans make better, life-saving decisions.

Okay, that's about surviving. What about thriving?

Before we go there, we need to distinguish between diverse groups' ideas of what thriving is. If you're in a feudal system and at the top of it, then thriving by definition involves the oppression of the serfs. If you're a serf, then thriving is a difficult thing and your only deity may be a Robin Hood type.

In an egalitarian system, the deities -- if there are any -- may be similar to the abundant mother goddess, the beneficent all-mother who provides generously for all.

Both of these systems, feudal and egalitarian, can be both palliative and weaponized.

Feudalism typically lulls us into complacency with ‘bread and circuses’ or ‘celebrities and drugs’ and oppresses us with fear-based separatism.

Egalitarianism can make us complacent and if pressed, intolerant of those who disagree.

Which system might be most beneficial to promote on Mars?

It seems as though, given the inherent inequities of capitalism and the inherent collaborative approaches of egalitarianism, that we’d choose the latter. What better place than a truly empty land to start afresh and hopefully realize the ideal society where the greater good for the greater number is an ingrained aspect of all that happens?

Our new myths would do well to consider and implement a couple of concepts, perhaps best stated as factors of a complex and ever-evolving equation. Given that this is a new, empty, relatively unexplored place and that the First Gods of Mars may well be the mythic characters who’ll guide and influence travelers and colonists to other worlds as well, a couple of things come to mind.

The Q-factor – Questions

Some religions don’t allow any questions about their dogma, except some quibbling over interpretations that can lead to sharp minds or too often, sharp swords the ends of which are often jabbed into questioners. Most religions are considered to be ‘divinely revealed’ with everything all settled. You need only believe and obey.

Yet in a land where most everything is an unknown, we better well be asking lots of questions. The mythology then needs to be not a fixed religion but a flexible pantheon of archetypes and concepts that contains some givens relative to encouraging collaboration.

One thing that makes myths work is mystery. There’s a dynamic tension between mystery and knowledge. Just think of the popularity of the mystery and detective genres. We want to know, yet we still want mystery. Before these days of tell-all, splattery narcissism, over-sharing, and lack of privacy, mystery was an essential part of romance. It no doubt still is and people wanting to charge up their love lives might well give that a go.

In the bigger picture, we tend to hang onto that which brings us mystery. Even when things are scientifically explained we still question... naw, it can’t be that easy, there must be more to it. Maybe it goes back to childhood when many things seemed magical and then we learned that the grownups were Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy, that talented technicians create the flying dragons and

magical worlds in our games and movies. It's more spooky, spine-tingling, exciting fun when you don't have all the answers and your imagination can just run wild. This tendency goes a long way to explaining the popularity of ancient alien theories, the appeal of lost cities, and the ubiquity of conspiracy theories and secret societies. We want to know, we want to be right, and we also want the comfort of knowing someone's in control, even if it is the big baddies.

Yet we still want the mystery. Thus it is our way to create something larger than ourselves to explain away the things we do not yet understand or are perhaps too scared to accept.

So even though all those first humans on Mars will most likely be scientists of some sort, we still want our mythic figures to be above that, to embody the Q-factor, to spur us to question, to give us the thrill of the mysterious.

The X-Factor

Ain, Ain Soph, Ain Soph Aur – this set of concepts from the Kabala is sometimes translated as the Known, the Unknown, and the Unknowable. You can pretty much divide things into these categories and if you're accurate in your assessment as to which category something belongs in you'll be much more likely to deal with it in an effective way. Make a mistake though, and things could go rather badly.

Donald Rumsfeld, the US Secretary of Defense under President George W. Bush [and previously under President Gerald Ford] famously said about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, “Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns - the ones we don't know we don't know.”

In a hostile environment such as Mars and presumably on many of the heavenly bodies we may explore in this solar system, being acutely aware of the *Ain*, the *Ain Soph*, and the *Ain Soph Aur* is essential to survival. No presumptions can be safely made. Perhaps the Mars Gods' Trickster is the one who'll try to get people to question their questions, or even question the act of questioning. In Christianity it's said that the devil's best trick is to convince you he doesn't exist.

Commercialism and consumerism cannot, should not, hold sway here, given all the damage it's done on earth. On Mars, survival will be a continuing concern for a very long time. Once that eventually stabilizes, then you will develop new myths. But do we need to wait that long? People who are forced into exile, people emigrating for a better life typically have gods, the former often carrying the old gods with them and the latter often leaving those behind to discover and create new gods. This will no doubt be the case for anyone going to Mars. We

take our psychology, our mores, our cultures and our philosophies with us, no matter where we go. What we do with them when we get there is the question. So it might well be consciously done for Mars before we even get there – as part of the X-Factor.

