

Myths anf folklore essay



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Introduction Myths are not lies. Nor are they detached stories. They are imaginative patterns, networks of powerful symbols that suggest particular ways of interpreting the world.

They shape its meaning. For instance, machine imagery, which began to pervade the people's thought in the seventeenth century, is still potent today. People still often tend to see themselves, and the living things around us, as pieces of clockwork: items of a kind that they themselves could make, and might decide to remake if it suits them better, hence the confident language of genetic engineering and 'the building-blocks of life' (Midgley, 2003). Some stories reflect the cosmos and our particular way of seeing it and understanding its mysteries. These can be classified as mythology.

Mythology deals with such persistently compelling matters as origins—the beginnings of the world or of a particular people and they are populated with deities and heroes who more often than not have supernatural powers.

Myths, in this sense, are religious stories, and they are at the very least metaphorically and psychically true (Leeming & Page, 1999). Perhaps the greatest example of the freebooting mythologization of science or technology and a nearly exclusively American phenomenon is the plethora of UFO sightings that began in the late 1940s and has led recently to tales of alien abduction and, tragically, the death of thirty-nine members of the Heaven's Gate cult in 1997. Here, the cult members were inspired by a charismatic leader who was certain that salvation was on its way in the form of a spaceship hidden behind the rapidly approaching Hale-Bopp comet. The members committed suicide in a peaceful and orderly manner to free their true selves and ascend to the Level above Human, to reach heaven via the

spaceship (Leeming ; Page, 1999). From the very beginning of the UFO phenomenon, largely inaugurated by the alleged crash of a flying saucer near Roswell, New Mexico, a half century ago, the alien visitors have been imbued by many believers with religious significance. They are seen as messengers from a higher plane, be they evil or good. The assumption that such creatures have been actually found and then covered up by agencies of the government only adds to the tingling excitement of the story, particularly at a time in American political life when the government is seen, through some eyes, as something of a monster itself, conspiring against the people it is supposed to serve (Leeming ; Page, 1999) this new version of myth making, the oral tradition from which most myths have developed since time immemorial has been replaced by the even more rapid and certainly more far-reaching capacity of electronic messaging.

Communities of interest may now be in instant touch with themselves, regardless of geography. And from these virtual communities, one can assume that new mythologies and new legends will arise and add to the already diverse realm of American myth (Leeming ; Page, 1999). Myths, folklore and legends are the different methods used by ancient people to explain certain events in nature. The ancient people pass the myths, legends and folklore to their younger generation and this process lead to myths preserving itself even after millions of years.

Due to the advances in science and human thinking, people were able to disprove the legend/myths/folklore. The paper will provide myths demystified through advances in science. Demystification The truth of myths is irrelevant; what is important is that they are perceived to be true and that people are

motivated or controlled by them. Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics*, doubted the details of the Olympic myths but felt that some truth had been perceived, that the divine pervades the whole of nature. In his *Reflections on Violence*, George Sorel dismissed as unimportant the validity of myths; instead he believed that they played a powerful role in motivating and sustaining movements: the Christian myth of the struggle with Satan, the Marxist myth of catastrophic revolution, Greek glory, the myth of the Napoleonic soldier of immortal deeds, and, of utmost concern to him, the anarcho-syndicalist myth of the General Strike (Greenbaum, 2000).

What was important was that without a myth accepted by masses, one may go on talking of revolts indefinitely, without ever provoking any revolutionary movement. Of even greater moment historically, a ruling class is secure as long as the myths that justify its rule are pervasive. If someone controls the minds of the ruled, minimal force is necessary to continue to control their bodies. When these myths lose their hold the rulers have lost the mandate of heaven (Greenbaum, 2000). Myths are necessarily transmitted by language.

So, too, archetypes are necessarily transmitted by manifestations. One might define an archetypal myth as what a story would be like if no one told it; but people cannot hear such a story. Moreover, the details lend the myths their verisimilitude. The myth, the core of meaning, survives to some extent even without language; the myth can be re-created again and again, re-inflated like a collapsible balloon. The Trojan horse and the myth of Eden survive as myths, free-floating without words; the non-mythological classic, by contrast, survives only in language, despite the sustaining nature of the ancient core of truth that it embodies (Rabkin ; Slusser 1999. For even a

myth needs some linguistic detail, some spark of originality, to ignite it; it must eventually be re-inflated and if the language that attempts to do so is inadequate and unexciting, the myth will not come to life again. Every society seems to need its myths those fables and allegories that distill the essence of a people and what they were all about during a given age. For example, back when the English colonies were perched on the edge of what seemed then a limitless, dark forest, there abounded myths that extolled the virtues of farms and towns and treated the evil wilderness harshly (Rabkin ; Slusser, 1989).

