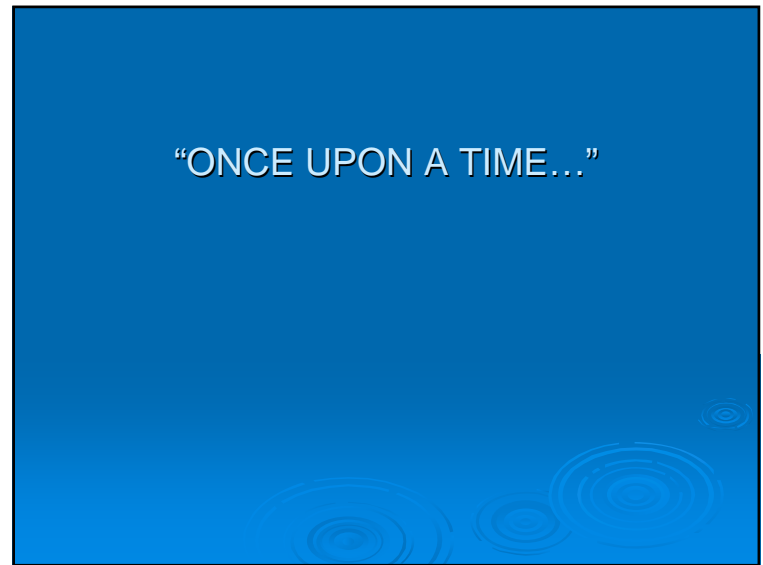
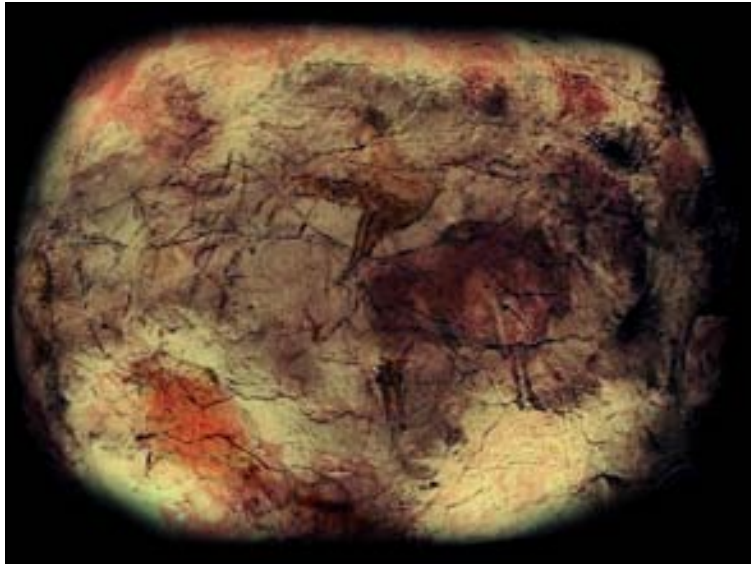


DEEP ROOTS:  
MYTHOLOGY AND US





## “Once Upon a Time...”

- Nearly everybody loves a good story.
- Our sense of self—our notion of who we are, from whence we came, and whither we are going—is defined by the tales we tell.
- Here’s the story: life is a dream.
- It is all a story we’re telling ourselves. Things are dreams, just dreams, when they are not in front of our eyes. What is in front of your eyes now, what you can reach out and touch, now, will become a dream.

## Joseph Campbell

- Almost any good story will enchant and can teach us something, but only certain beguiling visions, stories with the power to shape and control our lives, can inspire and far too often destroy us.
- Such potent timeless tales, he would insist, are the only ones that can be called “myths.”
- By extension, mythology is, for Campbell, the study of all stories imbued with this puissance.



## Need for Definitions

- Given the nature of this course it will be useful to examine the definitions of mythology, myth, religion, folktales, legends, fables, fairy tales and, eventually, paganism.
- What is the source of these stories and beliefs?
- What do they suggest and what might they mean?

## Mythology

- From Wikipedia: The term *mythology* can refer to either the study of myths or a body of myths. For example, comparative mythology is the study of connections between myths from different cultures, whereas Greek mythology is the body of myths from ancient Greece.
- The term “myth” is often used colloquially to refer to a false story; however, the academic use of the term generally does not pass judgment on its truth or falsity.

