CHAPTER 1
Creating the World through Language

The Navajo term nahaghá ("ritual") labels a large and significant category of Navajo behavior which non-Navajos least understand, and thus constitutes a major dimension of the estrangement that divides Navajos and non-Navajos. Navajos possess and perform over sixty major rites and numerous minor ones. They perform rituals for blessing, for curing, and for purification. They bless (make immune to illness and tragedy) their land, their livestock, their crops, their homes, their property, their relatives, and themselves. They cure both mental and physical disorders, as well as disorders in their environment. They purify things, places, and themselves after inadvertent, inastute, or inappropriate contact with potentially dangerous things. Navajos perform these rites, not at any set or specified times, but when conditions or circumstances require them.

One occasion when some Navajos felt the need for ritual behavior occurred in 1969 when I was spending the summer at the home of John Dick. That summer an active woman of eighty-two years became rather suddenly ill. She was taken to the Project Hope hospital in Ganado, Arizona. She quickly fell into a coma and remained in that condition for over two weeks. She was kept alive at the hospital by intravenous feeding. The family consulted a diviner who diagnosed her case as being caused by contact with the ghost of a deceased non-Navajo. The Enemyway rite was the prescription. Family members then petitioned the doctors at the hospital to release the woman for the performance of the ritual. The doctors counseled that once she was off intravenous feeding she would soon die. Undaunted, the family members brought her home and quickly began the rite for which they had been preparing and planning. When she arrived at her home, she seemed to
me to be in a deep coma, totally unconscious, and nearly dead. Before the rite was over (it lasted three days), she regained consciousness and was eating and talking. By the conclusion of the rite she was walking around almost normally. Several non-Navajos working at the local school were amazed; most Navajos were not amazed but were gratefully serene. I last saw her, alive and well, in 1973.

In this short narrative of observable behavior and events—a sort of ethnographic artifact—we have a case of unfamiliar acts emerging out of unknown backgrounds; and, as such, they both demand and, to some extent, defy explanation. But since a tumult of events that lack both interpretation and interpretability tends to unhinge our minds (Geertz, 1966:14), we seek interpretations and explanations of strange behaviors and events.

When non-Navajos are asked why the Navajos in this case (or any other case for that matter) went through the elaborate, expensive, and rigidly established behavior that the Enemyway rite demands, the answer is almost always that they did so because that is what their religion prescribes. Such an explanation casts itself into a category of our world (that is, religion) that does not correspond to anything in the Navajo world. The term nahaghá bears no semiotic or syntagmatic relationship to the word ‘religion’.

In explaining the ailment and its cure non-Navajos again rely on their own categories of belief and description. They attribute the event either to coincidence or to psychosomatic effect. Coincidence is a statistical hypothesis based on a theory of randomness, for which there is not only no proof but not even an adequate definition (Chaitin, 1975:47–52). Psychosomatic effect is just a label for a set of observed behaviors involving the power of the mind over the body, for which there is no adequate explanation in operational terms. Nevertheless, regardless of their adequacy, these explanations are again cast not in the ideological or ontological frame of the world in which they occurred, but in the ideological and ontological frame from which they were observed. These explanations tell us nothing about the Navajo world, and serve only as barriers to our understanding of it.

More sophisticated and empathetic thinkers may try to find an explanation for these events in the therapeutic value of Navajo rituals. Regardless of whether Navajo rituals have such therapeutic value, such explanations are cast in terms of Western psychology, based on Western ideas of personality, behavior, and mental illness and its cure. Here again we seek to explain events in their world, and thus reduce the estrangement we feel, by finding a parallel or an affinity between our beliefs and their practices. In the process, however, we miss the affinity between their beliefs and their practices, and thus remain oblivious to the initial basis on which our understanding of their behavior must be founded.

Gearing tells us that “when one is estranged he is unable to relate, because he cannot see enough to relate to” (1970:4). To relieve or overcome this estrangement, however, one often creates a fetish out of empathy and relates to it. But the escape is an illusion, and the relatedness it establishes is unilateral. Gearing adds that “the opposite of being estranged is to find a people believable” (1970:5). This probably goes too far. Estrangement may be overcome by simply discovering the rationality of their thought and the sensibility of their behavior.

Navajo acts arise out of their world and make sense within it. Before we can make sense out of ethnographic dramas, we must know the stages on which they are played, and the scripts according to which they are performed. Navajo dramas take place on Navajo stages, and are acted out according to Navajo scripts. We must know the origin and constitution of both their stage and their scripts, if we are to understand the meaning of their plays. This is especially true if we, like Geertz (1973:5), take the analysis of culture to be not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning. Ultimately, however, we must search for universals, but universals cannot correctly be inferred from inadequately understood or inappropriately explained data.

The world in which Navajos live and act was brought into being by the Diyin Dinéé (“Gods,” “supernaturals,” or often, incorrectly, “Holy People”). These Diyin Dinéé entered the sweathouse and
thought the world into existence (Wheelwright, 1942:57–59; Wyman, 1970:115). Their thoughts were realized through speech, song, and prayer. Wheelwright (1942:60) has recorded the “Beginning of the World Song” (my translation of the Navajo text):

First Verse: The earth will be,  
the mountains will be,  
(and so on, mentioning other things to be)

Second Verse: The earth will be, from ancient times with me there is knowledge of it.  
The mountains will be, from ancient times with me there is knowledge of it.  
(and so on)

Third Verse: The earth will be, from the very beginning I have thought it.  
The mountains will be, from the very beginning I have thought it.  
(and so on)

Fourth Verse: The earth will be, from ancient times I speak it.  
The mountains will be, from ancient times I speak it.  
(and so on)

Fifth Verse: (The fifth verse is a repetition of the first verse, rendering the sense “and so it will be” or “and thus it will be done.”)

Wyman records and translates a similar song in Blessingway (1970:113–14):

(1) of Earth’s origin I have full knowledge . . .  
(2) I had full knowledge from the very beginning . . .  
(3) Long ago he was thinking of it . . . of [Earth’s] origin he was thinking . . .

(4) Long ago he spoke of it . . .  
he speaks of [Earth’s] origins.