So there were legends such as that of Paul Bunyan, whose axe could take out ten trees in a backstroke. Nowadays there is an abundance of civilization. It is wilderness that is rare, and mythic figures of sad-eyed bears in forest-ranger hats remind children from an early age what they must learn to cherish and preserve before it is lost forever. Myths are potent things. And they jealously guard their territory, as if they were living entities themselves (Rabkin ; Slusser, 1989).

Myths are a powerful thing that has created followers of billions of people. It is most of the time abused by some people who want to control and have power over the people. Demystifying myths is a vital task because it can create chaos in the society and it can cost rebellion from the believers of that myth/legend/folklore.

There are some myths though that were demystified and it did not cause any problems. Demystified myth of no gravity in spaceCosmological myths make the culture's ideas of the origin and structure of the universe generally

intelligible and broadly accessible. Some of these myths were interpreted quite literally and anthropomorphically, while others were understood to be only analogies that could make the incomprehensible more familiar.

Mythology tends to reflect what is known or important to the culture in which it arose. The myths of agricultural societies typically revolve around the imagery of the seasons, of planting and harvesting, while the myths of hunting and gathering peoples often involve animals which take on human characteristics (Hawley & Holcomb, 1998). Most myths included a central role for humans.

In the absence of any scientific basis for the strong anthropic principle, people again enter the realm of mythology. It is sometimes argued that even though the people do not have any basis for the strong anthropic principle, the fact that they are here, and the apparent specialness of the universe, must be telling them something. The weakness in this position is that people have no grounds for concluding that this universe is really so special. People have but one example; they have no way of knowing what might be possible, or what the alternatives might mean (Hawley & Holcomb, 1998). People may think of the phenomenon of weightlessness as some sort of antigravity effect, but what it really represents is a good inertial frame.

When in orbit, the space shuttle is falling around the Earth in a state of free fall. The shuttle, the astronauts, their equipment, and the target satellite, are all falling together. As was demonstrated by Galileo, all objects, regardless of their mass, fall at the same rate in a gravitational field. When a body is freely falling it is weightless, and hence in the state of free fall it feels as though gravity has been cancelled. This simple idea will be developed into one of

the fundamental principles of the general theory of relativity. Like the special theory, the general theory is derived from only a few simple, powerful postulates, and this principle is called the equivalence principle. An orbit is a state of perpetual free fall around another body (Hawley & Holcomb, 1998). No power is required to maintain it, provided that no energy is lost due to some deceleration, such as friction from the tenuous outer edge of the planet's atmosphere.

The Moon orbits the Earth because it is accelerated toward the Earth, in accordance with Newton's law, but since the Earth is curved and finite and the Moon has some tangential motion, the Moon never approaches the Earth's surface. Thus the Moon is constantly falling (Hawley ; Holcomb, 1998). In an orbiting, freely falling frame, the inertial forces such as centrifugal force exactly cancel the gravitational force. This explains why the astronauts aboard the Shuttle are weightless while in orbit; it is not due to any lack of gravity in space.

Gravity is cancelled by free fall (Hawley ; Holcomb, 1998). There are different myths that were disproven by science. One myth is that there is no gravity in space. In actuality the state of weightlessness in a shuttle in space is explained by the scientific concept of centrifugal force canceling the gravitational force.

Without these concepts man would not have found out the reason behind the weightlessness in space. Man would have always believed that the law of gravity does not apply in space. Demystified myth of Animals being able to predict natural disasters In conceptualizing and defining disaster, some

researchers prefer static rather than dynamic approaches and thus consider a disaster as a discrete happening. The defining and declaring of a disaster area-which represents a rather complicated research issue that requires both an analytical and a system approach-is at the same time a very practical problem. This directly stems from the needs of the legal and executive branches of local, regional or federal public administrative bodies who undertake activities targeted toward setting up the boundaries and status of the disaster area; that is, the territories suffering from natural or technological disasters (Quarantelli, 1998).