Any good mythology needs some Teacher Gods who bring the arts and crafts down from the heavens to humans. The pre-Olympian Titan Prometheus brought us fire and was duly punished for that: chained to a rock in the Caucasus where an eagle ate out his liver every day, it grew back every night, and then the next day, yep, there was the hungry eagle again. [In some stories Prometheus is freed, in others not.]

In Mezo-America the main Teacher God is the feathered snake Quetzalcoatl, said to have brought previously unknown skills to the locals, such as agriculture, architecture, laws, and the calendar. Teacher Gods of Egypt gifted humans with among other arts, brewing and cosmetics. No doubt some of the effects of these took people into unique experiences in the Unknowable.

So for our First Gods of Mars, we probably need a deity of the Unknown and a deity of the Unknowable. No doubt both would be rather undefined and the latter perhaps never even described or illustrated, and might eventually just be spoken about in whispers.

As human brains continue to be altered by our technology, some of these effects are going to be Unknown. We already know that watching flickering backlit screens creates different neuronal wiring, particularly in young forming brains. We know that some attention spans are shortening – although the pandemics of binge-watching TV series and marathon gaming sessions seem counter to that. We know that even with the ubiquity of social media and the supposed constant connectivity via the internet there is an epidemic of loneliness. England has even created a new Minister of Loneliness to address the problem. Who knew that all that supposed connecting would make people feel more isolated?

The God of the Known will likely be rather scientific. The Goddess of the Unknown will be exploratory, casting back to look for patterns, casting forward to perceive and often create patterns. The amorphous Deity of the Unknowable will be -- what? Well, we can't know that, can we? And that may well be a good thing as it plugs into the above Q-factor in upholding the sense of, the fact of, mystery.

Daring to forecast from the *Ain Soph Aur*, the Unknowable, we might speculate that it may well spawn the 2nd generation of gods. A quick look at mythologies shows us that there are successions of pantheons, be it the Greek Titans being overthrown by the Greek Olympians or the Celtic Tuatha de Dana being overlaid by Christian saints and deities. In the syncretic Haitian Vodou the supreme creator is unknowable and the religion incorporates influences from

various African systems, the indigenous beliefs of the Caribbean island, Roman Catholicism, and some European mysticism.

No doubt the First Gods of Mars will also be an amalgamation of diverse and distinct concepts. Our goal is to be as sure as we can that all aspects are affectively and efficiently represented. Pantheons with hundreds of deities are rather unwieldy, so the more we can hone down the large concepts to workable personifications the better. Fortunately there is an existing system for that and we'll come to the ArchePaths soon.

Dangerous Deities – the inherent problems with gods.

Deities, like forces of any kind – from persuasive arts to electricity to nuclear energy -- can be used for good or non-good. The non-good part usually happens when people try to impose their own often narrow ideas of gods and good on other people who may well have rather different opinions and deities.

As the Monty Python skit proclaims, “Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition”. And yet there it was.

The biggest psychological and sociological question marks about off-earth colonization are whether or not after the initial euphoria and bonding of breaking new boundaries we will snap back like a stretched rubber band into ancient patterns of hierarchies, domination, separatism, fear and hate; if on different worlds humans will still be influenced in diverse ways by the various environments as we again credit agency and personification to natural occurrences and landscapes.

Perhaps we will not anthropomorphize forces and inanimate objects. Though that would be a more freeing situation less vulnerable to manipulation and misuse, there is always that tendency to apotheosize our fellow humans, often after their deaths but more and more these days while they are still alive. Certainly we see in history and now too often in current events, individuals claiming to be gods and certainly acting like them. In real life, the Roman Emperor Nero comes to mind: watch/read the BBC series “I, Claudius” based on Robert Graves’ novelization of historical facts. The award-winning film “Apocalypse Now”, which writer John Milius based on Joseph Conrad’s novel “The Heart of Darkness”, has as its key antagonist the mad Colonel Kurtz, who is holed up deep in the jungle where locals and renegade US soldiers worship him, “like a god”. To see apotheosis on a daily basis, just check out sports matches and celebrities.

So given the psychological tendency humans have to want some thing or better yet, some one in control, we might as well get ahead of that and provide the icons ourselves. How? Select the first travelers to Mars with this in mind, knowing that those initial inhabitants will be honoured, iconized, and eventually deified.

