

**Chapter 1 : Greece, A History of Ancient Greece, Mythology**

*Myth as Foundation for Society and Values: A Sociological Analysis. Barry Schwartz, "Myth as Foundation for Society and Values: A Sociological Analysis.*

Mythology is the study of myth. The term myth has come to refer to a certain genre or category of stories that share characteristics that make this genre distinctly different from other genres of oral narratives, such as legends and folktales. Many definitions of myth repeat similar general aspects of the genre and may be summarized thus: Myths are symbolic tales of the distant past often primordial times that concern cosmogony and cosmology the origin and nature of the universe, may be connected to belief systems or rituals, and may serve to direct social action and values. For many people, myths remain value-laden discourse that explain much about human nature. There are a number of general conceptual frameworks involved in definitions of myth, including these: Myths are Cosmogonic Narratives, connected with the Foundation or Origin of the Universe and key beings within that universe, though often specifically in terms of a particular culture or region. Given the connection to origins, the setting is typically primordial the beginning of time and characters are proto-human or deific. Myths also often have cosmogonic overtones even when not fully cosmogonic, for instance dealing with origins of important elements of the culture food, medicine, ceremonies, etc. Myths are Narratives of a Sacred Nature, often connected with some Ritual. Myths are often foundational or key narratives associated with religions. These narratives are believed to be true from within the associated faith system though sometimes that truth is understood to be metaphorical rather than literal. Within any given culture there may be sacred and secular myths coexisting. For example, structuralism recognizes paired bundles of opposites or dualities -- like light and dark as central to myths. Mythic Narratives often Involve Heroic Characters possibly proto-humans, super humans, or gods who mediate inherent, troubling dualities, reconcile us to our realities, or establish the patterns for life as we know it. Myths are Narratives that are "Counter-Factual in featuring actors and actions that confound the conventions of routine experience" McDowell, They are often highly valued or disputed stories that still intrigue us even though many of us do not recognize them as a living genre in our culture. Myths also seem in opposition to science because they are not testable, which is the case at least for origin myths because of their primordial setting -- if events described are from a different, earlier world, then of course they would not be repeatable or logical in our world. Both myths and science offer explanations of the cosmos. A key difference is that information about the universe presented in myths is not testable, whereas science is designed to be tested repeatedly. Science also depends on cumulative, frequently updated knowledge, whereas myth is based on passed down stories and beliefs. Myths may change over time, particularly after contact with other cultures, but they do not change and adapt to new periods and technological developments in the same way science does. Myths may be enacted through rituals and believed in absolutely, but they usually do not have physical effects in the real world, as in leading to new technology for building cars or providing medical treatment. People may believe they are cured through faith, and they may find important value-laden sentiments in myths, but these "real world results" are neither empirical nor usually repeatable two standard criteria for science. Although science differs from myth in offering actual, testable control over the environment and producing real, repeatable results in the world, science is NOT completely divorced from myth. Many scientific theories are presented or understood in narrative form, which often end up sounding remarkably mythic, as scholars like Stephen Jay Gould and Gregory Schrempff have discussed see scholarship as myth section below. Myths were considered by Victorian scholars as survivals of previous times perhaps decayed or reflective of "primitive" ancestors who took them literally. Some saw them as evidence for social evolutionary theories of the 19th century. These Victorians scholars like E. Tylor believed that humans in all cultures progress through stages of evolution from "savagery" to "barbarism" and finally to "civilization. Such theories no longer seem reasonable. We have not, for instance, progressed beyond brutality, murder, war, and grave injustices just because we have more advanced technology in fact we use our technology partly to more efficiently kills other humans. We also recognize the complexity, thoughtfulness, and beauty of many other cultures we may once have considered

inferior to our own. Based on over a century of ethnology anthropological fieldwork and research in psychology, genetics, and other disciplines, scholars now accept that humans from all eras and parts of the world have equal intellectual capacity and potential. We understand as well today that our own theories may seem as foolish to our descendants as their conceptions of the universe sometimes seem to us see scholarship as myth section below. Our ancestors understood metaphor as well as we. This does not mean our ancestors lived exactly as we do, or that we conceive of the world in identical ways. But myths serve us better as means of understanding our ancestors if we accept their capacity for complex intellectual and artistic expression. Theories allow us to do our work as scholars, though our best efforts come with self-awareness of the theories and methods we employ as scholars. We now understand and discuss traditional myths and other such texts as emergent and intricately connected to performance situations or context. The more we can understand of the context of a myth, the culture it came from, the individual who told it, when and for what purpose, the audience who received it, etc. Of course, the further back in time one goes, the harder it becomes to study context. Myths, as explanations of the cosmos and how to live, are parallel to science in many ways. Yet because of their differences from science, they often appear insignificant, whimsical, useless, or primitive to contemporary people. Many people lament the decline of myths, because they promise moral guidance and comfort that helps enrich life. For these reasons, many people remain interested in myths and seek to revive or revere them. Some people believe classical music, movies, and even novels have filled the places myths used to occupy culturally. In our post-modern world many people believe myths exist in new, combined, or revived forms. One of the functions of all art is to reconcile us to paradox. Another is to suggest fundamental patterns of life and the universe. Even if they are no longer associated with religious rituals, belief systems, or primordial moments of creation, "myths" of heroic characters who mediate the troubling paradoxes of life will always compel us and can, I believe, still be found in our culture.

**Characteristics of Myths** Given the cautions above about how much the definition of myth has been debated and written about, take the following characteristics of myth in the spirit in which they are intended: Remember these characteristics are neither absolute nor all-encompassing. A story that is or was considered a true explanation of the natural world and how it came to be. Characters are often non-human e. Setting is a previous proto-world somewhat like this one but also different. Plot may involve interplay between worlds this world and previous or original world. Depicts events that bend or break natural laws reflective of connection to previous world. Reflective and formative of basic structures dualities: Dualities often mediated by characters in myths. Myths are distinguished from other commonly collected narratives such as folktales and legends. Myths were defined as stories of ancient times believed to be true. Malinowski added that they must be sacred, and discussed how they serve society as a charter for action. Many great social theorists from the 19th and early 20th centuries Freud, Frazer, Muller, Jung, etc. More recent scholars, like William Hansen, argue that the sacred element of myths is a recent attachment to definitions perhaps beginning with the Grimms and then solidified by Malinowski. They were not necessarily connected to religious beliefs, but were often secular stories. While myths do not have to have a sacred element, they DO appear to share a world-forming, or worldview-forming function.

