

Creation myths= cosmogony

- Greek; *cosmos* – order, form, arrangement
- the world or universe + *gony* – production, genesis, origination

Creation Myths

- Innate in human nature is the drive to explore. Chief among these explorations is the desire to explain the origin of man, earth, animals, plants, and other elements of nature.
- In an effort to explain these origins, early man invented stories which made sense in regard to his specific time period and culture.
- These stories are known today as "Creation Myths."



Chaos or a Cosmic Egg

a breaking of primordial chaos to form a unity

Example: earliest Babylonian creation story, called Eridu Genesis

Example: a primal being, Pan Gu, is contained within an egg. When the egg breaks, Pan Gu appears as a giant who separates chaos into the many opposites of *yin* and *yang*, Chinese

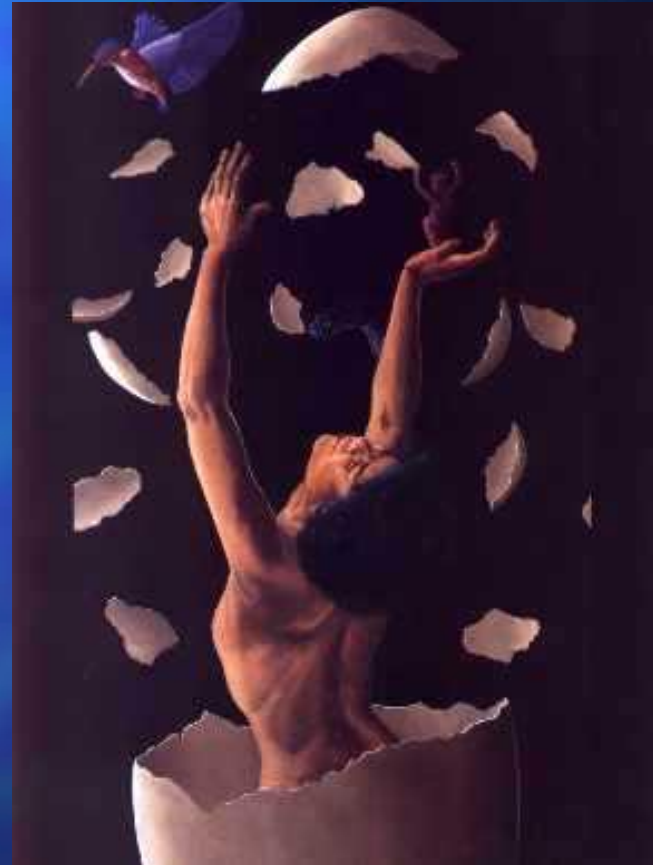
Other cosmic egg myths have twins within the egg: for example, the Mande people of West Africa, have twins who represent male and female, who became the first people



Pan Gu

Common Elements: *Birth*

- Egg
 - Often a jumbled mass of components which serve as the first elements of life
- Childbirth
 - Male or Female gods give birth to children
 - Natural
 - Unusual



The World Parents

Two types:

1. A primal pair is separated, sometimes turning against one another, with little care for their offspring. The pair might be Sky and Earth or other features of nature.

Example: *The Epic of Creation (Enamu Elish)* where Apsu and Tiamat are fresh and salt water