Thinking and singing the world into existence attributes a definite kind of power to thought and song to which most Westerners are not accustomed. It is rather obvious that the Navajo ontological conception of thought and speech is very different from our own. To discover and comprehend this difference it is necessary to look at the origins of thought and speech in Navajo mythology. In the account of the creation of this world found in Blessingway, First Man speaks to two beings who are the apparent personifications of thought and speech:

“Of all these various kinds of holy ones that have been made, you the first one will be (represent) their thought, you will be called Long Life [Sa’ah Naagháíi],” he was told. “And you who are the second one, of all Holy People that are put to use first, you will be (represent) their speech, you will be called Happiness [Bik’eh Hózhó],” he was told. That much so happened. “You will be (found) among everything (especially ceremonial affairs) without exception, exactly all will be long life by means of you two, and exactly all will be happiness by means of you two,” was said to them (Wyman, 1970:398).

The pair mentioned in the passage above originated out of First Man’s medicine bundle. When they arose, they were said to be without equal in their beauty and radiance, each having long hair extending to the thighs. At this time it was said that they would never be seen again, although their existence would be constantly manifested in their capacity to sustain life on the earth (Wyman, 1970:112). These two beings are sometimes referred to as First Boy and First Girl, with thought being male and speech being female. They are considered to be the parents of Changing Woman, the benevolent female deity who is identified with the Earth (Earth Woman being another one of her names) and is the
source and sustenance of all life on the earth’s surface, controlling particularly fertility and fecundity.

The names of these two beings—Sa’ah Naagháii, identified with thought, and Bik’eh Hózhó, identified with speech—are used in almost every song and prayer found in the numerous rites of the Navajo. In fact they constitute in linguistic form the ideal world of the Navajo, and they contain most of the important concepts and meanings that pervade the Navajo world. Hózhó may be glossed as ‘a beautiful, pleasant, and healthy environment’. Sa’ah Naagháii is that which precedes and produces hózhó. Bik’eh means ‘in accordance with it’ or ‘by its decree’. Kluckhohn (1949:368–69) identified hózhó as the central idea in Navajo religious thinking. But it is not something that occurs only in ritual song and prayer; it is referred to frequently in everyday speech. A Navajo uses this concept to express his happiness, his health, the beauty of his land, and the harmony of his relations with others. It is used in reminding people to be careful and deliberate, and when he says good-bye to someone leaving, he will say hózhóogo nanimádo (“may you walk or go according to hózhó”).

Sa’ah Naagháii Bik’eh Hózhó has been translated numerous ways, all of which have been grossly inadequate. The most common of these translations is the one popularized by Father Bernard Haile, who describes sa’ah naagháii as ‘long life’ and bik’eh hózhó as ‘happiness’. Other translations include the following: ‘in-old-age-walking-the-trail-of-beauty’; ‘according-to-age-may-it-be-perfect’; and ‘according-to-the-ideal-may-restoration-be-achieved’ (Reichard, 1950a:46–47). Robert Young considers sa’ah naagháii to represent the capacity of all life and living things to achieve “immortality” (perpetuate the species) through reproduction. He feels bik’eh hózhó represents the peace and harmony essential to the perpetuation of all living species. He further notes that these perfect prototypes, along with the prototypes of rain and other requisite elements of life, were placed in the Sacred Mountains and function now to make the reproduction and sustenance of all living things possible (Young, personal communication).

After attempting to outline many of the Navajo concepts concerning the nature of man and the world, Reichard concluded:

Consideration of the nature of the universe, the world, and man, and the nature of time and space, creation, growth, motion, order, control, and life cycle includes all these and other Navajo concepts expressed in terms quite impossible to translate into English. The synthesis of all the beliefs detailed above and of those concerning the attitudes and experiences of man is expressed by sa’ah na’áá, usually followed by bik’e xójó-n (1950a:45).

Nearly every song and prayer in the elaborate Navajo ceremonial system uses sa’ah naagháii bik’eh hózhó in its benediction. In fact, the entire ceremonial system is primarily designed to produce or restore the conditions symbolized by the phrase sa’ah naagháii bik’eh hózhó. In an attempt to elaborate further on the meaning of this phrase, I will proceed to an analysis of the implicit meanings of each lexical item:

Sa’ah

The etymology of sa’ah seems to indicate that this term is a derivative of the past tense form of the verb stem ‘to grow, to mature’. This verb stem is used widely to denote someone or something that is mature, ripe, experienced, or aged. Father Bernard Haile concluded that sa’ah refers to old age as a goal in life (Wyman, 1970:29). For the Navajo death of old age is considered to be both natural and highly desirable.

In Navajo mythology Coyote, the philosopher, argued that death had to be a part of the scheme of this world. He argued that if death did not occur, the earth would soon be overcrowded, and there would be no room for corn fields. He concluded that it was better for each person to live a limited time and then leave and make room for the children. The people recognized the wisdom of his words and agreed that it would be so (Reichard, 1950a:42).
Birth and death are recognized as structural opposites; one cannot exist without the other. This is manifested in mythology when Monster Slayer, who is in the process of killing the enemies of the people, comes upon Old Age with the intention of killing him:

Directly Old Age also spoke up, “In spite of all, I am going to live on, my grandchild,” he said. “You have not the right thing in mind, I see,” he told him. “Should you kill me dying would cease,” he said. “Then too giving birth would cease,” he said, “and this present number of people would continue in the same amount for all time to come. While if I live on, old age will do killing and giving birth will go on in the future. As giving birth goes ahead, so deaths will go on the other way,” he said. “The various birth beings, all without exception, should continue to give birth in the future, every kind of moving being, none excepted,” he said. “Now think this over, my grandchild, you can see now how this thing is!” he told him (Wyman, 1970:573).

Life is considered to be a cycle which reaches its natural conclusion in death of old age, and is renewed in each birth. Death before old age is considered to be unnatural and tragic, preventing the natural completion of the life cycle. Whereas illness usually comes from various forms of disorder and disharmony, premature death usually results from malevolent intentions and deeds. Ceremonies, however, have been provided by the Holy People to combat the suffering and misfortune caused by both disharmony and evil.

It has been mistakenly reported that the Navajos have a terrible fear of death. Actually they have a tremendous respect for life, and an avoidance of the dead, not a fear of death. Eighty-five-year-old singer, Bidaga, notes that he is getting old and it is time for him to die. He says that when he was young he wanted to live but with old age should come death. Death is described as the departing from the body of the breath (wind) of life. He notes that it is “just up to that wind when he will get out of the body, and then die. But this wind himself he knows just what year and what month and what time the person will die” (Ladd, 1957:417).