## Mythology: continued

- Wikipedia continued: In the study of folklore, a myth is a symbolic narrative explaining how the world and humankind came into their present form. Other concepts: In a very broad sense, the work can refer to any traditional story.
- Webster's:
  - 1. an allegorical narrative
  - 2a. a body of myths, as the myths dealing with the gods, demigods and legendary heroes of a particular people
  - 4. a popular belief or assumption that has grown up around someone or something

## Myth: Several meanings

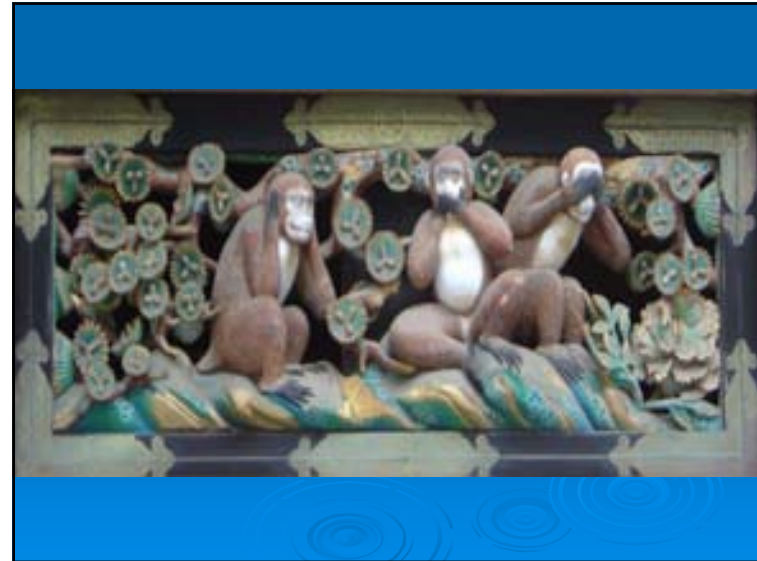
- A traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon
  - A person or thing having only an imaginary or unverifiable existence
  - A metaphor for the spiritual potentiality in the human being.
- Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*





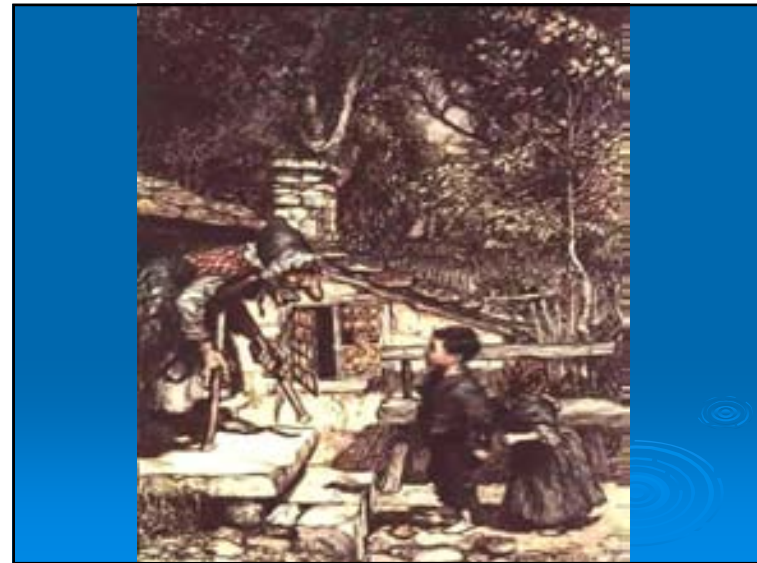
# Folklore

- Webster's: 1: traditional customs, tales, sayings, dances or art forms preserved among a people. 3: an often unsupported notion, story, or saying that is widely circulated.
- Folktale: A characteristically anonymous, timeless and placeless tale circulated orally among a people. Wikipedia: ...they are not considered true or sacred events by the societies that tell them.
- The telling of stories appears to be a cultural universal, common to basic and complex societies alike. Even the forms folktales take are certainly similar from culture to culture.
- Too-too-moo and the Giant, a tale of Indonesia. Parallels with "The Inch Boy" Japan, African children rescued from the belly of an elephant or giant caterpillar, and in Western culture, Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother taken from the stomach of the wolf.
- Brer Rabbit, Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, Hansel and Gretel, for example.
- Wikipedia indicates folklore can be divided into four areas of interest:: artifact (such as voodoo dolls), oral tradition, culture and behavior (rituals). **Folklore can contain mythic or religious elements; it equally concerns itself with the sometimes mundane traditions of everyday life.**



