

Prayer as supplication to supernatural beings

Emil Bachler and prehistoric religion; problem of death and ritual suggest a religious sense; intentional burial sites; bodies buried with goods to assist in next world; tools; weapons;

Ritual (religion in action): prayer, song, dancing, offerings

Bear Cult theory: importance of animals

Do animals have access to some form of more ancient type of knowledge

Religious specialists: priests, shamans, etc

Shamans had greater access to divine world and existed in liminal space

Shamans could transform into animals or be possessed by animal spirits and through this process gain access to supernatural knowledge

Religion explains the unknown; provides comfort in crisis; sanction human conduct of right and wrong; set precedents of acceptable behavior; transfer burden of decision making from human individual to divine

Mythology: interconnected stories told by a cultural group

If stories held in reverence we call religion; if not, mythology

Myths begin as sacred stories that “offer supernatural explanations for the creation of the world...and humanity, as well as for death, judgment, and the afterlife” (Myth, 284)

Religion as opiate of the masses

Religion as a tool of power

Origin Myths:

Creation or origin myths explain how the world came to be and often how the cultural group telling the same myth is the first or “true” people

Often tell where or how a people came to be where they are

Myths explain a culture's worldview—their assumptions and expectations about humankind's place in nature and the limits and workings of the natural and spiritual world.

Walt Whitman poem (1865) When I heard the Learn'd Astronomer

Greek, *mnw*, “to conceal” is etymology of word Mystic

Referred to secret religions

Early Christians used word to describe hidden meanings of scripture

Later synonymous with ‘mystical experience’—a connection with divine that transcended reason

Comes to be connected with practices, discourses and texts and traditions

Mysticism as a Divine Communion, quote from “Demystifying Mysticism”

“Mysticism is the endeavor of humans to apprehend Reality and experience the ecstasy of being in communion with God, by means of personal revelation, transcendence...”

Metaphysics: Aristotle, “After Physics”

Concerned with what there is and HOW we know what there is

What is really there vs what is merely apparent (eg Plato)

Williams James, ‘Varieties of Religious Experience,’ 1917

Philosophers have focused on a, classifying mystical experiences; b, defining their nature and manifestation in different traditions; c, describing how much mystical

experiences are conditions by culture and language; d, analyze the truth values of religious experience

On Origins of Greek Gods..."it is as if there were in the human consciousness a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we might call 'something there'" (William James)

"It is the emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures." (Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 1923)

William Blake, "I rest not from my great task!" first line of poem.