**Generic Fluidity** The fact that scholars discuss various possible definitions of myth demonstrates the vitality and importance of this genre. Genres are categorizations imposed by scholars seeking ways of classifying and analyzing material they study. As folklorist Richard Bauman explains of all genres of stories, they share certain characteristics of: Genres are extremely useful, but all good scholars realize that they are fluid and often messy guides, rather than absolute, neat, and fixed realities. Realizing the fluidity of narrative forms stretches throughout the history of folklore scholarship and into the present day. Contemporary performance theorist Richard Bauman writes: From the perspective of performance theory, distinctions between generic forms and their meaning and function should remain fluid, dynamic, to be discovered. In a sense, they create their own myths, even while they think they are rising above it. Myths seem to offer us symbolic resources we need to communicate. Although the prevalence of mythological details in our discourse keys us to its importance, we typically insist upon distinguishing ways of thinking about the world, and today we think of myth as lesser than science. Yet the persistence of myths throughout our culture reveals their worth. Early scholars in myth theory created myths to paint pictures of early human life and conceptions of the

universe. Discussions of myth became myths' origin stories that influence how we understand people and the world, i. Functionalism Bronislaw Malinowski is considered a functionalist because he insisted that myths serve as charters for social action. Many other myth scholars also discuss this aspect of myths. Anthropologist and folklorist Paul Radin considers myth distinctive because of its function and implications as determined by certain individual society members. The myth-makers then explain symbolically how to live, as Radin notes: The explanatory theme often is so completely dominant that everything else becomes subordinated to it. Myths serve to explain and encourage worldview and good action within society. Many other theorists of myth concur that it has a functional dimension. Antinomy or contradiction is often evident in the form of dualities such as good and bad, night and day, etc. Looked at as whole structures, myths reveal a typical pattern: The symbolic mediation in myths offers inspiration for culture and culture members to heal, flourish, or accept their reality. He also draws upon sewing imagery in discussing the function and method of the bricoleur: More rapid cross-references, together with an increase in the number of points of view and angles of approach have made it possible to consolidate into a whole what might at first have seemed to be a loose and precarious assemblage of odds and ends, all dissimilar in form, texture and color. Careful stitching and darning, systematically applied to reinforce weak spots, has finally produced a homogeneous fabric, clear in outline and harmonious in its blend of shades; fragments which at first seemed disparate, once they found their appropriate place and the correct relationship to their neighbors, come together to form a coherent picture. In this picture, the tiniest details, however gratuitous, bizarre, and even absurd they may have seemed at the beginning, acquire both meaning and function. Twin myths are very common and popular throughout the American Indian world. You can find traditional twin myths in virtually any collection of Native American myths. Her contemporary myth offers symbolism direction for contemporary Native Americans whose culture is currently experiencing a re-birth or renewal of culture. Erdrich highlights this twin myth theme in her opening image of primordial female twins sewing the pattern of the world in beads. Like bricoleurs, spinners, and spiders, they affirm that mixing cultures, like mixing patterns in other creative endeavors, need not be a source of concern, but is instead is the source of life itself.

**Chapter 2 : The Myth of a Judeo-Christian Tradition**

*Note: Citations are based on reference standards. However, formatting rules can vary widely between applications and fields of interest or study. The specific requirements or preferences of your reviewing publisher, classroom teacher, institution or organization should be applied.*

The distinction between cosmogonic myths and origin myths is not clear-cut. A myth about the origin of some part of the world necessarily presupposes the existence of the world—which, for many cultures, presupposes a cosmogonic myth. For example, many folklorists reserve the label "myth" for stories about creation. Traditional stories that do not focus on origins fall into the categories of "legend" and "folk tale", which folklorists distinguish from myth. Traditional humans tend to model their behavior after sacred events, seeing their life as an "eternal return" to the mythical age. Because of this conception, nearly every sacred story describes events that established a new paradigm for human behavior, and thus nearly every sacred story is a story about a creation. Myth and ritual and Eternal return Eliade An origin myth often functions to justify the current state of affairs. In traditional cultures, the entities and forces described in origin myths are often considered sacred. Thus, by attributing the state of the universe to the actions of these entities and forces, origin myths give the current order an aura of sacredness: When the missionary and ethnologist C. Strehlow asked the Australian Arunta why they performed certain ceremonies, the answer was always: Julius Caesar and his relatives claimed Aeneas and through Aeneas, the goddess Venus as an ancestor. Founding myth[ edit ] The Dispute of Minerva and Neptune c. Founding myths feature prominently in Greek mythology. Thus Greek and Hebrew founding myths established the special relationship between a deity and local people, who traced their origins from a hero and authenticated their ancestral rights through the founding myth. Greek founding myths often embody a justification for the ancient overturning of an older, archaic order, reformulating a historical event anchored in the social and natural world to valorize current community practices, creating symbolic narratives of "collective importance" [9] enriched with metaphor in order to account for traditional chronologies, and constructing an etiology considered to be plausible among those with a cultural investment. In 13th-century Padua, when each commune looked for a Roman founder - and if one was not available, invented one - a legend had been current in the city, attributing its foundation to the Trojan Antenor. In modern-era colonial contexts, waves of individuals and groups come to the fore in popular history as shaping and exemplifying the ideals of a group: Note for example the conquistadors of the Iberian empires, the bandeirantes in Brazil, the coureurs des bois in Canada, the Cossacks and the promyshlenniki in Siberia and in Alaska, the bands of pioneers in the central and western United States, and the voortrekkers in Southern Africa. Foundation stories[ edit ] Foundational stories are accounts of the development of cities and nations. A foundational story represents the view that the creation of the city is a human achievement. Human control and the removal of wild, uncontrolled nature is underlined. There are two versions of foundational stories: The development of the city is seen as a successful distancing of humans from nature. Nature is locked out, and humans take pride in doing so successfully. In the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan suggested ranking cities according to their distance to natural rhythms and cycles. Degradation stories also called pollution stories take a different stance. The city is seen as spoiling the landscape of the ecological relations that existed before the city was established. There is a sense of guilt for degrading the intact system of nature. In degradation stories true nature only exists outside the city.