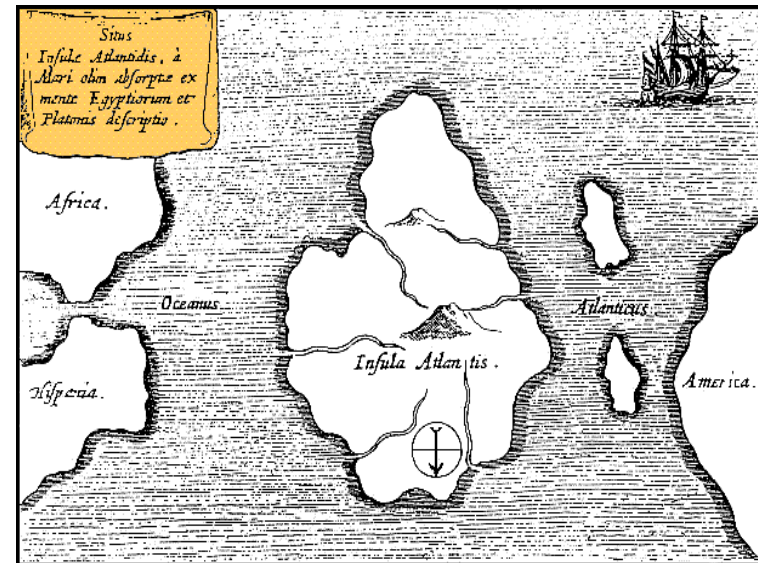
# Hansel and Gretel

- Folktales may or may not emerge from a mythological or religious tradition, but be a figurative narrative and speak to deep psychological issues.
- The purpose of the relatively recent Germanic *Hansel and Gretel* may primarily be one of mundane instruction regarding forest safety, or secondarily, a cautionary tale about the dangers of famine to large families, but its latent meaning may evoke a strong emotional response due to widely understood themes and motifs such as a terrible mother, death, etc.
- **So there can be a moral and psychological scope to a folktale, as well as entertainment value, depending on the nature of the teller, the style of the telling, the ages of the audience members and the overall context of the performance.**



## Legends

- Wikipedia: Like myths, legends (Latin, *legenda*, “things to read”) are stories that are traditionally considered true; however, they are set in a more recent time, when the world was much as it is “today.” Also, legends generally feature humans as their main characters, whereas myths generally focus on superhuman characters. The Brothers Grimm defined legend as folktale historically grounded.
- Webster’s indicates **1a. a story...esp. one regarded as historical but not verifiable** c. a popular myth of recent origin d. a person or thing that inspires legends.

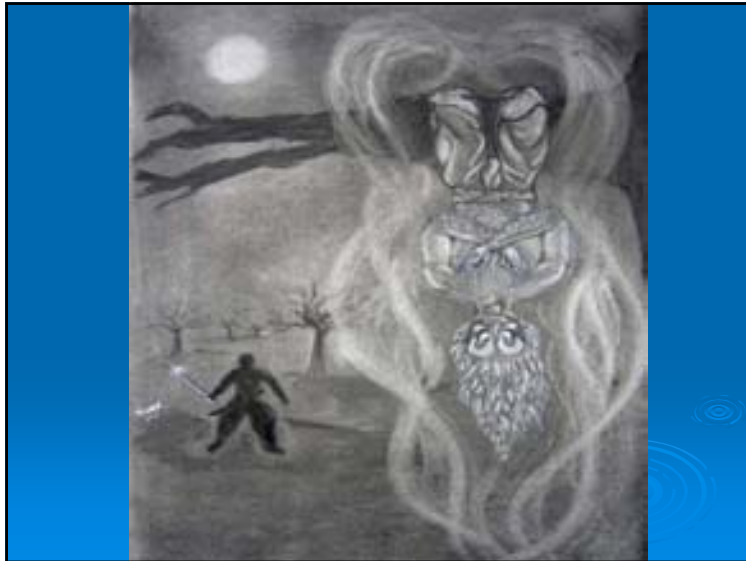


## Legends 2

- In oral traditions, **storytellers learned their stock in trade generally from older storytellers.** Legends apply structures that reveal a moral definition to events, providing meaning that lifts them above the repetitions and constraints of average human lives and giving them a universality that makes them worth repeating through many generations.
- Wikipedia examples of famous legends includes *Beowulf*, *Fountain of Youth*, *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*, *Robin Hood*, *Shangri-La* and *William Tell*. Once a legend is retold as fiction its authentic legendary qualities begin to fade and recede. *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* is a case in point.