What if the colonists were selected according to belief systems, with a relative balance so that one group does not predominate by numbers? The problem with any belief system is that it is overlaid upon existing cultural systems and then often adapted/distorted to justify those old activities. To see this in action you need only note how different are the expressions of various religions as they have spread across cultures.

For instance, we might think the best approach for peacefulness would be a Buddhist one – until we look at the genocide in Myanmar by some supposedly pacifist Buddhists against the mostly Muslim Rohingya and also the Burmese military (presumably including many Buddhists, in name at least) persecuting Kachin Christians in Northern Shan State.

From a disputed land in eastern India, the Nagas were head-hunters who when they came into contact with the 19th century Baptists, fairly quickly assimilated the new belief system, perhaps because of some similarities in the religious practices. They were also non-hierarchical. The British would ask, “Who’s in charge?” The villagers would reply that, “No one’s in charge. We just go and do what needs to be done.” The Brits were flummoxed, but it obviously worked quite well for the Naga. It fit their belief system in that it served all the people.

Because the religions we create serve to justify and uphold our self-created systems, any challenge to those beliefs can cause a reactionary and often violent response. Think of that meme of missionaries boiling in the pagans’ giant stew pot. The irony of Christian missionaries trying to convert pagans who performed blood sacrifices is heightened by the realization that the Mass itself celebrates a bloody sacrifice and includes the ingestion of the ‘body and blood’ of the Christ. Symbolic, sure, but still quite similar.

Though many religions claim to be religions of peace, their tenets and interpretations are often twisted to justify the agendas of short-sighted, fearful people intent on eliminating anything that is ‘other’.

Christians often claim that theirs is a ‘religion of peace’, yet how many oil tankers would you need to hold all the blood shed in the name of Christ, from the Crusades in the Holy Land, to the conquest of the Americas at the expense of the indigenous people, to the imposition of extraction capitalism almost everywhere that Christian Western Europeans went during the Age of Discovery, to the carving up of the Middle East after World War I, the repercussions of which are still reverberating throughout the region. Of course, that was an overlay on a part of the world which has been plagued by conflict for thousands of years. Many of the justifications for those conflicts lie in differing religions, be it the Persian Zoroastrianism, the schisms of the Shia and Sunni Muslims, and various other systems of belief.

Most of those clash-of-religions problems are the effects of clashing cultures or civilizations which are the effects of the conquest of one group by another group. Some of these clashes end in annihilation, as when over 90% of the indigenous peoples of the so-called New World of the Americas were wiped out from the diseases, warfare, and genocide imposed by Western European conquerors and colonists. Assimilation is another option, and some examples of that are how Alexander the Great in the 4th century BCE throughout the eastern Mediterranean and all the way to India, and later Genghis Khan, founder of the largest contiguous empire in history during the 13th and 14th centuries CE both enacted general religious tolerance towards the peoples they conquered.

As far as we know there is no extant intelligent culture on Mars that we would be conquering (presuming that if there were they wouldn't simply wipe us out after we set foot on their planet). So presumably all those typical inter- and intra-deity dynamics might well not apply.

Then again, in group dynamics there is a tendency for humans to stratify once the group reaches a certain size. If the pantheon we construct for the Gods of Mars is hierarchical, those tendencies might be supported. If the deities we consciously create are based on the goals of equality, fraternity, liberty, exploration, and aspiration, and if we set them up not as actualities but as paradigms, as archetypes, we may be able to avoid the extremes that come with blind faith and the use of people's beliefs, fears, and hopes to manipulate them. After all, people typically don't persecute or get persecuted for using the Meyers-Briggs profiles, Enneagrams, or the CliftonStrengths.

Other dangers inherent in religious involvement are hypocrisy and disenchantment, and those dark nights of the soul. Cures often sought for these disturbing states are to change gods, to re-define gods, or to give them up entirely. If a god has stopped working for you and even human sacrifices aren't enough, something needs to change. And yet, we know from tens of thousands of years of human psychological history that contemplating something higher than ourselves can be inspiring, can promote compassion, and can stimulate great works of art. We just don't want to give our deities too much determinative power. Let's keep the inspiration part but hold onto the action part for ourselves.

The goal of creating our own Gods of Mars is to enhance the sustainability and enrichment of the cultures we create off-planet.

Awareness of the dangers of certain types of deities and our interactions with them provides us a chance to avoid those dangers.

ArchePaths

It's not a hard science but we do need to carefully select those who will – by the sheer fact of how humans work – become the First Gods of Mars, maybe a thousand years from now, maybe only a few decades after they set foot on the red planet.