Chapter 3 : Origin myth - Wikipedia

*Myth As Foundation for Society and Values: A Sociological Analysis (Mellen Studies in Sociology) [Pierre Hegy] on calendrierdelascience.com \*FREE\* shipping on qualifying offers. Knowledge, business, politics and defence would be impossible on a national scale without the inner horizon of common values.*

Additional cultural creation myths Build Knowledge 1. Explain to the students that they will research and write a word essay highlighting the similarities and differences between two of the creation myths. Allow class time for research library or Internet research or assign the research for homework. Students will use their research to write an expository essay. The students should consider the following questions when writing their essays: What are some of the most obvious similarities between these stories? Which of the stories is the oldest? Do you suspect that there is some deliberate overlapping between the stories? Who tells these stories? Is it from a sacred book, oral legend, or religious leaders? Who accepts these stories as true? How did early people explain their origins? What factors might cause one group to develop a supernatural explanation for human existence and natural phenomena different from another group? What categories would help us to sort, compare, and contrast ideas in the creation stories we have read? Divide students into small groups and have each group explore one interactive creation myth on The Big Myth. Students should consider the following questions: How do these stories dramatize the plot? How are the main characters depicted? What creative liberties are taken with setting, conclusion, etc? Students will use these observations to help them develop their skit. Divide students into small groups and have them use their knowledge on different creation stories to write a skit for their group to perform. For a good resource on techniques and tips for writing plays, see the Playwriting Seminars site. Write a new creation story based on the common elements you have found among the stories. The myth should be from an imaginary religion, culture, or society. Write a play intertwining the three stories, in which characters from the myths interact with one another. Rewrite one of the creation stories, changing some of its most fundamental aspects i. Structure the play around an idea of your own, in which you demonstrate your knowledge of the similarities and differences of at least two creation myths. If students choose this option, they must submit a proposal to the teacher for approval prior to working on their production. Have students perform their skits for the class. After all groups have performed their skits, discuss with students which skits were most effective and why. Also ask students to evaluate the work of their peers using the same criteria: Completeness of the script Accuracy and believability of the characters Originality and creativity of the presentation Accuracy of the portrayal of a particular culture or religion Appropriate incorporation of research materials Extend the Learning Have students stage the wrestling scene in Act I sc ii. For a prompt, have them look at the illustrations of the wrestling scene on the website Shakespeare Illustrated. Preparation Standards Throughout the nation, standards of learning are being revised, published and adopted. The Arts learning standards were revised in ; please visit the National Core Arts Standards [http: The Kennedy Center is working on developing new lessons to connect to these standards, while maintaining the existing lesson library aligned to the Common Core, other state standards, and the National Standards for Arts Education. Script writing through improvising, writing, and refining scripts based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history Grade Theater Standard 2: Acting by developing, communicating, and sustaining characters in improvisations and informal or formal productions Grade Theater Standard 5: Researching by evaluating and synthesizing cultural and historical information to support artistic choices National Standards in Other Subjects Language Arts Language Arts Standard 4: Gathers and uses information for research purposes Language Arts Standard 6: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts Language Arts Standard 7: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts.](http://www.kennedy-center.org/education/arts-standards/)

**Chapter 4 : Judeo-Christian - Wikipedia**

*George V. Zito; Myth as Foundation for Society and Values: A Sociological Analysis, by Pierre Hegy. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, , ix + pp. \$ We use cookies to enhance your experience on our website.*

This article first appeared in the Christian Research Journal, volume29, number2 For further information or to subscribe to the Christian Research Journal go to: Christianity more often is defined or described as either a culture, a religion, a philosophy, or a myth. It is none of these, however. Unlike culture, which can only instruct us in how to interact with others in our group, Christianity answers our deeper need: Unlike religion, which teaches us that we must earn our salvation, Christianity shows us how to access a salvation that has already been won. Unlike philosophy, which seeks after abstract truth, Christianity offers us Truth as a person. Unlike myth, which embodies the desires of a thousand cultures, Christianity provides the historical fulfillment of those desires. In this timeless dialogue, Socrates constructs a full and nuanced definition of the nature and function of justice by building in his imagination an ideal state within which justice can be identified and studied. Socrates pauses to clear the ground, however, before attempting to lay the foundations for his ideal state. One by one, he allows his friends to share their definition of justice, then systematically explodes each of these definitions by revealing its inherent flaws. Only after he has cleared away the debris of false definitions of justice does he proceed toward a true definition of justice. Just as Plato felt a need in his day to distinguish true justice from its many counterfeits, so is there a need in our day to distinguish true Christianity from its many counterfeits. We shall consider below four things that often masquerade as Christianity: Though these four things resemble Christianity and are even related to Christianity, they are by no means equivalent to it. I have found that one of the greatest stumbling blocks to international students who are interested in learning about Christianity is the long-standing misconception that Christianity and Western culture are inextricably bound together. It is true that much that is excellent and lasting in the cultures of Europe and America owes a great debt to biblical precepts; however, it does not therefore follow that Western culture and Christianity are two sides of the same coin. The claims that Jesus made and the gospel that He taught or, rather, effected have little, if anything, to do with culture. One of the greatest innovations in modern missions indeed was inspired by the recognition that the gospel of Christ transcends the narrow confines of race and culture. Gone are the days of the Victorian missionary who would bring to India and Africa a gospel laden with British cultural values and prejudices. Once he has shared with the native population the good news that Jesus died for their sins and rose again, the modern missionary seeks to set up indigenous churches that will eventually be led and managed by the native peoples themselves. This is indeed great news, a message that has relevance for all nations and for all cultures. What is culture, after all? Our cultural heritage and the rich traditions on which this heritage is founded are what direct us to the questions and the problems that have most plagued our ethnic forebears, that let us know when it is proper to laugh or cry, to sing or dance, to love or hate, and that provide us with a strategy for dealing with the joys and the hardships of life. At some point in our lives, we all must ask ourselves the simple question: How do I know that I am valuable? Most of us respond to this internal question with stock answers. One person may say that he knows that he has value because he has a high-paying job; another because she has two beautiful children; and others a great athletic career or a well-disciplined mind. Have these four people lost their value and worth as individuals? There must be another answer to this question, one that is more secure, that is built on a foundation that cannot be shattered by economic shifts or accidental deaths or unexpected injuries or terrible diseases. Christianity offers us two answers to this question: The partial answer, one that Christianity shares with some though far from all other religions, is that we know we have intrinsic value because we were created in the image of God. I would argue, however, that this answer is not, on its own, a sufficient ground for securing our full value and worth. It is not enough for children to know the identity of their biological father; if they do not also know that he desires a relationship with them and that he accepts and loves them unconditionally, they may doubt their own value as human beings. We need something more than the knowledge that we were created in the image of God, and that something more is to be found only in Christianity. Jesus died for us while we were still sinners,