In a study of Navajo philosophy, John Ladd (a philosopher himself) concluded that death per se was not considered evil or feared but that the desirability of a long life in effect meant the undesirability of dying before old age. Death as an experience is not feared. It is inauspicious contact with the dead that is avoided in order to prevent unnatural illness and premature death.

The term sá’ah, therefore, expresses the Navajo concern for and emphasis upon life, and their attitude toward death of old age as a goal of life.

Naagháií

Naagháií is one of over three hundred thousand (356,200 by my calculation) distinct conjugations of the verb ‘to go’. This particular conjugation is the singular form of the third person of the continuative-imperfective mode, which refers to continually going about and returning. The prefix naa- of this verb is but one example of the great emphasis upon repetitions, continuations, and revolutions found in the Navajo language.

The Navajo verb distinguishes six modes and a number of aspects. Two of these modes and two of these aspects are concerned with the repetition, restoration, or continuous reoccurrence of an event or set of conditions, some of which imply the completion of a cycle or a revolution. There are also two verbal prefixes which denote various types of repetitions, restorations, or reoccurrences. One of these is the prefix hi which renders the idea of succession. An example of the use of this prefix with the verb ‘to go’ is ahiikai which translates ‘we went in, or out of sight, one after another’. Reichard calls hi the “repetitive of action or motion” (1951:262).

The other verbal prefix of interest here is náá or ná. Reichard says that náá refers to the repetition of an act or condition, while ná refers to the restoration of a condition or an act, or to the completion of a revolution or a cycle (1951:220). Paul Platero, a Navajo linguist, believes that actually náá and ná are the same
prefix, and that this prefix has either a long or short vowel depending on its position in a given verb or with what sounds it combines within a given verb (Platero, personal communication). This prefix can refer to either a repetition or a revolution. If used together (nááná), the semantic result is either a repetition of a repetition or a repetition of a revolution.

Restoration is a particularly important concept in understanding the nature and purpose of curing rites. Illness occurs when the normal harmony of one's world becomes disrupted, and curing rites are designed to restore harmony through which the health of the patient is also restored. These ceremonial restorations are indicated in Navajo language by the prefix ná.

Words, like thoughts, are considered to have creative power. In mythology things came into being or happened as people thought or talked about them. Repeating something four times will cause it to occur. A request made four times cannot be easily denied. At the end of each major portion of a ceremonial prayer, the phrase hózhó náhásdlii' is repeated four times. This phrase can be glossed here as 'harmony, beauty, and health have been restored'.

As mentioned before, the curing rites are designed to harmonize the patient with the world or his total environment. The world operates daily and yearly on the basis of a four-phased cycle. This is accomplished daily in the four-pointed path of the sun, and yearly in the four seasons of the annual cycle of the earth. Since the sun and the earth, days and years, operate according to a four-phased cycle, ritual drama designed to harmonize the patient's life with these important aspects of the universe must be repeated four times.

In the discussion above a particular view of action and being, repetition and reoccurrence, revolution and restoration was found to be implicit in Navajo verbal and ritual behavior, and these views and concepts are particularly relevant to an understanding of the symbolic meanings of the phrase sa'ah naagháíí bik'eh hózhó.

Reichard observed that a basic Navajo belief is that "if something happened once, it may happen again" (1950a:13). I think we can go further than that and say that if something happens once, it is likely to happen again, and maybe even again and again. Sa'ah refers to the completion of the life cycle through death of old age, and naagháíí refers to the continual reoccurrence of the life cycle.

Bik'eh

Bik'eh is the easiest of the four terms to translate. It means 'according to it' or 'by its decree'. The bi (it) in this case refers to what preceded it, which is sa'ah naagháíí. What follows bik'eh is, then, the product of or exists in conjunction with sa'ah naagháíí. The by-product of sa'ah naagháíí is hózhó.

Hózhó

The term hózhó is most often translated as 'beauty', although all writers recognize that this term means much more than just 'beauty' or 'beautiful conditions'. Wyman translates hózhó as everything that the Navajo thinks of as being good—that is, good as opposed to evil, favorable to man as opposed to unfavorable. He feels it expresses such concepts as beauty, perfection, harmony, goodness, normality, success, well-being, blessedness, order and ideal (1970:7). Reichard defines this term as perfection so far as it is obtainable by man, and feels that it represents the end toward which not only man but also supernaturals and time and motion, institutions, and behavior strive (1950a:45).

In his work on Navajo philosophy, Clyde Kluckhohn comments on the meaning of this all-important term:

There are, however, some abstract words, extremely difficult to render adequately in English, which are of the greatest importance for the understanding of Navajo philosophy. Perhaps the most significant of these is conveyed by the Navajo root hózhó. This is probably the central idea in Navajo religious thinking. It occurs in the names of two important
ceremonials (Blessing Way and Beauty Way) and is frequently repeated in almost all prayers and songs. In various contexts it is best translated as ‘beautiful’, ‘harmonious’, ‘good’, ‘blessed’, ‘pleasant’, and ‘satisfying’. As a matter of fact, the difficulty with translation primarily reflects the poverty of English in terms that simultaneously have moral and esthetic meaning (1949:368–69).

The translations of Wyman, Reichard, and Kluckhohn provide a good general notion of the meaning of hózhó but they are all inadequate because they deal with only one of the two morphological components of the term. They take into account only the meanings of the stem -zhó, and ignore the semantic significance of the prefix ho. Ho is a verbal prefix used widely in Navajo language, but it has not been carefully defined by students of Navajo language. The closest English gloss of ho might be ‘environment’, considered in its total sense. When one is referring to environmental conditions as a whole, the term hoot’é is used. Ho contrasts in meaning with the prefix ni which refers not to the total environment but to a particular item, event, or aspect of the environment. Thus when one says nizhóní he means ‘it (something specific) is nice, pretty, good’, whereas hózhoni means that everything in the environment is nice, beautiful, and good. As a verbal prefix, ho refers to (1) the general as opposed to the specific; (2) the whole as opposed to the part; (3) the abstract as opposed to the concrete; (4) the indefinite as opposed to the definite; and (5) the infinite as opposed to the finite (Witherspoon, 1974:53–54).

From the preceding discussion we can say that hózhó refers to the positive or ideal environment. It is beauty, harmony, good, happiness, and everything that is positive, and it refers to an environment which is all-inclusive. Concepts of positive health or well-being (shít hózhó; shít yááhoot’ééh; hozhdimíilts’íid) all use the environment signifier ho. Positive health for the Navajo involves a proper relationship to everything in one’s environment, not just the correct functioning of one’s physiology.

