The Myth and Mythology of Modernity

"The steep path of self development is...as mournful and gloomy as the path to Hell"

Carl Jung [1]

"How well we know what a profitable superstition this fable of Christ has been for us."

Pope Leo X (1513-1521) [2]

The modern age has been characterized as the transition from age-old traditions of the "Dark Ages" to the "Age of Enlightenment". The 17th century was a period when rationality challenged traditional modes of thought. Descartes championed philosophy, Newton explored physics, and Kepler revised cosmology.

"Once the 'new philosophers' (notably, Galileo, Bacon, and Descartes) had brought to light and clarified the conditions for intellectual progress in science, ideas of nature became progressively more rational and realistic " [3]

In his book *Cosmopolis, The Hidden Agenda of Modernity,* Stephen Toulmin challenges the optimistic rationality of modernity in contrast with the upheavals in religious theologies However, Toulmin failed to acknowledge the influence of the "Mystery Schools". These schools of alternative mythologies were at one time the same schools that coexisted with Christianity in the early years of the church. Roman Christianity left a legacy that clouded the influence of all other earlier mythologies Numerous mythologies eventually became a part of the "officially authorized" Roman

version of Christian mythology.

The modern age saw the erosion of the Roman version of Christianity. The Roman church endured numerous splits within the mythology of Christianity The 16th and 17th centuries saw the advent of the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther became disenchanted with the monastic virtues of Christianity and developed the concept of a calling, a fulfillment of worldly duties as the will of God. [4] According to Weber in his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* Protestantism evolved into 4 distinct forms during the 17th century, Calvinism, Pietism, Methodism, and the Baptist movement. However none of the reformations during the modern age attempted to challenge the foundations of Christian mythology.

The erosion of Christianity can be traced back to a period coinciding with the crusades. Europeans were introduced to heretical Christian philosophies that the Roman Church had long since outlawed in order to promote an official state religion. The Church responded to the threat of heretical philosophies by instituting the Inquisition The Inquisition was started by the church in 1233. The church was threatened by philosophies that re introduced the concept of reincarnation and the belief that individuals could come to a personal relationship with the divine. These philosophies threatened the supreme jurisdiction of the church, which held the exclusive dominion over divine rights. For several decades the church murdered and terrorized Europeans who practiced a form of Christianity known as Bogomilism and Catharism. The beliefs were similar to those of Gnosticism, Origenism and Arianism The unorthodox Christians did not worship the cross or believe in the resurrection.They believed that they shared a divine nature

with Jesus The Cathars did not follow the authority of the Vatican. This challenged sovereign authority or the divine right of Kings, a right that had been delegated by the Pope as God's personal representative on Earth

The Protestant Reformation did not challenge the basic tenets of Christian Dogma but instead sought to redefine the purpose of man in an age of enlightenment. The reformation did cause a period of religious wars but each faith sought to justify a political or economic reformation. The contradictions of rational thought and church dogma caused many notable figures to engage in secret societies. These secret societies were extensions of the original mystery schools that can trace their beginnings back to ancient Egypt. The teachings of the mystery schools and occultism were very much a part of the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment. It could be argued that the fascination with these alternative mythologies was not as much a part of an acceptance of new ideas as much as these mythologies caused the promotion of new ideas.

Many of history's greatest figures have been associated with secret teachings. A Catholic theologian, John Eck, (1486-1543) argued against persistent rumors which alleged that a secret had been confided to both Leonardo di Vinci and Michelangelo by the Borgia Popes and later the de Medici Pope Leo. Pope Leo X was a pleasure loving self-confessed homosexual and one of his partners was Michelangelo. [6] The Medici court was a haven for many of the era's prominent occultists Pope Alexander VI was a member of the Borgia family and decorated his private apartment in the Vatican with

murals of the Egyptian goddess, Isis.[7] Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) traveled throughout Europe preaching an occultism based on the teachings of the Hermetica. Hermeticism was a religion that can be traced back to ancient Egypt. Bruno traveled to England in 1583, and was widely received among Elizabethan society. Bruno was later hunted down by the Vatican and burned at the stake in 1600. Sir Isaac Newton was also influenced by the teachings of the mystery schools. Several of Newton's books were alchemical treatises. He also reconstructed the floor plan of the ancient temple of Solomon, which was devoted to Astarte or Isis. [8]

Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626), was one of the most prolific figures in the history of the modern age. He is known as the father of modern science, remodeler of modern law, patron of modern democracy, and possibly the reviver of Freemasonry. [9] Sir Francis Bacon founded the secret Rosicross Literary Society and the Lodge of Free and Accepted or Speculative Mason's in 1580. Bacon was appointed as Solicitor General and Chief Advisor to the Crown in 1607. It was King James who instructed Bacon to re-edit the Catholic version of the Bible into the edition now known as "The King James Bible". [10]

Sir Francis Bacon was heavily involved in the "Mystery Schools". Initiates are dedicated to the worship of the virgin Goddess, Athena. Athena was the Goddess of wisdom also known as Astarte. Ishtar, and Isis Athena is usually depicted with a spear and a serpent and is known as "the Spear-shaker". Freemasons ritually shake spears during their rituals. It has been argued that Bacon was the actual author of Shakespear's plays writing under this pseudonym.