while there was nothing in us to love. We were not worthy hence our innate yearning for love and acceptance , but Jesus made us worthy by providing a way by which we could take upon ourselves and into ourselves the very holiness of Christ. In this life-giving and worth-affirming exchange, we as fallen human beings of whatever culture or race cast our sins and our burdens on Christ, and He, in return as the Savior of all peoples , ascribes to us His own glory and worthiness. This, rather than culture, is the ultimate basis of human value and worth. If we are to get to the core of what Christianity is and not just how most people classify it , however, then we must carefully distinguish it not only from the other major religions, but from the very concept of religion itself, for true Christianity runs counter to the essential nature and goal of religion. Religion, if I may venture a general definition, is a man-made attempt to reach up to God, to deduce His nature, and to learn ways to appease Him. This religious walk encompasses faithfulness to a culturally defined set of rules and regulations; public and private worship of God; the fostering of such virtues as honesty, steadfastness, kindness, and charity; and the performance of various good deeds. Though specific teachings and precepts differ from religion to religion, though the expounders of these teachings differ in their emphases and their ethnic origins, though the living and true God sometimes is replaced with other deities, and though some followers believe their religious walk will take them through several lives instead of just one, most of the religions of the world can be encompassed by this definition. Many of the qualities of a religious walk as described in the previous paragraph overlap with Christianity as it is lived out by most of its adherents; yet, despite the similarity in the kinds of behaviors that both Christianity and religion elicit from their followers, the way in which Christianity defines both the problem that mankind faces and its solution sets Christianity directly at odds with religion. Perhaps the best way to illustrate this dichotomy is to examine a common misconception, a saying that people ascribe, incorrectly, to Christianity: According to the Bible, we live in a fallen, sinful world, a world populated by men and women who are in rebellion against God and who are thus separated from His loving presence. God in His holiness and perfection cannot have such sinfulness in His presence; He is obliged to judge it, to cast it out. Christians do not gain salvation by their own merit trying to do so would be like mopping a floor with dirty water , but because the God-man, Jesus Christ, who was the only human to live and not sin, took the punishment for our sin upon Himself. Salvation is not a prize diligently to be earned, but a gift humbly to be received; it is not the endpoint of our religious walk, but the beginning of it. This was a rather gloomy message to say the least, but one that prepared the way for the greatest message that the world has ever heard. You see, John did not preach the gospel; he preached a message that established the need for the gospel. It was Jesus who then stepped in and who, by dying on the cross, provided a way for us to be delivered from the wrath of God. The number one reason, I believe, why people do not accept Jesus as their Savior is not because they doubt His claims, but, quite simply, because they do not think they need to be saved by another. They can take care of salvation on their own; they are masters of their own fate. If salvation means giving up a few things and living in a certain way i. The biblical law, however, reveals to us our sin and guilt before a righteous and holy God, which leads us to despair of any attempt on our own to earn salvation. Only when we realize our desperate need will we look to another to save us. Unlike the great poet-philosophers e. For Homer, love is a beautiful goddess; but for Plato, love is an abstract form, a perfect idea. Many consider Christianity to be a philosophy, and, of course, there are elements of Christianity that are philosophical; certainly the books of Job and Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament and many passages from the letters of Paul in the New Testament have philosophical components. We can think of philosophy as a gifted individual sitting at a desk trying to capture an abstract notion of salvation in concrete terminology, one that aligns with certain accepted principles of logic; whereas we can think of Christianity as God taking on human flesh, invading the earth to effect a salvation that is so real, so concrete, that no philosophical system can contain it. The former is an idea, a carefully wrought mental construct; the latter is a living reality. The first is merely words; the second is words conveying power. A Christian is someone who accepts not an idea, not a system, not a cosmology, but a person. In terms of the world religions, we may say that Buddha is the founder of Buddhism, Muhammad is the founder of Islam, and Zoroaster is the founder of Zoroastrianism. In terms of the various philosophical schools, we may also say that Plato, Kant, and Nietzsche are, respectively, the founders of the Platonic, Kantian, and Nietzschean schools of philosophy. It is not really

correct, however, to say that Jesus founded Christianity. He is not the founder of Christianity; He is Christianity. Jesus did not only show us the way to find or reach God; He became the Way. Jesus, like Plato and Buddha, taught truths and furthered both philosophical light and religious life, but Jesus alone claimed to be Truth and Light and Life. John Jesus is our Shepherd, our Guide who leads us into the sheepfold. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul sets forth clearly the difference between Christianity and philosophy. There is a richness of understanding locked up in Christianity, but that treasure chest of glorious wisdom resides fully in that Living Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. It is Jesus Himself who is the beginning and end of all true wisdom. That is not to say that Christianity invalidates or even discourages the application of the mind to philosophical questions. Indeed, by affirming that Jesus was and is the Living Word or Logos John 1, Christianity affirms in contrast to postmodernism that human language is meaningful—it is capable of expressing truth that is not merely one of many theories, but is a reality that is absolute and knowable. Still, lest anyone think that philosophy alone can lead one to heaven and that salvation can reside in anything other than the person of Jesus Christ, Paul issues a warning: I was particularly thrilled by the story of a great flood that was told to Gilgamesh by the ancient sage, Utnapishtim. In discussing this specific episode our teacher was quick to inform us quite truthfully that the extant literature of most of the ancient civilizations contains similar flood accounts. He then concluded much too hastily that this was clear proof that the story of Noah and the Ark in Genesis was but one of many flood myths. I wanted to raise my hand and suggest to my teacher that this phenomenon might be interpreted in a different way, namely, that the plethora of flood myths strongly suggests that there was indeed an actual flood that persisted in the memories of many nations, and that the biblical account might possibly be read as the accurate, historical record of an event that in other nations retained only its mythic value. The force of secular humanism being what it is in our modern schools, however, I chose to remain silent. There are many people in universities and seminaries who are willing to concede the modernist. The modernists have not reciprocated; indeed, for most modernists in the secular, liberal academy and media, the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are not historical events, but merely embody another legendary variation on an old mythic theme. He argues, Since such images stem from the psyche [and] refer back to the psyche, they cannot be interpreted properly as references, originally, universally, essentially, and most meaningfully, to local historical events or personages. The historical references, if they have any meaning at all, must be secondary; as, for instance, in Buddhist thinking, where the historical prince Gautama Shakyamuni is regarded as but one of many historical embodiments of Buddha-consciousness; or in Hindu thought, where the incarnations of Vishnu are innumerable. The difficulty faced today by Christian thinkers in this regard follows from their doctrine of the Nazarene as the unique historical incarnation of God; and in Judaism, likewise, there is no less troublesome doctrine of a universal God whose eye is on but one Chosen People of all in His created world. The fruit of such ethnocentric historicism is poor spiritual fare today. First, Campbell argues that myths of gods who come to earth, die, and resurrect proceed from the psyche and thus are divorced from all historical reference. The fact that ancient cultures have stories of incarnate gods who act as divine scapegoats offers, I suggest, strong proof that there is in mankind an innate desire for the divine Creator to take human form and dwell with them and that there is a universal feeling of guilt that necessitates divine intervention to expiate. Where do these desires and feelings originate? If so, how did they find their way into those hidden recesses? The only explanation that can fully account for the existence of these universal, cross-cultural longings, I believe, is that it was the Creator Himself who put them there, and that they most often have found their expression in various cultural myths. If this is so, then it is not surprising that when God fulfills these universal longings through literal, historical events, those events resemble those cultural myths. Second, Campbell claims that historical references are secondary, but if he means this to apply to Christianity and he does, then he misses the whole point. What separates the incarnation stories of ancient Greece, Egypt, and India from those of Matthew or Luke is precisely that the biblical account is historical; it happened at a specific moment in time and space. Christ claimed to be God in human flesh, promised that His death on the cross would restore the sin-broken fellowship between God and man, and offered as surety of these claims the wonderful news that, on the third day, He would raise bodily from the grave. If, however, Jesus did rise and it is a historical fact that the grave