So how do we go about that?

We could take our lead from some of the old pantheons like the Greco-Roman, Norse, or Egyptian. The Hindu system has hundreds of deities for all sorts of positions and situations. However, most of these earth-centric collections reflect and are used to impress and impose patriarchal and hierarchical social systems.

The problem there is that we are currently facing worldwide challenges supported by belief systems that males should be dominant over females, over religions, finance, politics, animals, and the planet. That hasn't been working out so well for the great majority of life forms and the planet itself.

Some myths do posit matriarchies, including the impressive Amazons, recently linked to discoveries of burials of Scythian female warriors. Before Zeus and the Olympian gods, evidence implies that a matriarchy of sorts existed. In fact, it's said that King Menelaus had to drag everyone off to Troy to get his wife Helen back because the power was vested in her; he was just the consort and without her had no claim to the throne. Rather like Prince Philip and the current Queen Elizabeth.

Scholars differ on the number and longevity of actual matriarchal systems, but certain mythic systems proclaim their existence and there is extant evidence to actual historical cultures such as the Minoan on Crete, the Celtic, some indigenous Americans, and more. Robert Graves's scholarly tome *The White Goddess* examines this in great and interesting detail.

Mostly there are fairly set gender roles, though many cultures include deities, demi-gods, and special mortals with flexible sexual expression, such as the shamans of many indigenous tribes. In Greek myth the mortal man Tiresius was transformed into a woman and lived that way for seven years, then became a male again. He had the gift of insight and became a seer, eventually letting Oedipus know that he had indeed, according to prophecy, killed his father and married his mother.

Obviously with traditional male and female roles, identities, and expressions in flux these days, our new pantheon needs to be flexible, non-exclusive, and non-restrictive to be effective and to take us into a future enhanced by but not encumbered by our past.

Pantheons tend to assign deities to cover not only natural events like wind and water, volcanoes and plagues but also psychological aspects such as love, hate, war, marriage, the hunt, childbirth, death, fate and the afterlife.

If human tendencies hold, these First Gods of Mars would before too long be carried on to other orbs within our solar system and then likely at some point, beyond.

The more aware, egalitarian, innovative, responsible, determined, courageous, compassionate, wise, and joyful we can make these gods we create, the greater the chances of promulgating and supporting these qualities going forward.

Fortunately there is a paradigm that might well help accomplish our goals of creating a better world out there for all.

The deeper spiritual systems of many cultures revere the five ArchePaths of the Warrior, Clergy, Scientist, Magician, and Lover. Seekers of wisdom are encouraged to discover and fulfill their own particular Path. And then, they are to explore the four other Paths and incorporate those diverse experiences into a balanced and integrated, cohesive whole.

The symbol of that accomplishment is the five-pointed star, a shape found in many places around the world. It stands for the completed human and is echoed in Leonardo da Vinci's famous Vitruvian Man, with the points of the star being the hands, feet, and head. NASA has even used it in the design of the badge for the International Space Station's Expedition 37.

The ancient practices typically introduced students and aspirants to each of the five Paths in turn, spending time explaining and exploring the meaning, the mission, the methodologies and expressions of each diverse approach to betterment, and in the case of the spiritually-centered schools, enlightenment.

As we go into the great beyond, we can do as the myth-makers of old by consciously selecting a balanced pantheon of individuals who innately and who through training express the five ArchePaths and their sub-Paths. We can create a structure/skeleton/scaffolding upon which these individuals who leave earth behind can base their personal growth regimes, hone their skills, and be inspired to make forward and upward progress as the First Gods of Mars.

Here we'll take an overview of each of the ArchePaths, the three Levels of accomplishment and influence, the Mission, Keyword, Desires and Fears, Strengths and Weaknesses.

It's not just five Paths, either. Along each ArchePath are three levels: the steps from Apprentice to Journeyman to Master, to use the old craft guild terminology. You could also label the steps Aspirant, Probationer, and Initiate. They

specifically relate to the three levels of evolution of human awareness and action: Tribal Consciousness, Individual Consciousness, Group Consciousness. The goal is to fully experience one’s personal journey at each level and therefore be more understanding and effective with others, particularly at the higher levels of leadership.

Another thing to know is that within each ArchePath there are two aspects: the emotional and the intellectual (or in the ancient terminology, the mystic and the occult/hidden). A warrior operating from the emotional side will be quite different from a warrior operating from the intellectual side. The goal is to synthesize and balance the emotional and the mental.