An opposite of hózhó is hóchxos which could be glossed as ‘the ugly, unhappy, and disharmonious environment’. It is not considered to be part of the natural cycle of the universe, and comes about only as a result of evil intentions and evil deeds. When it does occur, the normal condition of hózhó can be restored through the curing rites of the Navajo.

The goal of Navajo life in this world is to live to maturity in the condition described as hózhó, and to die of old age, the end result of which incorporates one into the universal beauty, harmony, and happiness described as sa’ah naagháii bik’e hózhó.

Actually Sa’ah Naagháii and Bik’e Hózhó are the central animating powers of the universe, and, as such, they produce a world described as hózhó, the ideal environment of beauty, harmony, and happiness. All living beings, which includes the earth, the sacred mountains, and so on, have inner and outer forms, and to achieve well-being the inner forms must harmonize and unify with Sa’ah Naagháii and the outer forms must harmonize and unify with Bik’e Hózhó.

The desirable conditions of sa’ah naagháii bik’e hózhó are disturbed and disrupted by improper, inadvertent, or inustate contact with things that are defined as dangerous (bóhádzid), and by the malevolent deeds (witchcraft) of others. A variety of over sixty curing rites are designed to purify the patient made ill by contact with dangerous things or to neutralize and, in some cases, reverse the effects of witchcraft.

Curing rites, often referred to as “sings,” reenact the creation of the world through myth, song, prayer, and drama, and place the patient in this recreated world, closely identifying him with the good and power of various deities. These deities are, in the words of Kluckhohn, “charged with positive spiritual electricity” (1949:370). Ritual identification with them neutralizes the contaminating effect of dangerous things or evil deeds and restores one to the good and harmony of hózhó.

In this connection I believe the metaphor using electricity is quite appropriate, and I would like to take it a little further. In doing so, I would describe sa’ah naagháii bik’e hózhó as the generating plant or sources of animation and life for the inner forms of
all living beings. The Holy People are supernaturals because of their closeness to these power sources and because of their knowledge of the ways (rituals) to connect to and harmonize with these central power sources. Reichard described this process as a kind of spiritual osmosis (1950a:112).

At this point some lines from Blessingway (Witherspoon, 1974:56–57; Wyman, 1970:134–36) would be helpful in illustrating the ritual process of restoration. In the following lines, repeated in both song and prayer, the patient is identified with the earth and, through the earth, with Sa'ah Naaghááii Bik'eh Hózhó:

Earth's feet have become my feet
by means of these I shall live on.
Earth's legs have become my legs
by means of these I shall live on.
Earth's body has become my body
by means of this I shall live on.
Earth's mind has become my mind
by means of this I shall live on.
Earth's voice has become my voice
by means of this I shall live on.
Earth's headplume has become my headplume
by means of this I shall live on.
The cord-like extension from the top of its head
is cord-like from the top of my head
as by means of this I shall live on.
There are mountains encircling it and
Hózhó extends up their slopes,
by means of these it will be hózhó as I shall live on.

Sa'ah Naaghááii Bik'eh Hózhó I shall be,
Before me it will be hózhó as I live on,
Behind me it will be hózhó as I live on,
Below me it will be hózhó as I live on,
Above me it will be hózhó as I live on.
Hózhó has been restored.
Hózhó has been restored.

Hózhó has been restored.

The first stanza identifies the patient's outer form with the outer form of the earth, and this stanza is then followed by one which identifies the patient's inner form with the inner form of the earth, and through this channel, to the central generators, Sa'ah Naaghááii Bik'eh Hózhó.

It is surprising, surprising... yi ye!
It is the very inner form of Earth that continues
to move with me, that has risen with me,
that is standing with me, that indeed
remains stationary with me.
Now it is the inner form of Sa'ah Naaghááii
now Bik'eh Hózhó that continues to move with me,
that has risen with me, that is standing with me,
that indeed remains stationary with me...

Next the patient is identified with the inner forms of the mountains and other deities, and after each identification with these various beings, the patient is identified with Sa'ah Naaghááii Bik'eh Hózhó. Sa'ah Naaghááii Bik'eh Hózhó do not generate electricity, at least not in the Western sense of electricity, but do generate hózhó. Connection to and harmony with generators of hózhó will produce hózhó in one's environment.

Now let us return from this detailed diversion into the general and specific meanings of sa'ah naaghááii bik'eh hózhó to the Navajo definition of sa'ah naaghááii as thought and bik'eh hózhó as speech. Thought is the power source of all creation, transformation, and regeneration. Songs sung by the Dyiin Dine'é ("Supernaturals" or "Holy People") during the time they were organizing this world clearly express the power of directed thought:

I plan for it, when I plan for it, it drops nicely into position just as I wish, ni yo o. Earth's support I first lean into posi-
tion. As I plan for long life-happiness it yields to my wish as it nicely drops into position, ni yo o (Wyman, 1970:115).

There is additional evidence from everyday life which indicates the power of thought. Navajos emphasize that if one thinks of good things and good fortune, good things will happen. If one thinks of bad things, bad fortune will be one’s lot. In my first few years among the Navajo, I was constantly scolded for thinking about unhappy possibilities. As a product of another cultural world, I had learned to consider and plan for all possibilities and to “save something for a rainy day.” Among the Navajo I was told that planning for that “rainy day” would bring about “rainy days,” and that I had better forget about planning for “rainy days” unless I wanted it to “rain.”

During my introduction to Navajo culture another matter that perplexed me was the seriousness with which Navajos regarded bad dreams. Bad dreams are regarded as bad thoughts likely to be realized unless treated and transformed through ritual action. To protect themselves from the dangerous potentialities of bad dreams and to prevent their reoccurrence (which would serve to reinforce them), Navajos make relatively large investments of time and money in ritual action.

During two different periods of severe drought on the reservation, people attributed the droughts to their bad, evil, improper, or disrespectful thoughts. People constantly reminded each other to think positively and to be respectful of the powers of the Holy People and their rites. Four times I observed the rain ceremony (nłiz’ na’ànhí) performed on days with clear skies, and each time it rained within twelve hours of the conclusion of the rite, which lasted only a few hours. Only once, however, was the rain significant enough to be of some help. The other times the rite, so it seemed, brought only a sprinkle of short duration. The Navajos involved in the performance of the rite shrugged their shoulders with a slight sense of humor and not a little dismay and commented, “How feeble-minded we have become!”