Virgin worship or Goddess worship can be traced back to a time when culture was matrilineal. The dawn of culture was a period when man began to evolve and develop self awareness. Ernst Cassirer has shown that at different stages of mythological consciousness the first thing to be discovered is subjective reality, the formation of ego and individuality. [11]

The question about the origin of the world is at the same time the question about the origin of man. It is the question that every human faces upon the threshold of self consciousness, the moment when the ego seeks to know, "where did I come from?" [12] Mythology is the product of the collective unconscious. Primitive mythology answered the question of the origin by the use of the symbol of the circle representing the womb The cosmic womb transcends the body and forms the archetype of the Primordial Mother. Rousseau romanticized the natural state of the savage but failed to realize that this was a psychic rather than a historic condition The symbol of the circle and the serpent is known as the uroboros, the symbol has been represented in most primitive cultures as a serpent devouring its own tail. In China it is represented as the Tai Chi, the yin/yang.

In his book, *The White Goddess* [13], Robert Graves explored the role of the Goddess and cultural development In matriarchal European cultures there were no male gods to challenge the power of the Goddess, but she had a lover that was the serpent of wisdom or her son who was associated with the evening star who every year in the cosmos was devoured by the moon The love of the Moon Goddess destroyed the Star child. From his ashes was born another serpent which at Easter laid a red egg that was devoured by the Goddess to be reborn once

more. Osiris was a Star-son who, after his death. looped himself around the world in the shape of a serpent. He was renewed as Horus, the son of Isis, who had been his destroyer. lover, and mother. Each year the totem of a bird or animal of each society was offered to the Goddess.

The second stage of development according to Graves, occurred when the the institution of fatherhood appeared. This was called the Olympian stage. Mythology changed The star child was castrated or killed and a new son became the sun-god or thunder god The Sun-God killed the serpent and became a father figure The Greeks and Romans were at this stage when Christianity appeared.

The third stage, according to Graves, was purely patriarchal. This was the mythology of Judaism, Christianity. Mohammedanism and Protestant Christianity. God became the father with his son, who was killed to be reborn again and his mother, the virgin, became the mother of God. The serpent became the devil.

During the earliest stage of human consciousness the Mother Goddess was uroboric in form A snake devouring itself. In time this image was given human form although, many ancient forms depict a serpent's head on a human form. In Babylonia, this was known as Tiamat or the chaos serpent. This stage represents the unconscious. Culture was totemic. man was connected to the world around him. Creation was fueled by mana.

When the goddess has a son, he becomes associated with the yearly cycle of rebirth and becomes more than a fertility deity, he becomes the force of vegetation itself. Something that must be killed, mowed down and harvested. This archetype evolved into the mysteries of Eleusis,

the Christian Madonna and the wheaten host in which the body of the son is eaten. [14]

It was only when man began to differentiate between his consciousness and the world that ego established itself. The differentiation of the ego was the dismemberment from the primitive ouroboric stage of consciousness. Ego consciousness introduced or created the world by separating man and the world around him. It created suffering, loneliness, evil, sickness, and death. [15] The primitive consciousness perceived its own genesis as guilt. Man stepped out of the garden of Eden after eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

The creation myth occurs in every culture. The reality of all cultures, our own included, consists in realizing those images that lie dormant in the psyche. Art, science, technology, everything that has been conceived has as its origin this creative process. Why does man reproduce the natural processes in his beliefs, rituals, and practices? Man's mystical connection between the ritual and the event is the basis of all cultures. This process of creation within the ego and in the world is characterized by the hero, the great individual who represents mankind. He is the fertility king, the creator-god. Osiris gave the Egyptians their laws and taught them to plant corn, gather fruit and cultivate the grape. [16]

One of the basic principles of totemism is that the totem or ancestor is reincarnated in the initiate. This is seen with the son Horus and his connection with his father Osiris. This same principle is found in the Christian incarnation and the ego driven individuation of modern man. Between the son who regenerates himself as the hero, his divine parentage, and the rebirth of the dead father in the son, there exists a fundamental relationship, which is formulated as: "I and the father are one." [17]