## Fables

- Fable (Latin derived from “*fari*” (“to speak”) with the “*ula*” suffix that signifies “little,” a **little story**. Wikipedia: a succinct story in prose or verse that features animals, mythical creatures, plants, inanimate objects, or forces of nature which are anthropomorphized (given human qualities), and that **illustrates a “moral” lesson**, which may at the end be expressed explicitly in a pithy maxim. For example, *Aesop’s Fables*, James Thurber and Dr. Seuss. Hundreds of fables were composed in ancient India during the first millennium BC. From the Middle East came *The Thousand and One Nights*, also known as the *Arabian Nights*. More modern examples include *Bambi*, and in adult satire, George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* with reference to Stalinist communism in particular and totalitarianism in general.
- An example is “*Twenty five tales of Baital*,” a collection of tales and legends within a frame story from India. The legendary King Vikram, identified as Vikramaditya (c. 1<sup>st</sup> century BC), promises a *vamachara* (a tantric sorcerer) that he will capture a *vetala* (or *Baital*), a vampire spirit who hangs from a tree and inhabits and animates dead bodies. Not an easy task, since each story ends with a riddle; the cycle of catching and the release of the vampire continues twenty-four times.
- In a pejorative sense, a “fable” may be a deliberately invented or falsified account of an event or circumstances.



## Fairy Tales

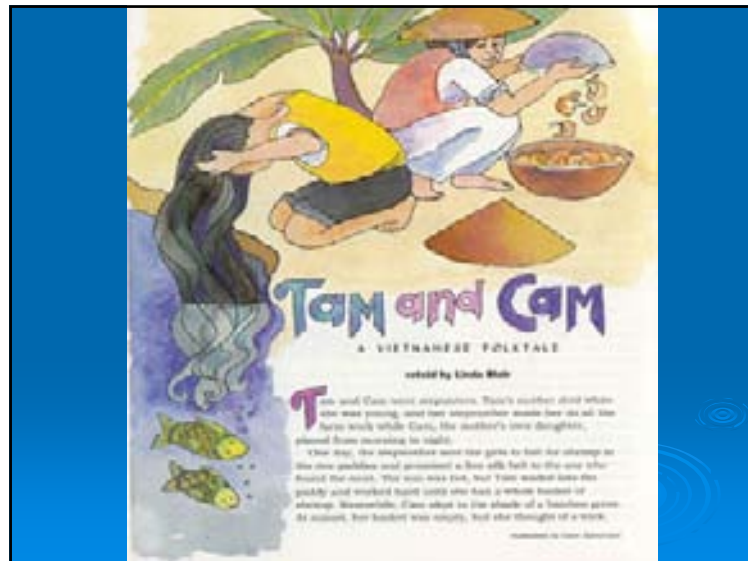
- The fairy tale, told orally, is a subclass of the folktale.
- Short narratives (as for children) involving **fantastic forces and beings** as fairies, goblins, elves, trolls, giants or gnomes, and usually magic enchantments. Often the story will involve a far-fetched sequence of events designed to mislead. Sometimes they are blessed with unusual happiness, as in a fairy tale romance. Only a few of the stories involve fairies.
- Colloquially a "fairy tale" can also mean a far-fetched story or tall tale. Unlike legends, they do not contain more than superficial references to actual places, people and events. They take place "**once upon a time**."
- **Fairy tales are found in oral and literary form but evidence of literary works indicates they have existed for thousands of years and in multiple cultures around the world.** Earlier fairy tales were intended for an audience of adults as well as children.

## Fairy Tales 2

- Thompson, *The Folktale*, 1977: "...In this never-never land, humble heroes kill adversaries, succeed to kingdoms and marry princesses." The characters and motifs of fairy tales are simple and archetypal: princesses and goose girls; youngest sons and gallant princes; ogres, giants, dragons and trolls; wicked stepmothers and false heroes; fairy godmothers and other magical helpers; often talking horses, or foxes, or birds; glass mountains; and prohibitions and breaking of prohibitions.
- Literary fairy tales show considerable reworking from the oral form. Older forms include *Panchatantra* (India animal tales in verse, 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE), *Pentamerone* (Italian), *Brothers Grimm*, *The Tale of Two Brothers* (Egypt c. 1300 BC) and many others. Fairy tales abound in Western cultures across Europe and around the world, including China, Japan, Africa, Australia and the Americas.

## Fairy Tales 3

- Fairy tales tend to take on the color of their location, through the choice of motifs, the style in which they are told, the depiction of character and local color. They can spring from common human experience and therefore can appear separately in many different origins.
- For example, *Cinderella*, the classical persecuted heroine whose attributes are unrecognized, or one who unexpectedly achieves recognition or success after a period of obscurity and neglect, represents a common identifying feature of fairy tales around the world. Some such tales are *The Wonderful Birch* (Russian), *Aschenputtel* (German), *Katie Woodencloak* (Norwegian), *The Story of Tam and Cam* (Vietnamese), *Ye Xian* (Chinese), *Cap O' Rushes* (English), *Catskin* (English), *Brown and Trembling* (Celtic), *Finette Cendron* (French), *Allerleirauh* (German) and *Tattercoats* (English).