I have also observed cases where the curing rites failed to cure or where the blessing rites seemingly failed to bless. The explanations given in such cases fall into one or more of the following three categories: (1) the diagnosis was wrong; (2) a mistake was made in the performance of the ritual; or (3) the patient was not sincere, evidenced by his failure to follow all the prescriptions for and limitations on his behavior before, during, and after the rite.

Navajos believe strongly in the power of thought. The world was created by it; things are transformed according to it; life is regenerated from it. People are cured and blessed, vegetation is improved and increased, and health and happiness are restored by the power of thought.

Thought (sa’ah naagháii) is not without its inseparable companion, speech (bik’eh hózhó). According to the Navajo, speech is the outer form of thought, and thought is the inner form of speech. Before we can fully understand what it means in Navajo ideology to say that thought is the inner form of speech and speech is the outer form of thought, we must briefly consider the whole phenomenon of inner and outer forms.

Natural phenomena such as earth and sky, sun and moon, rain and water, lightning and thunder, and so on have inner forms. They are referred to as bii’asti ‘an animate being lies within’. These ‘in lying ones’ are human-like in character and appearance, and retain their individual identity and agency. What First Man and First Woman and the others brought into being by their thoughts were the inner forms of all the natural phenomena that would be prominent in the structure and operation of this world (Wyman, 1970:109–12). After these inner forms were created in the sweathouse, they were told where their places would be and what their functions would be in the world, and then they were sent to take those positions and fill those functions.

People also have inner forms. These are referred to as nits’i bii’siszini, usually translated as the ‘in-standing wind soul’. The in-standing wind soul is thought to be in control of one’s body, including one’s thoughts and actions. The “goodness” or “badness” of a person is attributed to the nature of his wind soul. There are said to be seven general classes of wind souls, and a few
other exceptional ones (in the sense of being either extremely good or extremely bad).

Like the inner forms of natural phenomena, these wind souls have an existence which is independent of the body which they occupy. They are dispatched into one's body at birth, and become its source of life and breath, thought and action. At death they leave the body and "return to dawn woman to report on the life of the person thus controlled" (Haile, 1943:87).

When the fetus acquires human form, a "small wind" is dispatched to it. This small wind is what causes the fetus to move, and its movements are evidence to the mother that the small wind has taken its place inside the growing fetus. The distinction between the "small wind" soul and the wind soul acquired at birth is important for understanding the nature of thought and speech. Haile states:

This soul [small wind] manifests its activity in "four speeches." These are found both in pre-natal movements of the child in the womb, and in post natal cries for nourishment, which approximate the call: šimá 'my mother'. It was also told that this small wind "grows with a person," but does "not think far ahead." This "planning and calculating of things beneficial to the future of the individual" is done by the "wind placed into a person at birth." This tradition assigns a definite function to small winds, which seem to control the vegetative life of the human being, as "they grow with a person." This function is not replaced by the wind which, from birth on, does the planning "for the future" (1943:80).

The capacities to think "far ahead" and to speak a language are acquired from the wind soul dispatched at birth, and these capacities distinguish humans from other animals who have only calls and cries.

Whereas the little wind controls the digestive system of the body and, therefore, its growth and maturation, the in-standing wind soul controls one's thoughts and movements. Navajos believe that thought is located in the brain, but they contend that the in-standing soul controls the functioning of the brain. Bodily movements, actions, or behavior are extensions or externalizations of thought. They are indeed external and observable evidence of the power of thought.

Speech is an externalization of thought. Being the outer form of thought, speech is an extension of thought. To the Navajo, speech represents marvelous evidence of the varied character and extensive capacity of thought. Moreover, speech is a reinforcement of the power of thought; it is an imposition on the external world. This reinforcement reaches its peak after four repetitions, and therefore a request made four times cannot be easily denied.

Although it was implied earlier (cf. p. 16) that this world was thought into existence, the consummation or realization of the thoughts of the Holy People did not occur until they were spoken in prayer or sung in song. Thought, the inner form, and speech, the outer form, represent the two basic components of ritual creation or restoration. As we shall discuss later, thought is associated with form, and speech, as a kind of action, is associated with the transformation of substance (air); thus, ritual creation and restoration constitute a union of form and substance, or an imposition of form onto substance.

In the songs of creation referred to earlier, thought and speech were combined with another form or component of ritual action: knowledge. As thought precedes speech, knowledge precedes thought. Knowledge thus appears to be the inner form of thought. In this sense thought is the crystallization or conceptualization of knowledge.

As knowledge precedes thought, language precedes speech. In two of the best accounts of the origin myth (Goddard, 1933:9, 127; Haile, 1943), saad ēa'i 'first language' is listed as one of the primordial elements of the universe. It is obvious to the Navajo that speech cannot occur unless a language already exists. As in all creations or transformations, form precedes substance, and language is associated with form and speech with substance.

It may seem perplexing to non-Navajos that thought, an inner
form of speech, could be the outer form of knowledge and that speech, an outer form of thought, could be the outer form of language, but it is entirely consistent with the Navajo view of the world. Many inner forms also have inner forms of which they are outer forms. Included in this category are Sa'ah Naagháii 'thought' and Bik'eh Hózhó 'speech'. Haile's informant states that the in-standing wind soul (inner form) of Sa'ah Naagháii is the 'inaudible wind', and the in-standing wind soul (inner form) of Bik'eh Hózhó is 'smooth wind' (1973:74).

The names of the wind souls interestingly parallel or characterize their nature and function. Haile's translation of nícht'í doo diits'a'ígíí as 'inaudible wind' is misleading. First, nícht'í is 'air' and not necessarily 'wind'. Second, doo diits'a'ígíí means 'that which makes no noise' or 'the silent one' instead of 'inaudible' which suggests it makes a noise but its noise cannot be heard. Knowledge, the inner form of thought, obviously makes no noise. It seems appropriate, therefore, that the inner form of sa'ah naagháii is a soul that makes no noise. It is also interesting to note that an 'inaudible wind' soul is the inner form of white wind, which is the inner form of dawn, the beginning point of the day, and east, the correct starting point of the four cardinal directions. All four-phased prayers to the cardinal points begin with dawn or east, whose color is white. In the four phases of creation or transformation, the beginning phase is knowledge.