Here then are brief profiles Five ArchePaths.

THE WARRIOR

STEPS & GOALS - Soldier... Warrior... Monarch

MISSION – Promote and Defend the Good, the True, and the Beautiful
Protect the Weak and the Innocent / Self-sacrifice for the Greater

Good

KEYWORD – Purpose

DESIRES - Power, victory

FEARS - Defeat, imprisonment, exile, shame

STRENGTHS - Loyalty, honor, strength, obedience to leader, close to the mystery of death, action in spite of fear

WEAKNESSES - Narrow-minded, cruelty, cowardice, bureaucracy

THE CLERGY

STEPS & GOALS - Novitiate... Monk/Nun... High Priest/ess

MISSION - Release from the bonds of Matter / Identification with Spirit

KEYWORD - Purity

DESIRES - Purity, release from holds of the flesh and materialism, to know the Higher Self w/o the Lower Self

FEARS - Contamination, getting lost in materialism, sin, temptation, weakness

STRENGTHS - Fervent devotion to the Ideal, rigid determination, detachment

WEAKNESSES - Single-minded, fanaticism, withdrawn, damages own body & others

THE SCIENTIST

STEPS & GOALS - Student... Scientist... Philosopher

MISSION - Wisdom as perfect application of Knowledge

KEYWORD - Process

DESIRES - Wisdom, perfect Knowledge, Truth, precision, rationale, to uncover all secrets, all information, a 'Unified Field Theory'

FEARS - Sloppiness, emotionalism, disinformation, misinformation

STRENGTHS - Precision, rationality, information, assessment of true situation, persistence, clarity on non-emotion, methodology

WEAKNESSES - Coldness, detachment, non-intuitive, rigid

THE MAGICIAN

STEPS & GOALS - Apprentice... Magician... Magus

MISSION - Total connection between Above and Below

Total control of forces in seen and unseen worlds

KEYWORD - Performance

DESIRES - Correct process, expected results, transformation, heaven on earth

FEARS - Mistakes, lack of information, messiness, regression

STRENGTHS - Concentration, ritual, assessment, sees patterns and correspondences, creates new patterns

WEAKNESSES - Arrogance, rigidity, unconcern

THE LOVER

STEPS & GOALS - Admirer... Lover... True Union

MISSION - Total union with the One Life

KEYWORD - Passion

DESIRES - Close personal relationships, total merging

FEARS - Solitude, rejection

STRENGTHS - Unconditional love, understanding, ability to relate

WEAKNESSES - Blind to rejection, wrath if scorned, needy, introverted

Because each Path can be complemented by each of the others there are twenty-five combinations: Warrior-Clergy, Warrior-Scientist, Warrior-Magician, Warrior-Lover, Warrior-Warrior and so on through the other four Paths.

When people are consciously striving to be more effective on their natural as well as selected ArchePaths you'll have built-in redundancy. That's part of the point in the spiritual training systems: develop abilities along each Path so that you can access that part of yourself when needed.

In the beginning, presuming the selection field for those who go to Mars will include mostly scientists, we'll be looking at the other four ArchePaths for the additional strong role of each individual. Here are some examples from media on how that might work.

The Avengers include Iron Man = Scientist-Warrior, Black Widow = Lover-Warrior, Captain America = Warrior-Warrior, Loki = Magician-Warrior, The Hulk = Clergy-Warrior (because of his compassionate service to others in need).

In *Star Trek* Captain Kirk = Warrior-Lover (no surprise there), Spock = Scientist-Scientist, Scotty = Scientist-Magician, Dr. McCoy = Clergy-Scientist, Lt. Uhura = Lover-Magician.

NCIS – Gibbs = Warrior-Warrior, Abby = Scientist-Lover, Tony DiNozzo = Lover-Warrior, Dr. Mallard = Scientist-Magician, Timothy McGee = Scientist-Warrior, Ziva David = Warrior-Lover.

New Myths, New Rules

So we have some new gods. Now we need new myths. New rules.

The first explorers and colonists won't have any of the familiar social structures such as multi-generational families, at least not for a couple of generations. There will probably be corporate hierarchies inherent in the companies or government institutions that send them to Mars. They probably won't need money – no ATMs on the Enterprise, right?. What laws and rules will there be? And what the consequences of transgressions? How long before self-interest overrides the interest of the Commons? How long will equality last before the vertebrate tendency toward hierarchies (male or female dominated) kicks in and starts kicking people up and down the pecking order?