was empty on that first Easter morning<sup>5</sup> , then the truth of all He taught and did is established and confirmed, and our own salvation awaits only our humble acceptance of what Jesus did for us on the cross. Finally, Campbell claims that Christianity like Judaism is an ethnocentric and elitist religion.

**Chapter 5 : ARTSEGE: Cultural Creation Myths**

*Myths encapsulate the values and knowledge of a society and its beliefs about the proper relationship of gods and humans in memorable narrative for so that they may be passed down by oral.*

Any cursory review of American media will demonstrate that the concept is used on both sides of the proverbial aisle – this nebulous Judeo-Christian ideal is evoked in defense of both liberal and conservative political agendas on a routine basis. Rarely does this conflation of Judaism and Christianity seem to be questioned. Despite its omnipresence in political discourse, I believe that the concept of Judeo-Christian tradition is bizarre, imprecise, and most importantly – dangerous. President Eisenhower made the concept a household term when he connected it with the Founding Fathers in a speech: With us of course it is the Judeo-Christian concept, but it must be a religion with all men created equal. There is practically no precedent whatsoever for understanding Judaism and Christianity as sharing a common core of beliefs, practices, or morals. Another prophet hinted at this when he said: And this is what happened to the Jews: This is why Christ said: In addition to the bizarre nature of such a claim, it is also shockingly imprecise. The Judeo-Christian value system that American political commentators love to reference has no precedent in history in fact, quite the opposite, but it also has no basis in the theological and ethical systems of the two faiths. For the sake of brevity, simply consider some basic principles of each faith. Law, salvation, afterlife, sin, hierarchy, ritual, monotheism – even belief, faith, and practice – nearly every component of an authentic Christian practice and an authentic Jewish one differ in an elementary way. Most importantly, the concept of a Judeo-Christian value system is dangerous. Lest one think the days of supersessionist theology have passed, the contemporary fascination with conflating Judaism and Christianity can be read as simply a continuation of earlier supersessionist attempts. Stephen Feldman puts it well when he writes: The concept of a Judeo-Christian tradition flows from the Christian theology of supersession, whereby the Christian covenant or Testament with God supersedes the Jewish one. Christianity, according to this myth, reforms and replaces Judaism. Most importantly the myth of the Judeo-Christian tradition insidiously obscures the real and significant differences between Judaism and Christianity. Even if we were of the opinion that it was productive and wise to talk about a shared inter-religious culture, it would definitely not be Christianity and Judaism. Were such a thing to be a useful concept, the only potentially accurate incarnation of it would be a Jewish-Muslim culture. Islam and Judaism actually do share basic concepts about law, behavior, faith, the nature of God, the obligations of people, the running of a society, etc. When we talk about a Judeo-Christian civilization, we demean and endanger both Judaism and Christianity, and we do neither of them any favors by continuing to reference such an idea.

**Chapter 6 : The Importance And Value Of Myth And Mythology**

*explain how foundation myths like "Romulus and Remus" reinforced Romans' ideas of themselves, their origins, and their values Teaching Approach Learning-for-use.*

Myths and legends number among the most creative and abundant contributions of Christianity to the history of human culture. They have inspired artists, dramatists, clerics, and others to contemplate the wondrous effects of Christian salvation on the cosmos and its inhabitants. Theyâ€¦ The nature, functions, and types of myth Myth has existed in every society. Indeed, it would seem to be a basic constituent of human culture. Because the variety is so great, it is difficult to generalize about the nature of myths. The study of myth is thus of central importance in the study both of individual societies and of human culture as a whole. Relation of myths to other narrative forms In Western culture there are a number of literary or narrative genres that scholars have related in different ways to myths. Examples are fables, fairy tales, folktales, sagas, epics, legends, and etiologic tales which refer to causes or explain why a thing is the way it is. Another form of tale, the parable, differs from myth in its purpose and character. Even in the West, however, there is no agreed definition of any of these genres, and some scholars question whether multiplying categories of narrative is helpful at all, as opposed to working with a very general concept such as the traditional tale. Non-Western cultures apply classifications that are different both from the Western categories and from one another. If it is accepted that the category of traditional tale should be subdivided, one way of doing so is to regard the various subdivisions as comparable to bands of colour in a spectrum. Within this figurative spectrum, there will be similarities and analogies between myth and folktale or between myth and legend or between fairy tale and folktale. In the section that follows, it is assumed that useful distinctions can be drawn between different categories. It should, however, be remembered throughout that these classifications are far from rigid and that, in many cases, a given tale might be plausibly assigned to more than one category. Fables The word fable derives from the Latin word *fabula*, which originally meant about the same as the Greek *mythos*. Like *mythos*, it came to mean a fictitious or untrue story. Myths, in contrast, are not presented as fictitious or untrue. Fables, like some myths, feature personified animals or natural objects as characters. Unlike myths, however, fables almost always end with an explicit moral message, and this highlights the characteristic feature of fablesâ€”namely, that they are instructive tales that teach morals about human social behaviour. Myths, by contrast, tend to lack this directly didactic aspect, and the sacred narratives that they embody are often hard to translate into direct prescriptions for action in everyday human terms. Another difference between fables and myths relates to a feature of the narratives that they present. The context of a typical fable will be unspecific as to time and spaceâ€”e. Like myths, fairy tales present extraordinary beings and events. Folktales There is much disagreement among scholars as to how to define the folktale; consequently, there is disagreement about the relation between folktale and myth. The latter view is taken by the British Classicist Geoffrey S. Kirk, who in *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* uses the term *myth* to denote stories with an underlying purpose beyond that of simple story-telling and the term *folktale* to denote stories that reflect simple social situations and play on ordinary fears and desires. Examples of folktale motifs are encounters between ordinary, often humble, human beings and supernatural adversaries such as witches, giants, or ogres; contests to win a bride; and attempts to overcome a wicked stepmother or jealous sisters. But these typical folktale themes occur also in stories normally classified as myths, and there must always be a strong element of arbitrariness in assigning a motif to a particular category. A different and important aspect of the problem of defining a folktale relates to the historical origin of the concept. As with the notion of folklore, the notion of folktale has its roots in the late 18th century. This definition of folktale introduces a new criterion for distinguishing between myth and folktaleâ€”namely, what class of person tells the storyâ€”but it by no means removes all the problems of classification. Just as the distinction between folk and aristocracy cannot be transferred from medieval Europe to tribal Africa or Classical Greece without risk of distortion, so the importing of a distinction between myth and folktale on the later European model is extremely problematic. Sagas and epics The word *saga* is often used in a generalized and loose way to refer to any extended narrative

