

## MYTHS AS DEPICTIONS OF HISTORICAL EVENTS

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**Annotation.** *In this article, myths and their period of development, their place in the development of humanity, mythological schools, and examples given in the works of scientists. In addition, examples of myths that arose based on the views of ancient people and information about mythologists are given. The relationship of the Greek mythology, the formation of mythological schools, and the opinions of mythologic scientists about myths are presented.*

**Key words:** *Myth , monomyth, holy story, the Trojan War ,Greek mythology, Zeus, sacred history, Olympian gods.*

**Аннотация.** *В данной статье мифы и период их развития, их место в развитии человечества, мифологические школы и примеры приведены в трудах ученых. Кроме того, приведены примеры мифов, возникших на основе взглядов древних людей и сведений о мифологах. Представлены взаимосвязь мифологии греков, формирование мифологических школ, мнения ученых-мифологов о мифах.*

**Ключевые слова:** *Миф, мономиф, святая история, Троянская война, Греческая мифология, Зевс, сакральная история, олимпийские боги.*

Some myths are based on historical events. These myths can over time become imbued with symbolic meaning, transformed, shifted in time or place, or even reversed. Over time, such "myths" make the transition from "legendary occurrence" to "mythical status," as the event takes on progressively greater symbolic resonance while the facts become less important. By the time it reaches the status of myth, the story has taken on a life of its own and the facts of the original event have become almost irrelevant. A classical example of this process is the Trojan War, an historical event that is now a part of Greek mythology.

This method or technique of interpreting myths as accounts of actual events, euhemerist exegesis, dates from antiquity and can be traced back (from Spencer) to Evhémère's *Histoire sacrée* (300 B.C.E.) which describes the inhabitants of the island of Panchaia, Everything-Good, in the Indian Ocean as normal people deified by popular naivety. As Roland Barthes affirms, "Myth is a word chosen by history. It could not come from the nature of things."

This process occurs in part because the events described become detached from their original context and new context is substituted, often through analogy with current or recent events. Some Greek myths originated in Classical times to provide explanations for inexplicable features of local cult practices, to account for the local epithet of one of the Olympian gods, to interpret depictions of half-remembered figures, events, or to account for the deities' attributes or entheogens, the origins of which have become arcane with the passing of time.

Contra Barthes, Mâche argues that, "myth therefore seems to choose history, rather than be chosen by it", "beyond words and stories, myth seems more like a psychic content from which words,

gestures, and musics radiate. History only chooses for it more or less becoming clothes. And these contents surge forth all the more vigorously from the nature of things when reason tries to repress them. Whatever the roles and commentaries with which such and such a socio-historic movement decks out the mythic image, the latter lives a largely autonomous life which continually fascinates humanity. To denounce archaism only makes sense as a function of a 'progressive' ideology, which itself begins to show a certain archaism and an obvious naivety."<sup>1</sup>

Catastrophists such as Immanuel Velikovsky believe that myths are derived from the oral histories of ancient cultures that witnessed "cosmic catastrophes." The catastrophic interpretation of myth forms only a small minority within the field of mythology and often qualifies as pseudohistory. Similarly, in their book *Hamlet's Mill*, Giorgio De Santillana and Hertha Von Dechend suggest that myth is a "technical language" describing "cosmic events."<sup>2</sup>

The ancient Greeks were great storytellers. They were also deeply religious. They believed their gods and goddesses and monsters really existed. They believed these magical beings could interfere in their lives, for good and for bad. The ancient Greeks built temples to honor their gods. Each temple honored only one god. So there were many, many temples in ancient Greece. They also told stories about their gods. These stories are called myths (short for mythology, or stories about gods.) Some myths were so good that they have been told over and over, and still are told today. Some are new myths about the ancient Greek mystical world. The thing about myths is that the gods' adventures might change, but the characters remained consistent. It was a real world, at least it was to the ancient Greek people, a world full of bickering and fights and wars and compromise and fear and fun and punishment. Many myths were based on the fact.

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.

The classic examples of the monomyth relied upon by Campbell and other scholars include the Buddha, Moses, and Christ stories, although Campbell cites many other classic myths from many cultures which also rely upon this basic structure.

The truths inherent in myths thus are not reducible to their historical veracity; rather, like imaginative literature, myths present abstract, often archetypal insights into human experience. In modern usage, *myth* is often used pejoratively to dismiss a belief or opinion as false or unsupported by any evidence. Nevertheless, myths may tap into dimensions of human experience, often religious, that science cannot access.

Since the term myth is widely used to imply that a story is not objectively true, the identification of a narrative as a myth can be highly controversial: many adherents of religions view their own religion's stories as true, and therefore object to those stories being characterized as myths, while seeing the stories of other religions as being myth. As such, some scholars label all religious narratives as myths for practical reasons, such as to avoid depreciating any one tradition because cultures

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<sup>1</sup> Giorgio De Santillana & Hertha Von Dechend. *Hamlet's Mill: An Essay Investigating the Origins of Human Knowledge And Its Transmission Through Myth*. 1990. 222.

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interpret each other differently relative to one another. Other scholars avoid using the term "myth" altogether and instead utilize different terms like "sacred history", "holy story", or simply "history" to avoid placing pejorative overtones on any sacred narrative

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