With new deities, co-operative archetypes, and fluidity among the five ArchePaths and the three levels of each, we should have at hand a wide choice of prophylactic and problem-solving approaches to those evolutionary tendencies.

We're going to need it.

There are plenty of problems on earth, some of which will simply not apply on Mars and beyond. The Millennium Project, in affiliation with the United Nations, has identified 15 Global Challenges. They include environmental, social justice, education, crime, and tech issues. Some of those we will carry with us to Mars as potential flaws, others will not be an issue because they relate more specifically to the physical aspects of local geology, flora, and fauna. The latter two, as far as we can tell so far, are simply not on the Red Planet. Yet. But who knows what life forms we may discover beneath the icy surface of outer moons or within the porous interiors of comets and asteroids.

Because myths and stories have always influenced our behaviour, we need to be quite conscious about which ones we promote as we move into a new and presumably pristine system beyond the gravity well of earth.

Here then are some Mythic Themes we would do well to take with us as we leave the planet.

- Exploration Inwards & Exploration Outwards – from outer space to the inner depths of our personalities.

Many journey myths not only take the heroine on a trek across wastelands and through danger zones but they also spur self-reflection and personal growth. These stories have run the gamut from Roman poet Virgil’s *Aeneid*, a commissioned work about the defeated Trojan Prince Aeneas going off to found Rome and discovering quite a bit about himself along the way [including that he should find a better way to leave a lover as it didn’t end at all well for jilted Queen Dido on that funeral pyre] to Furiosa trying to rescue the baby-making women in *Mad Max: Fury Road* and not going through much personal transformation at all. But what a wild ride across the wasteland, eh?

Explorers will be the default heroes in our new myths, so we might as well get a head start on how we’d like them to proceed and what results we’d like to see in the stories.

There are basically three choices for an individual, a culture, a civilization, and even a planetary body: Revolution, Devolution, or Evolution. The first two are not that attractive or effective. A pig on a spit revolves, searing first one side then the next. We’ve seen over and over again how counter-revolutions can bring a society to vicious chaos. The classic film *Viva Zapata* shows Marlon Brando transitioning from a barefoot hat-in-hand peasant farmer to a revolutionary leader to the new bureaucrat who listens disdainfully to the hat-in-hand peasant farmer. Power corrupts.

Devolution leaves evocative ruins and remains in jungles, half-buried in the boundless and bare, lone and level sands, or underwater, waiting to transition back from myth into fact.

Evolution sure seems like the better path. Let’s approach the problems at a higher turn of the spiral. Let’s move beyond the old patterns, beyond the rubber band effect of change and reaction, between growth and shrinking, between expansion and contraction.

- Mean Machines – when tech goes bad.

From Mary Shelley’s lonely monster pestering his creator Dr. Frankenstein for a mate, to Stanley Kubrick’s computer HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, to the Terminator, the self-aware and religiously questioning Cylons of *Battlestar Galactica*, and the seductive cyborg of *Ex Machina*, we will continue to need relevant cautionary tales and paradigms to mold safe yet progressive interactions with our creations.

There’s a reason most mythologies contain stories about how the creator gods became disenchanted with their creations and sent floods, fires, winds, and even jaguars to destroy them.

Let’s factor this reaction into the equation to begin with and hopefully avoid the potentially destructive tendencies of machines who reach ‘singularity’, and evolve beyond their programming.

➤ Redefining Consciousness

What is alive, aware, self-conscious? From animals to plants to who-knows-what, especially in fantasy and sci-fi, let’s expand our consciousness of what else might be conscious. What is alien?

Think of all the myriad stories of angels and aliens that appear in cultures around the world. A significant percentage of people in any system believe in angels and/or aliens. Whether it’s all just psychological manifestations of desire for order and oversight or maybe, possibly, something tangible, the point is that human minds have a decided bent towards this.

It may simply be an artifact of what Julian Jaynes identified in his landmark book *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*: before the bridge of the corpus callosum united the left and right sides of our brains, we interpreted the observations of the gestalten right brain as the voices of the gods, speaking to our logical left brains. This theory goes a long way to explain people’s experiences over the aeons in regards to angels, aliens, nature sprites, gods, and such.

Though modern humans have for the most part functioning corpus callosums that give us a united brain, [though in some instances one does wonder] there may well be for some people at some times throw-back factors that create the impressions of encounters with aliens and angels and such.

Many sci-fi stories posit conscious rocks. Silicon-based intelligence is not too far away from AI, when you consider AI is made of silicon chips – the mineral kingdom. Just think of the episode from the first *Star Trek* series where they encounter conscious rocks in “Devil in the Dark”, and the Gornak or Rock Monster from *Galaxy Quest*.