## Mythology and Religion

- A look at mythology, religion, logos and mythos from a secular perspective.

## Mythology

- Karen Armstrong: *A Short History of Myth*.
- Neanderthal graves containing weapons, tools and the bones of a sacrificed animal suggest they had some kind of belief in a future world similar to their own.
- **Humans are meaning, sensing creatures.** They have invented stories that enabled us to place our lives in a larger setting.
- The human mind has the **ability to have ideas and experiences** that we cannot explain rationally.
- **Imagination** produces mythology and religion, to invent new technology and to live more intensively in this world.





## Mythology Continued, drawing upon Karen Armstrong

- Neanderthal graves tell us important things about myth. Myths are nearly always rooted in the **experience of death** and the fear of extinction.
- Burial was accompanied by sacrifice. Mythology is usually inseparable from ritual.
- Myth is about **the unknown**. The most powerful myths force us to go beyond the limits of human experience.
- Myth is not a story told for its own sake. It shows us how we should behave.
- **A belief in the invisible but more powerful reality, sometimes called the world of the gods**, is a basic theme.

## Logos

- **Reason**: in ancient Greek philosophy is the controlling principle in the universe.
- The "word of truth," **logical, pragmatic and scientific**.
- It is essentially practical and **rational**. It allows us to invent new technology and define mathematics; one plus one equals two.
- First fish like fossil found in China in 1999 at Cheng-Jiang likely 500 million years old.
- Neolithic Age was 10,000 to 3,500 BCE. Earliest evidence of agriculture 10,000 BCE was wheat in the Zagros mountains of Turkey and Iraq, and in Mexico, squash.
- Writing emerged in 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE, and the spoked wheel chariot 2000 BCE in Russia and Kazakhstan.
- Logos mentioned in Heraclitus 535-475 BCE. In Western philosophy, it is the source and **fundamental order** of the cosmos.
- Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, developed around 1990(?).

## Mythos

- From the Greek, meaning story, saying or legend.
- Willis: Usually originates in ancient oral tradition. **Symbolizes human experience and embodies the spiritual values of a culture.**



## FIVE MINUTE QUIZ

Please note your answers

- Where did we come from?
- Who am I?
- What must I do in order to survive?
- What must I do to be good?
- How do I live my life under any circumstances?
- Where are we going?
- What happens when I die?
- Is mythology an inferior mode of thought?

## Observations Regarding Myths

- Today the word "myth" can mean something that simply is not true given our "logos" view of history. However, even history is often mainly a myth, dependent on who writes history and what facts have survived actual events.
- Armstrong argues that in the ancient world a myth was an event which had happened once, but which also happened all the time.
- Mythology should awaken us to rapture or inspiration, even in the face of death and despair. If a myth ceases to do that it has died and outlived its usefulness.

## Observations continued:

- A myth is true because it is effective, not because it gives us factual information.
- If it works...it is a valid myth.
- There is never a single orthodox version of a myth. As our circumstances change we need to tell our stories differently.
- The myth of my tribe or clan may not be the same as that of your tribe.

## Religion

- There are many interpretations of what defines a religion, but not one that can be said to be most accurate. Religion is derived from the Latin *religio*, the ultimate origins of which are obscure. One possibility is *le-ligare* connecting *lego* "read," i.e., *re* "again" + *lego* in the sense of "choose," "go over again" or "consider carefully."
- Modern scholars, including Joseph Campbell, favor the derivation from *ligare* "bind, connect" with *re* or "to reconnect."
- Wikipedia: Religion is the belief in and worship of a god or gods, or any such system of belief and worship, usually involving devotional and ritual observances and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs.

## Religion 2

- Wikipedia: Aspects of religion include narrative, symbolism, beliefs and practices that are supposed to give meaning to the practitioner's experiences in life....
- It may focus on specific supernatural, metaphysical and moral claims about reality (the cosmos and human nature) which may yield a set of religious laws and ethics and a particular lifestyle.
- Religion also encompasses ancestral or cultural traditions, writings, history and mythology, as well as personal faith and religious experience.
- The term "religion" refers both to the personal practices related to communal faith and to group rituals and communication stemming from shared conviction.