Virgin births and crucifixions have occurred in numerous mythologies. There are several mythologies that are similar to the story of Christ. Osiris in Egypt, 1700BC; Bel in Babolonia, 1200 BC; Attis in Phrygia 1700BC; Tammuz in Syria, 1160BC; Dionysius in Greece 1100BC; Krishna in India, 1000 BC Krishna died for the sins of mankind by crucifixion on a cross After three days he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. [18]

Society sets up an authority, a spiritual tradition which forms the basis of education The individual is molded by society through the customs, laws, traditions, rituals, and religions. Historically, the great individual occurs in the role of the god-king. Osiris and the pharaoh through deification become the incarnation of the human soul. The god-king becomes the archetype of human consciousness. Eventually the God King gives up his mana and is dismembered or devoured. This is the transformation process Just as the primitive identity is reproduced with the totem In Christianity the host becomes the wafer. [19]

Isis was known as the Queen of Heaven Star of the Sea, (*Stella Maris)*, and the Mother of God long before the Virgin Mary was born Isis is usually depicted suckling Horus, the offspring of herself and the dead Osiris. Osiris was resurrected three days after his death. The communion of wine and bread was not originated with Christianity. This was a common practice of all major dying God mystery schools, including Dionysius Tammuz, and Osiris It was understood to be a way of becoming one with the god. [20]

The early Christians appropriated much of the Isis traditions into their mythology. The Virgin Mary became the new holy virgin Where Christians are required to accept the virgin birth as a matter of faith the worshipers of Isis had no such problem. To them Zeus, Venus, or

Apollo may or may not have lived real lives What mattered was that each deity ruled over their respective portion of their respective portion of the human experience. For instance, the Egyptian goddess, Ma'at, dealt with justice. The gods were understood to be living archetypes, not historical characters. [21]

The real crisis in this age of modernity is not the threat of rationalism, but the loss of a functional mythology. When the English language was first formed, all educated people were thinking within the framework of the Christian myth cycle, which was Judaeo-Greek with numerous paganistic accretions disguised as lives of saints. The Protestant revolution expelled all but a few of the saints, and the growth of rationalism since the Darwinian controversy has so weakened the churches that Biblical myths no longer serve as a secure base of poetic reference." [22] By adopting a patriarchal theology the Christian Church lost the fundamental understanding of the archetypal equality of the sexes Isis was always balanced by her consort Osiris Jehovah was balanced with his consort Astarte.

The Christian church has always sought to curtail virgin or Isis worship.

The misogynistic tradition of Judaeo Christian patriarchy has created an inequality for the female sex. This puritanical attitude has created a tragic legacy for this age of enlightenment. Child abuse, wife beating, pedophilia and rape are the symptoms of our sexually repressed society.

Hebrew monotheism has been modified by Rome with the gradual and limited introduction of pagan beliefs and virgin worship. The Catholic was cut off from direct communion with God A Catholic can only know God through the intermediary of a priest [23]

Protestantism reintroduced the concept that man could attain direct communion with God. The Puritans sought to abolish religious pomposity. Puritanism took hold in America and the doctrine of religious egalitarianism, expanded into social egalitarianism. Capitalism has flourished under the Protestant ethic. For if that God whose hand the Puritan sees in all the occurrences of life, shows one of his elect a chance of profit, he must do it with a purpose. Hence the faithful Christian must follow the call by taking advantage of the opportunity. [24]

Roman Catholics as well as Protestants have come to believe that money, although the root of all evil. is the sole practical means of expressing value Our culture believes that science is the only means of describing phenomena. A morality of common honesty is not relevant to love, war, business, or politics. Although the West is nominally Christian we have come to be governed by the unholy triumvirate of Pluto the God of wealth, Apollo the God of science, and Mercury the God of thieves. [25]

The Protestant churches are divided between liberal theology and fundamentalism. The Vatican has made a concession to Goddess worship but has maintained a patriarchal mythology. The religious philosophies of Eastern mysticism have been attracting more and more to a mythology that embraces a humanity without a political. sexual, or economic agenda.

Twenty percent of American adults believe in reincarnation. [26] Another twenty two percent say they are not sure about reincarnation. [27] In Denmark, a 1992 survey found that 14 percent of the country's Lutherans believed in reincarnation, while only 20 percent believed in

the doctrine of resurrection. [28]

The traditional mythologies of Christianity are no longer fulfilling the desire for a sense of spirituality. The question remains as to how culture can redefine the mythology that reflects our own conscious development Could our culture or economy survive without the Christian myth of Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny? Could we forgo the celebration of the Goddess Ishtar by not making Easter Eggs? Bhuddism, karma and reincarnation are all concepts that have attained commonality within our culture All of these concepts were in place before the advent of Christianity This is the myth and mythology of modernity.

We are no different than the Romans, Greeks, or Egyptians. We have a considerable technology, but we are still afraid of the dark Can we recognize poetic myth as something other than historical fact?

End Notes

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