

I. ANCIENT RITUALS: Four Functions

Viewing mythology through the practice of rituals provides a clearer lens as to the application of a community's cultures and ideas in everyday life. As opposed to Myths, which are stories that account the history and beliefs of a particular society, rituals serve as the habitual expression of those beliefs and ideas. A ritual is defined as 'a [habitual] form for a ceremony or a system of ceremonies' practiced by group of people, which often offer some form of symbolism. Mythologies and rituals go hand in hand, some rituals find their foundation and meaning in a certain myth and vice versa. The creation of rituals is an essential part in defining the culture and practices within our community. The establishment of rituals helps reinforce the story behind a certain myth and unifies the people who participate in it.

Although rituals remain abundant in today's society, they have also been practiced for generations throughout human history. The idea of Rituals can be categorized by, religious rituals: involving sacrifices, festivals, and church events such as Easter & fasting; second, status rituals which recognize time, birthdays, death, and milestones such as initiations [graduations] . A good example for a religious ritual, is the practice of Communion. Communion reflects the events of the last supper, allowing people of the church to remember and honor Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. The ritual of Communion uses symbolism through bread and wine to represent the body and blood of Christ as his sacrifice to humanity. This allows the church to be seen as a place of habitual reassurance, and gives tangible expression to a mythological story. Going to church on weekends for Communion, and other religious rituals serve as a reminder of a community's beliefs and origins. Just as the ancient story of Jesus Christ serves as

the foundation for many religions worldwide, Catholicism established this ritual centuries ago creating a meaningful and symbolic practice.

Status rituals are important in marking the stages of life, establishing change within communities. Death is an inevitable stage of life, making it one of the most important status rituals. Death rituals are abundant and have been practiced throughout human history. These practices have varied through time and place, and will continue to do so until the end of humanity. Because many religions believe in an afterlife, funerals tend to serve as a place of reassurance for the loved ones of the deceased. People gather in unity to say goodbye, pray, remember and pay respect to the body while reassuring religious beliefs about continuance of life. Funerals and burials help people deal with internal emotions involving loss and help reflect on the impermanence of their own lives. According to mythologist and professor Joseph Campbell, myths can be further interpreted through their four functions: Mystical, Cosmological, Sociological, Psychological. The cosmological function of mythology is the focus when dealing with rituals within communities. Cosmology allows a culture to give physical shape to its mystical ideas in the form of stories and rituals, such as Communion and funerals.

II. Creation + Destruction Myths: Similarities

Creation myths and cosmic myths are essential to mythological studies. They serve as the foundation of worldwide cultures which give purpose and meaning to many people's lives. Creation stories usually explain an order and chaos relationship. Specifically, they are rooted in the study of cosmology, defined as 'the study of the order of the universe as a whole.' or cosmic myths. These stories include a circle of life

aspect, focusing on how the world and humanity came to be as well as their downfall. A common popular example is the Bible, whose books begin with the creation story of Genesis and end with the destruction depicted in Revelations. Many different cultures throughout history have believed their own versions of creation, allowing for the study of similarities between creation myths.

One great example of a creation and destruction myth is the Hindu concept of the Trimurti which speaks of three gods: Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer. The three represent the origins of a cycle of birth, life & death. Brahma is known as the creator and the first of the Trimurti, he is seen as the least important of the three as his job is considered mostly complete once he creates the universe. According to Hindu creation stories, Brahma originated with the help of Vishnu, the second of the trio. Vishnu is known as the life, preservation and sustenance god. He is depicted laying upon a large snake in an ocean with Brahma sitting on a lotus flower sprouting from his navel. Brahma is encouraged by Vishnu to create life, he then splits the lotus flower he rests on into three parts, one becomes the heavens, the second the sky and the last being earth. Seeing as though Brahma's role was fulfilled with the creation of life and animals on earth, Vishnu who maintains and preserves the universe, is more important and valued greater of the two in Indian culture. The third pantheon, often considered the most important of the three: Shiva the destroyer rules death & rebirth. Shiva is also associated with yoga, sexual power & immortality. Shiva is depicted with multiple arms, balancing on a dwarf and holding various items which symbolize Shiva's power. The structure of this story tells us that, as opposed to Christian and biblical beliefs, Hindu creation studies a polytheistic view.

The trio of gods can be analyzed in comparison to Norse mythological beliefs and stories from German cultures. Common characteristics of the Nordic creation stories involve the creation of three brothers destined to destroy a family of giants to create the world. We immediately see a duality of order vs. chaos at hand, and a recurring 'trio' theme between the cosmic myths from different cultures.

Borr and his wife Bestla: who gave birth to three sons, Odin, Vili, and Ve. Despite originating from giants who came before them, the three brothers despised the fact that they were outnumbered by the giants. The godlike brothers succeeded in attacking the giants while sleeping, they used the giant's body to create life and the world, his flesh became Earth, his bones became mountains, his blood the seas and lakes and his skull, the skies. The brothers created the sun and moon, then a fertile garden called Midgard. On Midgard the brothers found fallen trees, Odin gave the the logs spirit and life, Ve gave them movement & intelligence, and Vili gave them shape, emotions, and senses: creating the the first two humans Ask (man) and Embla (woman). This is similar to Hindu creation as to the separation of the lotus flower and the separation of work between the three entities. They both offer a sense of death in order to attain birth, which is common throughout the study of cosmology and cosmic myths.

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