## Religion 3

- Wikipedia: Religion is often described as a communal system for the coherence of belief focusing on a system of thought, unseen being, person or object, that is considered to be supernatural, sacred, divine or the highest truth.
- Moral codes, practices, values, institutions, tradition, rituals and scriptures are often traditionally associated with the core belief; these may have some overlap with concepts in secular philosophy.

## Leahy: Origins Reconsidered 5

- Mythology and religion have been a part of human history, and even in this age of science, probably will remain so.
- Quoting Campbell: "The elements of mythology, through space and time, confirm "the unity of the race of man, not only in biology but also in its spiritual history."
- Perhaps the single most important behavioral adaptation of *Homo sapiens* is the passage from generation to generation of the elements of culture, the folk knowledge of the means of survival. Part of that cultural passage is the profoundly felt urge to understand the world.
- It is interesting enough that every human society has felt the need to generate a body of myth, an explanation of how the society came to be and its place in the world.

## Leahy: Origins Reconsidered 5 Continued

- Commenting on the many commonalities between different mythologies, Leahy quotes Campbell:
  - "The comparative study of the mythologies of the world compels us to view cultural history of mankind as a unit."
  - "We find that such themes as the fire-theft, deluge, land of the dead, virgin birth and resurrected hero have a worldwide distribution—appearing everywhere in new combinations while remaining, like the elements of a kaleidoscope, only a few and always the same."
- The way people arrived at answers about their world followed much the same path individuals take in coming to understanding one another.
- In all mythologies that we know, and by extrapolation in mythologies long extinct, many of the elements, such as animals and physical forces, are endowed with humanlike emotions and motives.
- The mind that evolved subjective consciousness as a tool with which to understand the complexities of social chess used the same formula to understand the complexities of the rest of the world.

## Leahy: Origins Reconsidered 5 Continued 2

- To the earliest members of *Homo sapiens* and to societies through much of human history, life was played out in full interaction with other powers in the world.
  - The migratory herd had to be treated with respect; otherwise it would refuse to return next season.
  - Appropriate gifts had to be made to the sun; otherwise it would become angry and would not rise.
  - The spring had to be constantly blessed; otherwise it would choose to flow elsewhere.
- Explanation, then, was what people sought, not as demonstrated fact but as authorized story, the basis of myth.

## Leahy and others 6

- Animals figure large in many societies' mythologies. They were anthropomorphized in terms of their "intentions" and often took on special roles in people's interaction with "spirit worlds," sometimes representing sources of power. Frequently animal images are distorted, becoming part human and part beast, an expression of the ambiguity of life, an illusion of human, animal and spirit worlds.
- The ultimate expression of this anthropomorphism is the creation of gods. Following psychologists Gordon Gallup and Jack Maser, "Because of our capacity to use personal experience as a means of understanding the experience of others and because of the well studied phenomenon of generalization, humans create god(s) in their own image and not vice versa. ...In another reversal of a familiar idea, we would say that it was awareness of self that should be construed as a high level abstraction; god(s) then follow as a rather concrete extension of self."
- Leahy concludes the chapter on Consciousness: Mirror of the Mind by noting, "Great science, great art, and great compassion—each is the product of consciousness. And great arrogance."

## Joseph Campbell's Perspective

- ...From Campbell's unprejudiced perspective, no hagiology (sacred writings) is the divine revelation of inconvertible Truth, for all are, in actuality, fabulous human constructs, wondrous tales of "once upon a time," marvelous myths.
- From the point of view of any orthodoxy, myth might be defined simply as "other people's religion."
- Like dreams, myths are productions of human imagination. Their images, consequently, though derived from the material world and its supposed history, are like dreams, revelations of the deepest hopes, desires and fears, potentialities and conflicts of the human will.
- ...The task of the modern human being; to realize that all the gods and demons are within; to understand that heaven, hell and all other such realms are not places somewhere "out there" to which you go when you die, but psychological states within us all; to comprehend, in short, that all mythological images are all aspects of your own immediate experience.

## Religion and Mythology

- Wikipedia, selected comments: ...Generally, mythology is considered one component or aspect of religion. Religion is the broader term: besides mythological aspects, it includes aspects of ritual, morality, theology and mystical experience....Disconnected from its religious system, a myth may lose its immediate relevance to the community and evolve—away from sacred importance—into a legend or a folktale.
- Other views: The relationship between religion and myth depends on which definition of "myth" one uses.
- By poet, translator and novelist Robert Graves's definition, a religion's traditional stories are "myths" if and only if one does not belong to the religion in question.
- By Barnard College professor Alan Segal's definition, all religious stories are myths—but simply because nearly all stories are myths. By the folklorists' definition, all myths are religious (or "sacred") stories, but not all religious stories are myths, i.e., Genesis as myth, but hagiographies of famous saints are not myths.