The issues of evacuation, sheltering, the providing of medical and nutritional services, the providing of pensions or loss compensation, and the state of the environment are defined in locational terms, and serve as the focus of those officials responsible for making decisions (Quarantelli, 1998). As far as the natural environment is concerned, in contrast to communities, it is practically always jeopardized by the potential impact of physical agents both on inhabited or uninhabited territories (Quarantelli, 1998). Any disaster or emergency should be considered as ecological because others simply do not exist.

If anyone wants to discuss the sources or risks coming from the natural environment, rather than the objects involved or the impacts produced on them, and to stress that the destructive agents or disaster in its traditional meaning come from the ambiance, then it is quite logical and far preferable and clearer to use the well-known term of natural disaster rather than misleading categories of ecological disaster and/or ecological emergency areas (Quarantelli, 1998). Many species have senses that we do not have at

all. A science fiction novel once tried to give some impression of what such a new sense would be like.

The sense was called rault and it greatly expanded perception of the universe, analogous to giving a blind person sight. Some strange animal senses are as follows. Bats emit high-pitched whistles and use the echoes to locate objects. The dolphin has a sonar sense that works much the same way. Some species have electro-detection senses.

Sharks can pick up the weak electric fields animals give off when they move muscles. The duck-billed platypus has a similar electrical sense, which it uses to find underground prey (Howard, 1991). Rays can detect lines of flux in a magnetic field, using them to determine the size and location of various objects. Pigeons, robins and possibly whales use variations in the Earth's magnetic field as cues to navigation. Some scientists speculate that the occasional mass strandings of whales occur in places where there are anomalies in the Earth's magnetic field, which play havoc with their sense. What all this means is that many animals live in a sensory world fundamentally different from ours. They sense quite different things (Howard, 1991). Natural disasters come unexpectedly but sometimes animals are observed to know of any impending natural disaster.

Animals have a distinct kind of sense but science has proven that they do not have a sixth sense that helps them predict natural disasters. Usually animals make use of their strong sense in knowing whether natural disasters are coming. The keen sense of hearing, smell and sharp hearing help the animals know that disaster is coming. Demystified myth of lightning never

strikes the same place twice. Certain animals such as cats, dogs, mules, and horses were said to attract lightning. Holding specific objects like the Bible, candles, bells, and salt would either prevent a lightning strike or make it subside. In the house, featherbeds were believed to offer a sure refuge, while occupants were warned to stay away from windows, mirrors, and chimneys.

People were expected to remain absolutely quiet during thunder because it was thought that talking could be interpreted as ridiculing the loud booming noises in the sky and provoke a punishing lightning bolt upon the violator.

For some people the experience of hearing the sounds of thunder can be frightening. Witnessing a lightning storm can cause fears that can last a lifetime. Some demonstrate their fears in unusual ways (Resnick, 2000).

They cover their eyes and ears, cry, pray out loud, scream, want to be held, or even hide in closets until the storm abates. Children are especially fearful of these kinds of electrical storms.

Animals tend to behave in very odd and unpredictable ways during periods of lightning and thunder. Lightning can be very dangerous. It occurs with all thunderstorms (Resnick, 2000). The typical thunderstorm is fifteen miles in diameter and lasts an average of thirty minutes. Lightning strikes 400 people per year in the United States and on average takes ninety-three lives nationwide. It is reported to be the most severe killer from a weather cause. In a thirty-four-year period in the United States, lightning killed about 7,000 people, 55 percent more than deaths due to tornadoes over the same period. It has been estimated that lightning strikes the ground 100-125 times per minute on a global basis.

The current of a lightning discharge averages around 30,000 amperes. One-tenth of an ampere can kill a human. The temperature inside a lightning channel reaches 50,000 to 60,000 degrees F, several times the heat of the sun's surface. Contrary to popular belief lightning can strike in the same place many times. Tall buildings, such as the Empire State Building in New York, are particularly vulnerable. There lightning has struck as many as twelve times in twenty minutes and as often as 500 times a year. That is why observation decks of skyscrapers are closed to visitors during lightning strike periods (Resnick, 2000). It is not unusual for people on beaches, in swimming pools, on fishing piers, or in small boats, to be ordered to get out or away from the water.

An open beach umbrella is hardly safe. Lightning often strikes a conductor of electricity, such as water or metal. Metal roof sheds invite tragedy for those that enter them for shelter unless they have a lightning rod placed high on the building (Resnick, 2000). The rod, acting as a conductor, is grounded at the lower end and diverts lightning from the structure. People are advised to refrain from using the telephone during lightning because telephone lines can carry the electrical charge right to a person holding the receiver, resulting in death by lightning within a home (Resnick, 2000).