The in-standing soul of Bik'eh Hózhó is 'smooth wind', according to Haile's translation. In Navajo conception 'smoothness' implies form or pattern. Again Haile's translation is inadequate. Nícht'í diilhóó means 'the air or wind that has been smoothed', not 'smooth wind'. The 'smoothing' process relates to the Navajo conception of what happens to air when it becomes articulated sound. It appears, then, that the name 'smoothed wind' for the inner form of Bik'eh Hózhó (speech) is not arbitrary but is illustrative of the patterning role that language plays in speech.

From the propositions that knowledge is the inner form of thought, language is the inner form of speech, and thought is the inner form of speech, it may be presumed that knowledge is also

the inner form of language. The structural arrangement of these components is diagrammed in figure 1. This structural arrangement illustrates how all ritual creation or restoration begins with knowledge and culminates in speech. For the Navajo, then, knowledge is power, and the greatest power to transform or restore various conditions comes from the knowledge of various rituals acquired from the Holy People. As such, ritual knowledge is highly treasured and not easily obtained.

![Diagram of Structural Relationships among Knowledge, Language, Thought, and Speech](Adapted from Witherpoon, 1975b:75)

Ritual knowledge can be purchased but it cannot be produced; it can be learned but it cannot be discovered; it can be communicated but it cannot be destroyed. Ritual knowledge is fixed and complete; it cannot be expanded. All there is to know about this world is already known because the world was organized according to this knowledge. Earth surface people (Navajos or human beings) can expand their awareness or command of knowledge, but they cannot expand knowledge itself.

Creation is the external manifestation of knowledge. When asked what they were planning in the sweathouse, the Holy People said, "we are planning to extend knowledge endlessly" (Goddard, 1933:26, my translation). In Navajo mythology there are four underworlds (sometimes extended to twelve when phases within the principal underworlds are enumerated) that preceded this, the fifth world. The first of these underworlds is called saad
the Blessingway rites (Hózhó’í), maintain and reinforce hózhó by attracting and incorporating the goodness and power of benevolent Holy People. A second general type of ritual, the Holyway rites (Diýin’ehgo), deals with Holy People who are potentially malevolent. These rites emphasize transformation; that is, transforming powers that are potentially malevolent and dangerous into benevolent powers. This is done by ritual control and compulsion, creating in the patient an immunity to the potential evil of the Holy Person thus controlled. A third general class of ritual, the Evilway rites (Hóchxo’í), emphasizes the exorcism of the evil powers of malevolent Holy People, thus eliminating hóchxo’í and restoring hózhó.

At the core of Navajo ritual is the relationship between the Diýin Dine’é ‘Holy People’ and the nihokáá dine’é ‘earth surface people’. Diýin may be translated as ‘immune’ for the Holy People are immune to danger, destruction, and death as a reflection of their inherent knowledge. Earth surface people may incorporate this power and immunity by knowing how to control and compel the Holy People who possess it. The symbolic action of ritual is the process by which the Holy People are controlled and compelled.

In most cases the Holy People of the fifth world are the inner forms of various natural phenomena and forces, including animals, and are the controlling and animating powers of nature. Navajo ritual is not designed to control the elements directly; it is designed to control the Holy People who are the inner forms and controlling agents of those elements.

The goal of the earth surface people is to die of old age after a long life of beauty, harmony, and happiness. This must be accomplished, however, in a world of benevolent and malevolent forces. To reach old age one must identify with and incorporate the good of benevolent powers and transform or exorcise the evil of malevolent powers.

The inner forms of various natural phenomena are humanoid. They can hear the speech of ritual and can see the movements and prestations involved in the symbolic action of ritual. These
inner forms (in-lying ones) of natural phenomena also have inner forms (in-standing wind souls). Just as with the earth surface people, it is the nature or class of the in-standing wind soul that determines whether the particular Holy Person is benevolent, malevolent, or a combination of these.

This world is an arena in which the inner forms of the Holy People and the inner forms of the earth surface people interact. This is manifested in the movements and interactions of their outer forms. Since the movements of outer forms are representations of the thoughts and intents of inner forms, these actions or interactions are symbolic in nature. The world is, therefore, a stage of symbolic action. One of the most important aspects of symbolic action is found in language, and it is that aspect of symbolic action toward which our attention is focused in this chapter.

Songs of Blessingway illustrate the pattern of identifying with and incorporating the good of benevolent Holy People. Earth Woman is a Holy Person who is incapable of doing harm to anyone. She is only capable of blessing, aiding, and sustaining; and, as such, is the very essence of benevolence. The following excerpts from Blessingway songs illustrate how the patient identifies with and incorporates the benevolent power of Earth Woman:

As I stand along the surface of the Earth
she says child to me, she says grandchild to me.

Now at Earth's soles, now dark cloud,
now male rain, now dark water,
rainbow, now pollen usually lies across.

Now at my soles, now dark cloud,
now male rain, now dark water,
rainbow, now pollen usually lies across.

(Wyman, 1970:123, 128)

(The verses above constitute an identification of outer forms. This is followed by an identification of inner forms:

It is the very inner form of Earth that continues to move with me, that has risen with me, that is standing with me, that indeed remains stationary with me (Wyman, 1970:136).

The prayers of the holy way chants are designed to transform evil and gain immunity from evil. To illustrate this process the following excerpts from the Male Shootingway are provided:

At Rumbling Mountain,
Holy Man who with the eagle tail-feathered arrow glides out,

This day I have come to be trustful
This day I look to you...

With your strong feet rise up to protect me,
With your sturdy legs rise up to protect me,
With your strong body rise up to protect me,
With your healthy mind rise up to protect me,
With your powerful sound rise up to protect me,

Carrying the dark bow and the eagle tail-feathered arrow
with which you transformed evil,

By these means you will protect me,

No weapon of evil sorcery can harm me as I go about.

This day I shall recover.
Safely may I go about.
Your child I have become,
Your grandchild I have become,
I have recovered my energy, I say.

Just as you are the one who is holy because of these things,
So may I be holy because of them.

This day the weapon of sorcery
Has returned to normal.

Just as you are the one who transforms evil,
So may I transform evil.
Just as you are the one dreaded by evil because of these things, 
So may I be dreaded by evil because of these things. 
We all survive.
My mind in safety repeatedly survives.