re-creation of historical events. A distinction is thus sometimes drawn between myths set in a semidivine world and sagas more realistic and more firmly grounded in a specific historical setting. This rather vague use of saga is best avoided, however, since the word can more usefully retain the precise connotation of its original context. If the word saga is restricted to this Icelandic context, at least one of the possible terminological confusions over words for traditional tales is avoided. While saga in its original sense is a narrative type confined to a particular time and place, epics are found worldwide. Examples can be found in the ancient world the Iliad and Odyssey of Homer, in medieval Europe the Nibelungenlied, and in modern times the Serbo-Croatian epic poetry recorded in the 19th century. Epic is similar to saga in that both narrative forms look back to an age of heroic endeavour, but it differs from saga in that epics are almost always composed in poetry with a few exceptions such as Kazak epic and the Turkish Book of Dede Korkut. The relation between epic and myth is not easy to pin down, but it is in general true that epics characteristically incorporate mythical events and persons. An example is the ancient Mesopotamian epic of Gilgamesh, which includes, among many mythical episodes, an account of the meeting between the hero Gilgamesh and Utnapishtim, the only human being to have attained immortality and sole survivor with his wife of the flood sent by the gods. Myth is thus a prime source of the material on which epic draws. Legends In common usage the word legend usually characterizes a traditional tale thought to have a historical basis, as in the legends of King Arthur or Robin Hood. In this view, a distinction may be drawn between myth which refers to the supernatural and the sacred and legend which is grounded in historical fact. Thus, some writers on the Iliad would distinguish between the legendary aspects of the epic. But the distinction between myth and legend must be used with care. As in other cases, it must be remembered that the boundaries between terms for traditional narratives are fluid, and that different writers employ them in quite different ways. Parables The term myth is not normally applied to narratives that have as their explicit purpose the illustration of a doctrine or standard of conduct. Instead, the term parable, or illustrative tale, is used. Familiar examples of such narratives are the parables of the New Testament. Parables have a considerable role also in Sufism Islamic mysticism, rabbinic Jewish biblical interpretive literature, Hasidism Jewish pietism, and Zen Buddhism. That parables are essentially non-mythological is clear because the point made by the parable is known or supposed to be known from another source. Parables have a more subservient function than myths. They may clarify something to an individual or a group but do not take on the revelatory character of myth. Etiologic tales Etiologic tales are very close to myth, and some scholars regard them as a particular type of myth rather than as a separate category. In modern usage the term etiology is used to refer to the description or assignment of causes Greek aitia. Accordingly, an etiologic tale explains the origin of a custom, state of affairs, or natural feature in the human or divine world. Many tales explain the origin of a particular rock or mountain. Others explain iconographic features, such as the Hindu narrative ascribing the blue neck of the god Shiva to a poison he drank in primordial times. The etiologic theme often seems to be added to a mythical narrative as an afterthought. In other words, the etiology is not the distinctive characteristic of myth. Approaches to the study of myth and mythology The importance of studying myth to provide a key to a human society is a matter of historical record. In the middle of the 19th century, for instance, a newly appointed British governor of New Zealand, Sir George Grey, was confronted by the problem of how to come to terms with the Maori, who were hostile to the British. He learned their language, but that proved insufficient for an understanding of the way in which they reasoned and argued. Other government officials and Christian missionaries of the 19th and 20th centuries made similar efforts to understand the mythologies of nations or tribes so as to facilitate communication. Such studies were more than a means to an end, whether efficient administration or conversion. They amounted to the discovery that myths present a model or charter for human behaviour and that the world of myth provides guidance for crucial elements in human existence—war and peace, life and death, truth and falsehood, good and evil. In addition to such practically motivated attempts to understand myth, theorists and scholars from many disciplines have interested themselves in the study of the subject. A close study of myth has developed in the West, especially since the 18th century. Much of its material has come from the study of the Greek and Roman classics, from which it has also derived some of its methods of interpretation. The growth of philosophy in ancient Greece furthered allegorical interpretations of myth. Such meanings were usually seen as involving natural