Pantheistic religions have typically given agency to aspects of nature, be it faeries, the Green Man, sea gods and goddesses, nymphs of wind-springs-woods, storm gods, gods of the deep and the dark, gods of light and the beyond. Animism is probably the most interesting of the varying myth-making systems because it is so complex and imaginative.

What might we come across in our off-planet explorations that will be conscious? And sometimes, more highly evolved than we are? Sci-fi films offer many variations of this theme, from the mechano-monster of Ridley Scott's *Alien*, to the rebellious cylons of *Battlestar Gallactica*, to the benign octopusses of *Arrival*.

We need to be exceptionally open-minded about what is conscious.

➤ The Nature of Reality and Time-Twisting

We are going off-planet. Will different laws of physics apply? How do we know how Einstein's General and Special Relativity apply in other places? Recently at the CERN labs they've measured neutrinos that 'maybe' have traveled faster than the speed of light. Suddenly the imaginings of sci-fi writers may be moving closer to actuality.

What about time travel? There's a seemingly great divide between those who think that time inexorably moves in one direction [see more at the spilled milk or the growing plant] and those who think it's focused in the Now but is flexible in either direction [see more in stories and myths].

Well, maybe we simply don't yet have the answers, or the physics, to explain the seeming paradoxes, so it would behoove us to keep open minds and be willing to explore and experiment. Myths can help us do that.

In our minds, in our imaginations, we know we can alter the past and the future by what we think and imagine in the present. Is this limited to the human brain? Or might it be an aspect of the consciousness of the cosmos? If so, how would we even begin to know it? To measure it? To manipulate it?

Story-tellers lead the way.

Those who create myths, sci-fi, fantasy and speculative fiction bring these ideas down from the level of concepts and abstract ideas into mental consideration, then attaching emotional sign-on can eventually create real physical things. From the Hindu Garuda, those flying metal machines to Jules Verne's round-the-world submarine in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, to the tri-corders in *Star Trek*, imagination precedes creativity.

Many sci-fi, fantasy, and speculative fiction works envision Mars as a *tabula rasa*, that clean slate where we can start over without having to eradicate or colonize the locals. Where we have raw planetary materials with which to work, and where our own designs, science, tech, engineering, and math will be determining elements of what gets accomplished. Stir in the elegant and creative art inherent in a lot of that [STEAM] and you can consider Mars a crucible for a new creation.

The story-lines vary from Ridley Scott’s film *The Martian* where one man strives to survive alone on the planet to Michael J. Straczynski’s *Babylon 5* TV series, where the Mars Colony is well-developed and is struggling to free itself from Earth’s hegemony, rather like the American Revolution loosed them from Britain. Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Mars* Trilogy follows the development of ecological courts, true representative democracy, worker-owned co-ops, and ultimately a balanced, sustainable, yet constantly enlarging and enriching system of individuals collaborating into groups that then collaborate into larger organizations, all with agreed-upon mutually beneficial goals.

As we create new myths we need to keep in mind that though we hate secrets we also want mystery. This dynamic tension is what creates great stories, what allows innovative social movements, and if not checked, also allows regression into oppression, cowering fear, and apathy.

There are two elements essential for good stories: Familiarity and Surprise. We want to know what mythic theme we’re going to see. We want to set our minds and emotions to that channel. And though we desire the comfort of a Lost Love Rescued story or a Search for the Promised Land or a Stealing Fire from Heaven theme, we also want something different. A new twist. An element of surprise. This is just a standard trope of story-telling that we must follow.

It is incumbent upon us when creating our First Gods of Mars and our Next Myths to be as certain as possible that we are eschewing the old ways and encouraging new paradigms that will lead us onto the path of Evolution and not just back into the destructive and debilitating whirlpool of Revolution and Devolution.

The good news is that we can do it.

All it takes is Vision and Will, Knowledge and Determination.

Conclusion

Humanity is making the move towards a greater destiny – sometimes stumbling, sometimes soaring. The old ways do not serve and cannot stand. Within and between groups, cultures, nations, and the world we are on the brink of tipping towards revolution, devolution, or if we handle this well, evolution.

Any move off-planet will require top design and implementation of hardware and software. We’ve already seen how some of our technology has vastly outlived its designed lifespan, such as Voyagers 1 and 2 launched in 1977 to explore Jupiter and Saturn. The machines are still sending back reports, their mission has been expanded three times, and they’re now out in interstellar space. Unlike the planned obsolescence in your smart devices or DVD player, we do know how to build things that will last.