[Sa'ah naagháíi bik'eh hózhó] I have become again.
It has become beautiful again. . . . (Reichard, 1944:58–65)

The Evilway rites are designed to exorcise evil from the 
patient's body, mind, and presence. To illustrate how ritual 
language is used in this process, the following excerpts from an Evil- 
way rite, Enemyway, are provided:

From where threatens the weapon of the white man's ghost, 
its sorcery, its indispensable power, its parts naturally af- 
fected by evil, all of which bother me inside my body, which 
make me feverish, move deceitfully through me, 
From there may they be warned off (by winking), far away 
may they go, 
Along with its power of motion evil sorcery is moving far 
from me, 
Along with its power of motion its threatening sound is 
moving far from me, 
Far away with its evil power it has gone. 
It has gone back to its own dwelling place, 
It has become unknown water. 

(Reichard, 1944:31)

In the translations above Reichard frequently includes “may” 
which gives a misleading sense of asking for permission. There is 
no “may” or requesting of permission in the Navajo versions. 
Phrases such as “so may I be dreaded by evil” should read “so I 
will be dreaded by evil.”

There is another important source of hóchxo' that must be 
brought under control and reversed or neutralized. It is found in 

witchcraft, and has been part of the world from the beginning, 
having been part of the knowledge of First Man and First Woman. 
Witchcraft is associated with incest, and First Man and First 
Woman are both brother and sister and husband and wife to each 
other. First Man is said to be the originator of “invisible witch-
craft,” and First Woman is the originator of “noisy medicine” and 
“gray witchcraft” (Haile, 1943:75).

The children of First Man and First Woman are called Ánit'i (íjí) 
Sa'ah Naagháíi and Ánit'i (íjí) Bik'eh Hózhó. Ánit'i (íjí) is 'witchcraft', 
and these children, born of incest, are personifications of witch-
ery sa'ah naagháíi 'thought' and witchery bik'eh hózhó 'speech'. 
Whereas Sa'ah Naagháíi plus Bik'eh Hózhó produce, maintain, and 
restore hózhó, witchery Sa'ah Naagháíi plus witchery Bik'eh Hózhó 
produce hóchxo'. One of the most common ways of producing 
hóchxo' is by reversing the order and sequence of the rites which 
produce hózhó. Reichard notes that “the power of the word is as 
strong for evil as for good, an inverse wish being a curse” 
(1950a:275). Haile adds:

The colored winds, too, which are assigned in proper se-
quence to the phenomena of the cardinal points, to wit: 
white wind soul to dawn, blue wind soul to horizontal blue, 
yellow wind soul to evening twilight, dark wind soul to dark-
ness, are considered benevolent, if mentioned in this se-
quence in religious functions. But when a ceremonial, in its 
songs and prayers, disturbs this sequence, giving preference 
to darkness, malevolence and witchery may be suspected 
(1943:75).

Whereas ritual language can be used to create order, it can also 
be used to create disorder. Ritual language was the means of 
transforming chaos into cosmos, but it can also be used to reduce 
cosmos to chaos. In the battle between the forces of disorder and 
evil and those of order and good, the “good” side has the advan-
tage. This is based on the idea that through ritual knowledge and 
circumspect behavior one can acquire an immunity from evil, but
there is no immunity from the ritual control and compulsion of good. There are no evil forces or deities that cannot be transformed or exorcised.

Evil and malevolence also have an advantage. They act secretly and deceptively. Before one can transform, exorcise, or reverse evil, one must know its nature and source. This is the function of the diviner or diagnostician. Often, however, serious misfortune or death is caused before the nature and source of the evil is discovered. If the source of the problem is witchcraft and the witch is discovered, the witch will die because his evil power can be reversed and returned. There is only one escape from this pronounced doom. He can acknowledge his misdeeds and be treated by a holy way rite by which he can gain an immunity from the evil forces that he himself has set in motion.

At this point I would like to summarize and clarify Navajo theories of knowledge, language, thought, and speech, and relate these theories to some of those found in linguistics. Navajos have distinct terms for each of these four aspects of the world, and they make rather sharp distinctions between and among them. Nevertheless, they also see important relationships among them, and see in them four paired sets.

Wilhelm von Humboldt, a linguist and philosopher of language of the nineteenth century, offered a view of thought and speech that interestingly parallels the Navajo view. He clearly saw thought as the director of speech, and speech as the external manifestation of thought:

Intellectual activity—completely intellectual, completely innate, and to a certain extent passing without a trace—becomes externalized in speech and perceptible to the senses. It and the language [which he equates with speech], therefore, are a unit and are indivisible from one another (1971:34).

Elsewhere he added that “language is, as it were, the external manifestation of the minds of peoples” (1971:24).

Like the Navajos, Humboldt saw air as an appropriate medium through which thought is externalized in speech:

Inasmuch as thought in its most typically human relationships is a longing to escape from darkness into light, from limitation into infinity, sound streams from the depths of the breast to the external ambient. There it finds in the air, this most subtle and mobile of all elements whose apparent incorporeality significantly corresponds to the intellect, a marvelously appropriate intermediary substance... For, as living sound, it proceeds, as does respiration itself, from the breast... breathing life from which it streams forth into the mind which receives it... Thus it connects man with the universe (1971:34–35).

In Navajo conception thought is not an aspect of the small wind soul which is received prenatally and controls the digestive system, but is rather a dimension of the in-standing wind soul which is received at birth and controls respiration and is the source and medium of speech (Haile, 1943:80). Reichard lists numerous terms which illustrate a close association of life, breath, and speech with air (1944:51–52). Although Humboldt did not project the existence of an “in-standing wind soul” as the source of speech, he did postulate something similar to it, although he did not elaborate on its nature or composition. He stated that human speech is “the organ of the internal being, this self that progressively achieves internal cognition and enunciation” (1971:xix).

In line with the Navajo philosophy of language, Humboldt also saw the ultimate effect of thought and speech as making an impact on the form and events of the world:

The truly creative principle operating in the recondite and secret course of mankind’s development is the power of the intellect which sallies forth from its inner depth and plenitude to intervene in the events of the world (1971:7).
Elsewhere he added:

The intellect produces, but stands in contrast to, the created item. . . . Thus from the cosmos reflected in man originates the language which associates him with his environment and which, through his effort, reacts fruitfully upon the latter (1971:163).

Humboldt's view and the Navajo view part company with regard to the distinction between language and speech. Humboldt made little distinction between language and speech. This is probably due to his view that the form and content of both language and speech are products of the intellect. To him the intellect is both the originator of language and the director of speech.