phenomena or human values. Related to this was a tendency toward rationalism, especially when those who studied myths employed false etymologies. Rationalism in this context connotes the scrutiny of myths in such a way as to make sense of the statements contained in them without taking literally their references to gods, monsters, or the supernatural. Of special and long-lasting influence in the history of the interpretation of myth was Euhemerism named after Euhemerus, a Greek writer who flourished about bce , according to which certain gods were originally great people venerated because of their benefactions to humankind. The early Church Fathers adopted an attitude of modified Euhemerism, according to which Classical mythology was to be explained in terms of mere men who had been raised to superhuman, demonic status because of their deeds. By this means, Christians were able to incorporate myths from the culturally authoritative pagan past into a Christian framework while defusing their religious significance—the gods became ordinary humans. The Middle Ages did not develop new theoretical perspectives on myth, nor, despite some elaborate works of historical and etymological erudition, did the Renaissance. In both periods, interpretations in terms of allegory and Euhemerism tended to predominate. In early 18th-century Italy, Giambattista Vico , a thinker now considered the forerunner of all writers on ethnology, or the study of culture in human societies, built on traditional scholarship—especially in law and philosophy—to make the first clear case for the role of the creative imagination of human beings in the formation of distinct myths at successive cultural stages. His work, which was most notably expressed in his *Scienza nuova* ; *The New Science of Giambattista Vico* , had no influence in his own century. Instead, the notion that pagan myths were distortions of the biblical revelation first expressed in the Renaissance continued to find favour. Bernhard Le Bovier de Fontenelle , a French scholar, compared Greek and American Indian myths and suggested that there was a universal human predisposition toward mythology. In his view, expressed in such works as *Comparative Mythology* , the mythology of the original Indo-European peoples had consisted of allegorical stories about the workings of nature, in particular such features as the sky, the sun, and the dawn. For instance, one Greek myth related the pursuit of the nymph Daphne by the god Phoebus Apollo. Scholarly interest in myth has continued into the 20th century. Many scholars have adopted a psychological approach because of interest aroused by the theories of Sigmund Freud. Subsequently, new approaches in sociology and anthropology have continued to encourage the study of myth. Allegorical An example of an allegorical interpretation would be that given by an ancient commentator for the *Iliad*, book 20, verse Referring to an episode in which the gods fight each other, the commentator cites critics who have explained the hostilities between the gods allegorically as an opposition between elements—dry against wet, hot against cold, light against heavy. Thus, the gods Apollo, Helios , and Hephaestus represent fire, and the god Poseidon and the river Scamander represent water. This approach tends to limit the meaning of a myth, whereas that meaning may in reality be multiple, operating on several levels. Romantic In the late 18th century artists and intellectuals came increasingly to emphasize the role of the emotions in human life and, correspondingly, to play down the importance of reason which had been regarded as supremely important by thinkers of the Enlightenment. Those involved in the new movement were known as Romantics. The Romantic movement had profound implications for the study of myth. Myths—both the stories from Greek and Roman antiquity and contemporary folktales—were regarded by the Romantics as repositories of experience far more vital and powerful than those obtainable from what was felt to be the artificial art and poetry of the aristocratic civilization of contemporary Europe. Ossian is the name of an Irish warrior-poet whose Gaelic songs were supposedly translated and presented to the world by James Macpherson in the s.

**Chapter 7 : mariamilani Ancient Rome**

*the importance and value of myth and mythology. New definitions for myth, sometimes used derisively, have sprung up in some corners of modern society.*

Theology and religious law[ edit ] Further information: Two major views of the relationship exist, namely New Covenant theology and Dual-covenant theology. In addition, although the order of the books in the Protestant Old Testament excluding the Biblical apocrypha and the Tanakh Hebrew Bible differ, the contents of the books are very similar. Antisemitism in the United States Promoting the concept of United States as a Judeo-Christian nation based upon Judeo-Christian ethics first became a political program in the s, in response to the growth of anti-Semitism in America. Jews played a small role in that but the rise of anti-semitism in the s led concerned Protestants, Catholics, and Jews to take steps to increase mutual understanding and lessen the high levels of anti-semitism in the United States. Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism During the late s, Evangelical proponents of the new Judeo-Christian approach lobbied Washington for diplomatic support of the new state of Israel. The Evangelicals have never wavered in their support for Israel. On the other hand, by the late s Mainline Protestant denominations and the National Council of Churches were showing more support for the Palestinians than for the Israelis. Moreover, for many Evangelicals Israel is seen as the instrument through which prophecies of the end times are fulfilled. In the s, "In the face of worldwide antisemitic efforts to stigmatize and destroy Judaism, influential Christians and Jews in America labored to uphold it, pushing Judaism from the margins of American religious life towards its very center. A postage stamp commemorated their heroism with the words: Cohen , in *The Myth of the Judeo-Christian Tradition*, questioned the theological validity of the Judeo-Christian concept and suggested that it was essentially an invention of American politics , while Jacob Neusner , in *Jews and Christians: The Myth of a Common Tradition*, writes, "The two faiths stand for different people talking about different things to different people. Feldman looking at the period before , chiefly in Europe, sees religious conflict as supersessionism: Once one recognizes that Christianity has historically engendered antisemitism, then this so-called tradition appears as dangerous Christian dogma at least from a Jewish perspective. For Christians, the concept of a Judeo-Christian tradition comfortably suggests that Judaism progresses into Christianityâ€”that Judaism is somehow completed in Christianity. The concept of a Judeo-Christian tradition flows from the Christian theology of supersession, whereby the Christian covenant or Testament with God supersedes the Jewish one. Christianity, according to this belief, reforms and replaces Judaism. The belief therefore implies, first, that Judaism needs reformation and replacement, and second, that modern Judaism remains merely as a "relic". Most importantly the belief of the Judeo-Christian tradition insidiously obscures the real and significant differences between Judaism and Christianity. Abrahamic religions Advocates of the term "Abrahamic religion" since the second half of the 20th century have proposed a hyper- ecumenicism that emphasizes not only Judeo-Christian commonalities but that would include Islam as well the rationale for the term "Abrahamic" being that while only Christianity and Judaism give the Hebrew Bible Old Testament the status of scripture , Islam does also trace its origins to the figure of Abraham as the "first Muslim". Advocates of this umbrella term consider it the "exploration of something positive" in the sense of a "spiritual bond" between Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

**Chapter 8 : Why 'Judeo-Christian values' are a dog-whistle myth peddled by the far right**

*These arts and traditions are important means to preserve and transmit a culture's customs and values, to contribute to the cohesiveness and solidarity of society— as well as to critique the status quo and stimulate change.*