## Religion and Mythology

### Additional comments

- The myths of many religions, both ancient and modern, share common elements.
  - Many religions involve an initial Paradise preceding ordinary historical time.
  - Many religions involve the story of a god who undergoes death and resurrection.
  - The mythical geography of many religions involves an *axis mundi*, or Cosmic Center.
  - Many myths feature a global flood.
- Scholars argue that myth was an essential foundation of religion, i.e., Mircea Eliade, Romanian historian of religion, fiction writer, philosopher, and professor at the University of Chicago.
- Most religions contain a body of traditional sacred stories that are believed to express profound truth. Some argue these are not only sacred and "true," but also historically accurate and divinely revealed, so calling them a "myth" is disrespectful. Other religious organizations have no problem with categorizing their sacred stories as myths.
- C. S. Lewis; British novelist, academic, medievalist, literary critic, essayist, lay theologian and Christian apologist; freely called the "Christ story" a true myth, historically and spiritually true. Catholic priest, sociologist, journalist and best selling author Father Andrew Greeley states with respect to the myth terminology, "The Christian would be well advised to get over his fear of the word and appreciate how important a tool it can be for understanding the content of his faith." *Myths of Religion*.
- Neo-pagans frequently refer to their sacred stories as "myths."



## Neolithic Age or Revolution

### Roughly 10,000 BCE to 3500 BCE

- The transition from hunting and gathering communities and bands to agricultural settlement started independently in at least seven or eight sites around the world. The earliest known forms of domestication of plants and animals took place in the Middle East around 10,000 BC or earlier.
- Agricultural production of plants and animals useful to humans, including 15 crops that account for 80% of the food, emerged. Raising crops, breeding and managing livestock and preparing and preserving plant and animal products gradually changed mankind.
- With the start of human civilization as we now think of it, settled societies slowly emerged along with systems of government, religion, social class, labor and record keeping.
- Small and mobile groups of **hunter-gathers** transformed into **sedentary societies** based on built-up villages and towns increasingly geared to **specialized food-crop cultivation** (e.g., irrigation and food storage technology) that allowed surplus food production. These developments over thousands of years provided the basis for concentrated high population densities and settlements, specialized and complex labor diversification, trading economies, the development of non-portable art, architecture and culture, centralized administrations and political structures, hierarchical ideologies and depersonalized systems of knowledge (e.g., property regimes and writing).
- The first full-blown manifestation of the entire Neolithic complex is seen in the Middle East Sumerian cities (c. 3500 BC), whose emergence also inaugurates the end of the prehistoric Neolithic period.



## Agricultural Revolutions

- The shift from nomadic life to settled communities was influenced by the species of plants and animals available and by local cultures. In some parts of the world, such as the Arctic regions, hunting still dominates since plant-based agriculture is not a viable option. A simplified list of agricultural revolutions follows:
  - Middle East 6000–500 BCE with active areas up to 10,000 BCE. Wheat (later barley), peas, and lentils. Domestication of sheep, goats, cattle.
  - Egypt 3000–30 BCE
  - China 1766 BCE forward but starting around 8000 BCE. Rice, millet, gourds. Domestication of goats, sheep, cattle, chickens and pigs.
  - Mesoamerica 1200 BCE forward, corn, beans and squash, 8000 forward Peru chili beans, potatoes and peppers and by 4500 BCE domestication of alpacas and llamas.
  - Native Americans 2500 BCE sunflowers, sump weed and goosefoot.
  - Greece 800 BCE–150 AD
  - Rome 500 BCE–455 AD
  - India 320 BCE forward
  - Asia 8000–7000 BCE forward widespread, some earlier
  - Melanesia 8000 BCE possible starting date
  - Sub-Saharan Africa 2500 BCE forward
  - Africa Ethiopian highlands coffee, shale sorghum and pearl millet
  - West Africa: African rice, yams and oil palm
  - Horse domesticated many old world sites 6000 BCE forward



## Neolithic Revolutions 2

- Animal domestication was an important part of the change to agriculture. To bring animals into settlements or control production factors such as size, temperament, diet, mating patterns and life span were important in domesticating animals.
- Milk producers, cows and goats were valuable. The use of animals for plowing or towing as well as for a food source or as a source of leather, wool, hides and fertilizer were also important. Animals were also useful as a portable source of food for periods of shortage.
- The Neolithic Revolutions likely came about due to hunger, shortages of wild game and population growth that may have resulted in periods of famine and starvation. There is good evidence that average height and longevity declined with the shift to farming and herding. It took until the 20<sup>th</sup> century for average human height to come back to the pre-Neolithic Revolution levels.
- However, food surpluses made possible a denser population and the development of a social elite who were not otherwise engaged in agriculture, industry or commerce, but dominated their communities by other means and monopolized decision-making.