Until now we have not distinguished saad as 'word' or 'words' from saad as 'language'. Because there is no such overt distinction in the Navajo language, most scholars have assumed that Navajos make no such distinction. Reichard argues strongly that such conclusions are not necessarily warranted. She states:

. . . Navajo language is every bit as subtle as English, if not more so. . . . One apparent feature of the language is what one might call a "linguistic synecdoche," that is, the designation of a whole and a part, or selected parts, by the same term. For instance the same word is used to name a medicine bundle with all its contents, the skin (quiver) in which the contents are wrapped, the contents as a whole or each part of the contents (1944:38).

As in Reichard's example of the medicine bundle, saad may refer to both 'language' as a system, and to 'words' as parts of that system. Navajos refer to the 'Navajo language' as Diné bizaad, to Spanish as Naakaii (Mexican) bizaad (his language), and to English as the saad of the white man. This clearly indicates that Navajos see these languages as systems of words. There are a multitude of ways to identify individual words or groups of words. One can speak a sentence and most any Navajo can count the number of saad in the sentence.

One can say Diné'ehji yáshti' which translates 'according to the Navajo pattern, I speak'. I once heard a Navajo comment on the incorrect syntax used by a non-Navajo trying to speak Navajo. He said, Diné'ehjígo dóó ákot'áó saad athé sinil da, which translates 'according to the form of Navajo (speaking), words are not ordered in that way'. From the foregoing evidence I think it is clear that Navajos use saad to refer both to language as a system and as a whole, and to words as elements of the system and parts of the whole. It is also clear that they see form and pattern as inherent qualities of language.

Just as the inner parts of a medicine bundle are called jish (the same term as that used for the medicine bundle itself), the inner parts or elements of language are called saad. According to Navajo mythology, saad ("words, symbols, or names") are considered to be one of the primordial elements of the universe, antedating the existence of First Man and First Woman (Goddard, 1933:9, 127). Thus saad as words or symbols precede saad as patterned whole or grammar and constitute the inner form of the latter.

Ééhóin 'knowledge' is the awareness of thing or being and its symbolic representation. To a great extent, the beginning of man's knowledge is found in learning the natures and names of things. Unlike Adam, First Man did not go about naming things (creating symbols); he went about learning the names of things (interpreting reality through already established symbols).

Although First Man and First Woman were not the originators or inventors of symbol, they were the originators of form. The capacity to organize, arrange, and pattern symbols is found in the intellect. Symbols are the building blocks of mental images, and just as man cannot build a house without materials, so man cannot construct mental images of the universe without symbolic elements.

This is not to say that in the Navajo view man cannot or does not create symbols. After symbols have been organized in thought, and this organization or form has been imposed on substance, a
new symbol is needed to symbolize the new world, and it is man who finds or creates a symbol to represent his own creations. This new or additional symbol becomes part of his symbolic resources for future thought and creation. The present world is the fifth world; it is organized out of symbols that originated and developed in the four underworlds. Each of these successive worlds, except the first underworld, was organized out of the symbols of previous worlds. The first underworld had substance but it possessed no inherent form. Because the capacity to originate and impose form is inherent in the intellect, First Man and First Woman imposed form onto the substance of the first world. Things do not think; symbols do not think—man thinks.

Having acquired the capacity to impose form and order onto the world, First Man and First Woman also acquired the capacity to return order to disorder, cosmos to chaos. Whereas sq'ah naaghátíi 'thought' and bik'eh hózhó 'speech' produce hózhó, ánt'ííjí (witchery) sq'ah naaghátíi and bik'eh hózhó produce hóchxó'. Hózhó may be conceived of as the imposition of form, order, harmony, beauty, and, therefore, good upon the world. When hóchxó' occurs in one's world, it is as though things have returned to original chaos. The ritual takes the patient back to the beginning of things, or apparently it assumes he is already there because it is there that the ritual starts, and recreates the world according to hózhó. Ritual renews the environment with harmony, order, and beauty, and that is why all rituals conclude with the phrase "hózhó has been restored."

The original creation of hózhó was a development of thought and intellect on the part of the Holy People. For the earth surface people, restoration of hózhó is a dimension or capacity of ritual knowledge. The Navajo term ééhózin ("knowledge") really means 'awareness', 'acquaintance', or 'familiarity'. Awareness of thing or being is the core of ritual knowledge, and might well be considered its inner form. When the inner forms of knowledge and language are added to the structure found in figure 1, the result is the structure illustrated in figure 2. This figure represents my logical extension of the Navajo concepts discussed in this chapter.

The arrows in figure 2 are used only to represent the inner/outer structural relationships between and among all the categories. Actually the two entities at each level (thing and word, knowledge and language, thought and speech) form a pair, and the lower pairs are the inner forms of the next higher pair. Because each of these pairs has an inner and an outer form and because in ritual performances inner forms precede outer forms, the correct sequential process of the structure appears to proceed from the inner form of the lower pair to its outer form, then to the inner form of the next pair and then to its outer form, and so on. This is illustrated in figure 3. This model is based on structural relationships which are implicit in Navajo thought.

Many scholars see language as the creation of the intellect, but the Navajos see that as putting the cart before the horse. To the Navajo, man can think only with symbols, so some symbols must have existed before thought. The first few sentences of the first
In chapter 1 we discovered that for the Navajo the world was actually created or organized by means of language. The form of the world was first conceived in thought, and then this form was projected onto primordial unordered substance through the compulsive power of speech and song. Rappaport has referred to this process as the informing of substance and the substantiation of form (1974:42–46). Despite their appeal on aesthetic grounds, these metaphysical propositions seem very strange to people grounded in occidental philosophy, and thus any discussion of them is quickly classed as, at best, mystical or, at worst, magical. We refer to the powers Navajos attribute to thoughts and words as magical because we cannot understand them and cannot accept them on empirical or rational grounds. To Navajos, however, the powers of thought and speech are not particularly mysterious or magical because they simply follow logically from more fundamental premises on which the Navajo world was built and according to which it operates.

In this book I am more interested in what the Navajo think than in how they think. I believe the differences found in what we think and what they think are attributable not to any differences in intelligence or mental structures, or to some projected state of preliteracy or mental structure, but to some presupposed forms of “primitive” consciousness, but are attributable to different premises about the nature and operation of reality. These premises on which Navajo thinking is based are not assumed to be the same for all non-Western peoples, nor do I assume that many of these premises are not to be found in the Western world; what I do say is that they are given special and