The Muse Of Mythology the importance and value of myth and mythology New definitions for myth, sometimes used derisively, have sprung up in some corners of modern society. For example, by differing reckonings, a myth is: Any invented story, idea, or concept. An imaginary or fictitious thing or person. A story, theme, object, or character regarded as embodying an aspect of a culture, as a movie star who became a myth. An unproved or false collective belief that is used to justify a social institution. For example, one "myth" that fits this definition is the Nazi myth of Aryan superiority. In spite of the negative perceptions people tend to have about myth, many of the same people who scoff at myth in some situations admire it in others. They read comic books, see films about superheroes, or follow science fiction stories on television. There must be something about myth that continues to intrigue and attract. Their stories may even appear a bit silly to modern eyes. For some reason, in our culture, something that is not true tends to be discounted. Where myth is concerned, this view is summed up in the statement, Myth is myth. Yet, the truth is that myth is truth, truth as modern today as it was long ago. Where mythology is concerned, myth is not mythical in the pejorative sense; nothing could be further from the truth. Our apparent cultural need to see, hear, or read a story as literal truth may account for recent television specials that attempt to rationalize the super-fantastic science that is the basis for movies like Star Trek, Star Wars, Superman, and Spiderman, various comic books, and other contemporary fictional stories. For some reason, fantasy epics like these, which at the core are myths in their own right, are adored by their vast audiences even though they are as separated from actual science as ancient mythic stories are separated from actual science. These modern audiences seem to be unable to accept myth unless it is presented in a patently factual manner. The admiring public responds to these blockbusters without realizing that they are just as much mythical epics as the trials of Hercules or the adventures of Jason and the Argonauts. There is nothing old fashioned about myths; they are as alive as ever, exerting as much impact on society and the individual as in past millennia. New myths are spawned continually, and there is every indication that myths will continue to alter the course of human events as long as mankind inhabits this planet. Yet much that is worthwhile can be learned from unearthing answers to the knotty and profound questions it raises. Exert a strange, wonderful, and inexplicable power over the affairs of men, a power that compels, motivates, and directs? Seem to perform a vital, essential function in individuals, societies, cultures, religions, philosophies, and nations? How can a myth: Be taken as literal truth by its adherents even when it contains irrational or implausible elements? How and why does myth: Project an aura of mystery and awe? Stimulate strong emotions, excite, and draw in the believer rather than promote calm, detachment, or indifference? How and why does man make myth: Does myth serve a vital purpose or is it an incidental or casual phenomenon? Is mythmaking fundamental to human nature? Why are mythmaking processes active in all individuals, societies, cultures, and nations? Does the mythic process function the same way in everyone, everywhere? Is myth active in the psyche at both a conscious and an unconscious level? How does the mind produce myth and what is the source of the mythical experience? Is there a "myth center" in the brain? Is the capacity for making or experiencing a myth genetically conveyed between the generations? Is it fundamental to human nature or is it culturally induced? What is the historicity of a myth and how can we unlock its historical messages? When and under what conditions should we take a myth to be serious history? How do myths differ from kinds of stories that resemble them, such as fairy tales, legends, and fables? Specific mythical stories differ from one culture to the next or one nation to the next, yet all myths seem to share common elements. Oddly, many specific myths, mythic characters, and mythic themes closely resemble each other even when they arise in cultures apparently isolated from each another by expanses of geography or time: Can we identify elements common to all or most myths? Can we discern patterns in these elements? Can we identify specific elements in specific myths that are different from each other or that are the same? Can we discern patterns in these differences and similarities? Can we find reasons that might explain how these

anomalies came to be? What is being discovered and what are the prospects for future developments?

**Chapter 9 : Culture, Religion, & Myth: Interdisciplinary Approaches**

*DEFINING MYTH* From the Greek *mythos*, *myth* means *story* or *calendar*. *delascience.com* *ogy* is the study of myth. As stories (or narratives), myths articulate how characters undergo or enact an ordered sequence of events.

It consists mainly of a body of diverse stories and legends about a variety of gods. Greek mythology had become fully developed by about the 8th century BC. Greek mythology has several distinguishing characteristics. The Greek gods resembled humans in form and showed human feelings. Unlike ancient religions such as Hinduism or Judaism, Greek mythology did not involve special revelations or spiritual teachings. It also varied widely in practice and belief, with no formal structure, such as a church government, and no written code, such as a sacred book. On Olympus, the gods formed a society that ranked them in terms of authority and powers. Zeus was the head of the gods, and the spiritual father of gods and people. His wife, Hera, was the queen of heaven and the guardian of marriage. Other gods associated with heaven were Hephaestus, god of fire and metalworkers; Athena, goddess of wisdom and war; and Apollo, god of light, poetry, and music. Artemis, goddess of wildlife and the moon; Ares, god of war; and Aphrodite, goddess of love, were other gods of heaven. They were joined by Hestia, goddess of the hearth; and Hermes, messenger of the gods and ruler of science and invention. Poseidon was the ruler of the sea who, with his wife Amphitrite, led a group of less important sea gods, such as the Nereids and Tritons. Demeter, the goddess of agriculture, was associated with the earth. Hades, an important god but not generally considered an Olympian, ruled the underworld, where he lived with his wife, Persephone. The underworld was a dark and mournful place located at the center of the earth. It was populated by the souls of people who had died. Dionysus, god of wine and pleasure, was among the most popular gods. The Greeks devoted many festivals to this earthly god, and in some regions he became as important as Zeus. He often was accompanied by a host of fanciful gods, including satyrs, centaurs, and nymphs. Satyrs were creatures with the legs of a goat and the upper body of a monkey or human. Centaurs had the head and torso of a man and the body of a horse. The beautiful and charming nymphs haunted woods and forests. The Greeks believed that their gods, who were immortal, controlled all aspects of nature. So the Greeks acknowledged that their lives were completely dependent on the good will of the gods. In general, the relations between people and gods were considered friendly. But the gods delivered severe punishment to mortals who showed unacceptable behavior, such as indulgent pride, extreme ambition, or even excessive prosperity. The mythology was interwoven with every aspect of Greek life. Each city devoted itself to a particular god or group of gods, for whom the citizens often built temples of worship. They regularly honored the gods in festivals, which high officials supervised. At festivals and other official gatherings, poets recited or sang great legends and stories. Many Greeks learned about the gods through the words of poets. Greeks also learned about the gods by word of mouth at home, where worship was common. Different parts of the home were dedicated to certain gods, and people offered prayers to those gods at regular times. An altar of Zeus, for example, might be placed in the courtyard, while Hestia was ritually honored at the hearth. Although the Greeks had no official church organization, they universally honored certain holy places. Delphi, for example, was a holy site dedicated to Apollo. A temple built at Delphi contained an oracle, or prophet, whom brave travelers questioned about the future. A group of priests represented each of the holy sites. These priests, who also might be community officials, interpreted the words of the gods but did not possess any special knowledge or power. In addition to prayers, the Greeks often offered sacrifices to the gods, usually of a domestic animal such as a goat. These people believed that all natural objects had spirits, and that certain objects, or fetishes, had special magical powers. Over time, these beliefs developed into a set of legends involving natural objects, animals, and gods with a human form. Some of these legends survived as part of classical Greek mythology. The ancient Greeks themselves offered some explanations for the development of their mythology. In *Sacred History*, Euhemerus, a mythographer from the 3rd century BC, recorded the widespread belief that myths were distortions of history and the gods were heroes who had been glorified over time. The philosopher Prodicus of Ceos taught during the 5th century BC that the gods were personifications of natural phenomena, such as the sun, moon, winds, and water. Herodotus, a Greek historian who lived during the 5th century BC,

believed that many Greek rituals were inherited from the Egyptians. As Greek civilization developed, particularly during the Hellenistic period, which began about BC, the mythology also changed. New philosophies and the influence of neighboring civilizations caused a gradual modification of Greek beliefs. However, the essential characteristics of the Greek gods and their legends remain unchanged.