## Shaman

- Shaman: Evenki (Tungusic language of Siberia) 1. a priest or priestess who uses magic for the purpose of curing the sick, divining the hidden and controlling events.
- Shamanism: a religion practiced by indigenous peoples of far northern Europe and Siberia that is characterized by belief in an unseen world of gods, demons and ancestral spirits responsible only to shamans; also, any similar religions.
- The Evenki people currently number about 30,000. The name means "he who runs swifter than a reindeer." Evenki is the largest of the group of Tungusic languages and is spoken by Evenks in Russia, Mongolia, and the People's Republic of China. The language is generally considered endangered.





## Guru

- Guru: 2a. a teacher and especially intellectual guide in matters of fundamental concern b. one who is an acknowledged leader or chief proponent c. a person of knowledge or expertise: expert.
- Also, definition 1. a personal religious teacher and spiritual guide in Hinduism.
- As an adjective, heavy, venerable 3a. calling forth respect through age, character and attainments; broadly, conveying an impression of aged goodness and benevolence b. impressive by reason of age.
- In Sanskrit gu means darkness and ru means light. As a principle for the development of consciousness, it leads the creation from unreality to reality, from darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge.
- Widely used in modern terminology as "teacher."



## Other Terms

- Elder: 1. one living in an earlier period 2. one who is older 3. one having authority by virtue of age and experience. Note: The term is frequently used in describing shamans and other Neolithic leaders but did not appear to be a common archaic term.
- Sage: a mentor in spiritual and philosophical topics who is renowned for profound wisdom.
- Sheikh: is a word or honorific term in the Arabic language that literally means "elder." It is commonly used to designate an elder of a tribe, a revered wise man or an Islamic scholar. Although the title generally refers to a male, a very small number of female sheikhs have also existed in history.
- Chief: noun 2. the head of a body of persons or organization 3. the principal or most valuable part. From Wikipedia, a tribal chief or king is the leader of a tribal society or chiefdom. Tribal societies with social stratification under a single (or dual) leader emerged in the Neolithic period from earlier tribal structures with little stratification. They remain prevalent throughout the Iron Age after the Neolithic period that ends around 3500 BCE or later.







## Neolithic Period: The Mythology of Farmers

- Armstrong indicates that with the switch to agriculture, farming became sacramental. The earth seemed to sustain all creatures—plants, animals, humans—as a living womb. Rituals were designed less this power exhaust itself. So the first seeds were “thrown away” as offerings, the first fruits of the harvest were left unpicked, as a way of recycling sacred energies. There was evidence that in South America, parts of Africa, the Pacific Islands and Dravidian (southern) India human beings were offered in sacrifice.
- You could not expect something for nothing.
- Gods, human beings, animals and plants all shared the same nature and invigorate and replenish one another.
- Human sexuality was a divine force that fructified the earth. The soil was female, the seeds divine semen and rain the congress of heaven and earth. It was common for men and women to engage in ritual sex when they planted their crops.
- Some of the early creation myths in Europe and North America imagined the first humans emerging from the earth like plants; like seeds their lives began in the underworld.

## Mythology, Religion, Paganism

- The shamans, gurus, elders, sages, chiefs and sheiks with hunter-gather societies and with agricultural societies had the important role of guiding tribes and communities. Their knowledge of the patterns of the seasons, the nature and habits of animals, the growing, harvest and storage of crops aided in the success and welfare of the tribe. The practicality of predicting the seasons, knowing the habits of game and how to successfully produce food and survive was essential to the communities.
- Successful advice, and the invention of appropriate rituals and practices to guarantee desirable outcomes were rewarded with special benefits and powers. Bad outcomes had to be explained via a lack of effort or not performing rituals. Explanations and stories had to be offered regarding the needs to appease or gain the favor of unknown powers, gods, demons and other supernatural beings evolved.
- The ability of pass along knowledge and guarantee performance in the future was critical to the survival of the tribe and to the welfare of the shamans. Unsuccessful rituals and stories that were not relevant were discarded or modified as conditions warranted.
- Over years, centuries and generations the oral histories of the tribe evolved and became the mythologies, spiritual or religious practices, and what we might consider ‘paganism’ today.
- All this “Once Upon a Time.”