Lightning is one of the most dangerous elements in nature. It has brought about varying levels of casualties once it strikes. There was a belief that lightning would never strike at the same place, this was disputed after experiments were made. Lightning favors high rise buildings and it can hit more than 10 times. This disproves the myth that lightning doesn't hit twice at the same place. Demystified myth of a falling cat will always land on its

Nature's process is that mechanism Darwin uncovered, evolution by natural selection.

Human technology springs from what is variously called invention, discovery, development, or planning. A little confusingly, the word evolution has recently been associated with human technological progress. Sometimes that implies a kind of selective process, but most often it just alludes to incremental change, with things building one upon another (Vogel, 1998).

Some major group of animals has reconciled support and growth. We Vertebrates have a skeletal system that can grow and remodel itself continuously. By contrast with mollusk shell and arthropod cuticle, bone is a living tissue, a complex and unusual accomplishment of fishes, frogs, birds, and people. A growing skeleton may be the greatest vertebrate innovation, the central item in our success as moderate-size to large creature (Vogel, 1998). Animals make use their inborn talent or evolution of a previous talent to survive in its environment. Cats, camels, and crocodiles use four legs, but analogy with tables isn't appropriate.

For one thing, jointed legs are naturally adjustable in length. More important, a quadruped with one leg lifted forms a nicely stable tripod. Watch a cat slowly stalking; it keeps a leg off the ground for long periods. But four legs may be too few for easiest walking since only one can be lifted at a time without losing stability (Vogel, 1998).

Two of these four schemes, gravitational and elastic energy storage, find wide application in nature, probably more than in human technology. Just about every way that animals move around walking, running, jumping,

flying, swimming uses one or the other. Three of nature's peculiar disabilities cry out for short-term energy storage (Vogel, 1998). One is her lack of wheels and consequent reliance on reciprocating or pulsating devices like legs and wings. A second is muscle's inability to re expand itself and the resulting need for some easy way to undo its contraction; an opposing muscle is bulky and expensive. The third is that muscle contraction isn't instantaneous, and chemical explosives aren't part of nature's ordinary armamentarium, yet motion with high initial acceleration has obvious advantages: Predators from alligators to cats get their food by springing forward (Vogel, 1998). Through slow accumulation and sudden release, energy storage permits pulses of extreme power output. Elastic storage must be more common than gravitational storage simply because the latter works only for terrestrial organisms of significant weight and the bulk of the earth's creatures are aquatic or tiny or both.

No absolute choice, though, need be made; a single animal may use both (Vogel, 1998). The cat known for its unique reflexes is considered to have survived falls from high places. People have believed that falling cat will always land on its feet. With the use of scientific experiments it was proven that when cats are dropped upside down from a height of one foot or less they will definitely not land on their feet. This shows that cats don't really have the capability to land on their feet uninjured; the circumstance of the fall plays a big factor on how the cat will land. It also disproves a notion that cats have nine lives because they still survive after a fall from a high place, the cat just had the right positioning for its fall thus it landed on a safe

stance. Conclusion Myths, folklore and legends are the different methods used by ancient people to explain certain events in nature.

The ancient people pass the myths, legends and folklore to their younger generation and this process leads to myths preserving themselves even after millions of years. Due to the advances in science and human thinking, people were able to disprove the legend/myths/folklore. Demystifying myths is a vital task because it can create chaos in the society. There are some myths though that were demystified and it did not cause any problems. There are different myths that were disproven by science. One myth is that there is no gravity in space. In actuality the state of weightlessness in a shuttle in space is explained by the scientific concept of centrifugal force canceling the gravitational force. Another myth disproven is that animals don't have the sixth sense to predict incoming disasters.

Animals have a distinct kind of sense but science has proven that they do not have a sixth sense that helps them predict natural disasters. Usually animals make use of their strong sense in knowing whether natural disasters are coming. Moreover a belief is that lightning would not strike twice at the same place. There was a belief that lightning would never strike at the same place. This was disputed after experiments were made and after observations were made.

Lastly a myth that people believe includes the notion that cats always land on their feet. People have believed that a falling cat will always land on its feet. With the use of scientific experiments it was proven that when cats are dropped upside down from a height of one foot or less they will definitely not

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