Adaptive software that learns is the basis for AI and despite the conveniences offered, that possibility also raises concern about the Singularity: when the machine becomes conscious and we lose control.

All fascinating and important, the hardware and software aspects of exploration.

Perhaps the most important factor though will be, as always, the wetware. Human error, unintended consequences, atavistic reversion to primitive responses to new challenges, alienation and divisiveness, system gridlock... there's plenty that can go wrong with the wetware, just look around you or watch the tumultuous daily news reports. Sometimes it's hard to get up much hope for the wetware.

Yet there have always been stand-out individuals whose mental, imaginative and creative powers place them above and beyond most of humanity. We call them geniuses, be it in science, philosophy, the arts, or leadership. With more thoughtfully designed and implemented educational and organizational systems we might actually get to the point where there are so many people like that it is considered normal.

Those are the kinds of people we want to be sending to Mars and beyond.

As noted above, it is in the nature of being human that we will create myths and deities. Whether reflections of the local geography, innate desires for metaphysical reassurance, the tendency to justify our behaviours with imposed belief systems, or the yearning for the mysterious and the numinous, some kinds of deities will be created by those who venture off-planet and settle on Mars.

The more aware we are of how myth-making works the more conscious we can be about selecting groups of people who will embody the more positive aspects of human tendencies as expressed in the ArchePaths.

Within each of us individually, and among us in groups, we can improve the positive aspects of each of the five ArchePaths and work to transmute the less desirable aspects until they too better serve us, the group, the whole of Life. This kind of awareness, training and selection process can easily be applied in selecting from the many qualified candidates for the first trips.

Just think about it and put yourself on Mars. How would you embody each of the ArchePaths?

- ☆ The Warrior who sees the purpose of a thing, who stands up for principles and defends others' rights with the power of truth.

- ☆ The Clergy who focuses exclusively on the task at hand and through devotion to a cause, brings a pure, whole-hearted energy.
- ☆ The Scientist who assesses the needs, the processes, the timing of a project with mental clarity and precision.
- ☆ The Magician who spots patterns where others do not see them and who creates patterns where they did not exist, in order to bring about seemingly magical results.
- ☆ The Lover who brings passion, empathy, and idealism to a situation and inspires others with their seductive enthusiasm.

The more conscious we become of these archetypes at work within us, the more we can develop and utilize them for positive affects.

Also, we must outgrow our old myths because given the evidence of how they are currently serving the populace and the environment, they are woefully inadequate and out-of-date. We must continually and consciously create something better; call it CMI – Continuous Mythological Improvement.

The goal of creating our own Gods of Mars is to enhance the sustainability and enrichment of the cultures we create off-planet.

Eventually stories will be told and written about the first people who land and work and thrive – and sometimes don't.

It's important that we carefully select the first people who go to Mars with all of these factors in mind because they will eventually become The First Gods of Mars.

FURTHER READING

Alchemy & Mysticism – Alexander Roob

Alphabet Versus the Goddess, The: The Conflict Between Word and Image – Leonard Shlain

Bhagavad Gita, Mahabarata, Rig Veda, Upanishads - Hindu classics

Bible, The

Bulfinch's Mythology – Thomas Bulfinch

Joseph Campbell..... All his works. In particular:

Inner Reaches of Outer Space: Metaphor as Myth & Religion

The Hero With a Thousand Faces (aka the Hero's Journey)

The Masks of God – 4 books of analysis of mythology through time

The Power of Myth - from the Bill Moyers TV show

Golden Bough, The - Sir James Frazer

Greek Myths, The - Robert Graves

Koran, The

Library of the World's Myths and Legends - Peter Bedrick Books

Memories and Visions of Paradise: Exploring the Universal Myth of a Lost Golden Age -
Richard Heinberg

Metamorphosis - Vergil, Roman poet and mythologist

Mythic Past, The: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel – Thomas L. Thompson

Mythologies (of many cultures, separate books) - Geoffrey Parrinder

Mythology - Edith Hamilton

New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology – Felix Guirand, editor

Power of the Dark Side, The – Pamela Jaye Smith

Secret Teachings of All Ages, The – Manly P. Hall

Story of Civilization, The - Will and Ariel Durant

When They Severed Earth from Sky: How the Human Mind Shapes Myth – Elizabeth
Wayland Barber & Paul T. Barber

White Goddess, The - Robert Graves

www.mythworks.net