2. Creation comes from the dismemberment of one of the parents in order to create heaven and earth.

Example: *The Epic of Creation (Enamu Elish)*

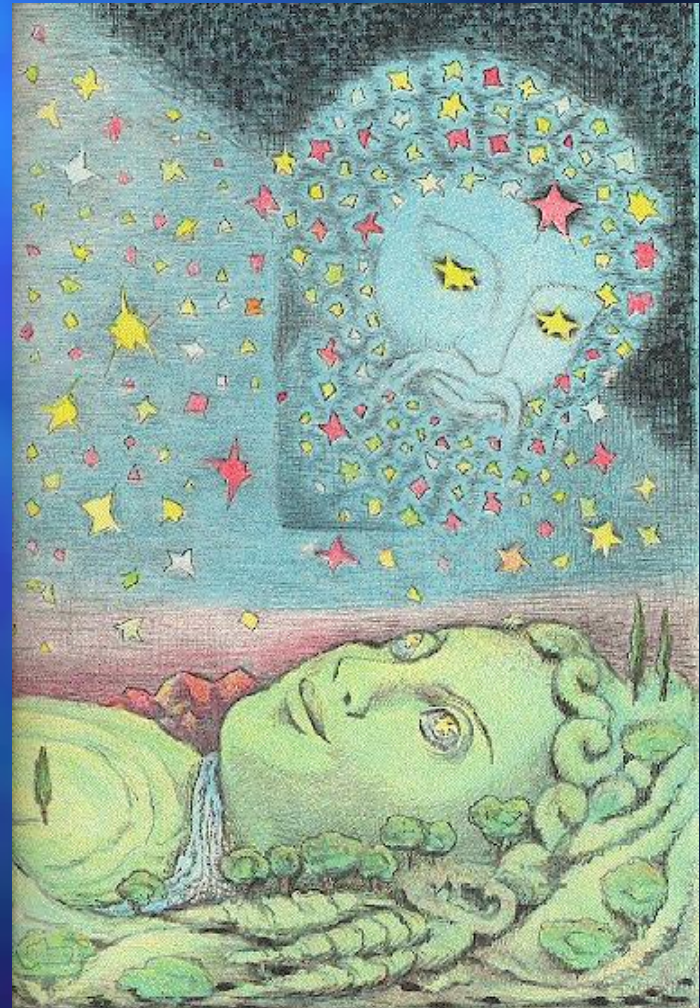


Tiamat and Marduk

Common Elements: *Mother and Father*

Very common in many
world cultures

- Mother usually earth
 - Life emerges from earth/womb
- Father usually sky
 - Sense of unity created (marriage)



Common Elements: *Genealogy*

- The first god born did not always create the world.
- Often, his or her children decided to fill the world with life.
 - The parents' work was finished by the child.



Five types of creation myths

Ex Nihilo

“out of nothing”

a diety (a god) creates the cosmos through thought, dream, word, or other means

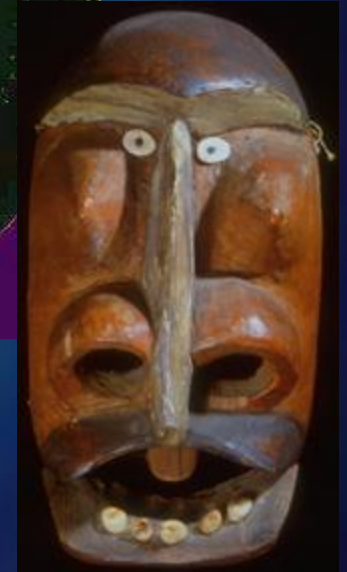
Example: The Book of Genesis from The Bible



Creation of Adam

Common Elements: *Supreme Beings*

- Most cultures revered a pantheon of supreme beings (polytheistic)
- Some cultures revered a single creator (monotheistic)



Emergence

Creation is a gradual process featuring human-like creatures who must travel through many worlds before reaching this one.

Example: three worlds below with events which shape the Fourth world, the one in which we now live, Navaho, but similar myths are common among many Native America tribes.

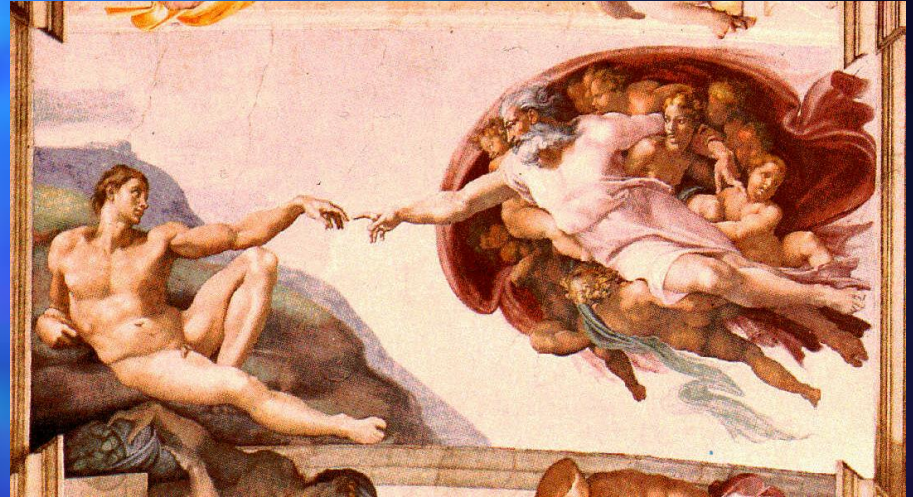
Example: Ra, the sun-god, emerging with new land after the annual flood, Egyptian



Hopi Emergence

Common Elements: *Creation of Man*

- Created by a god or supernatural being
- Establishes:
 - a connection between human beings and the supernatural world
 - the place of humans in the hierarchy of life in the universe (below gods, above animals)



Earth Diver

a deity sends a bird or animal down into the primal waters to bring up a bit of mud from which the earth is made

Example: a water beetle dives and brings up soft mud, Cherokee tribe

Example: a bird, the water wagtail, splashes water and stomps his feet to make pieces of earth, thus making islands where the Ainu people of Japan would live.

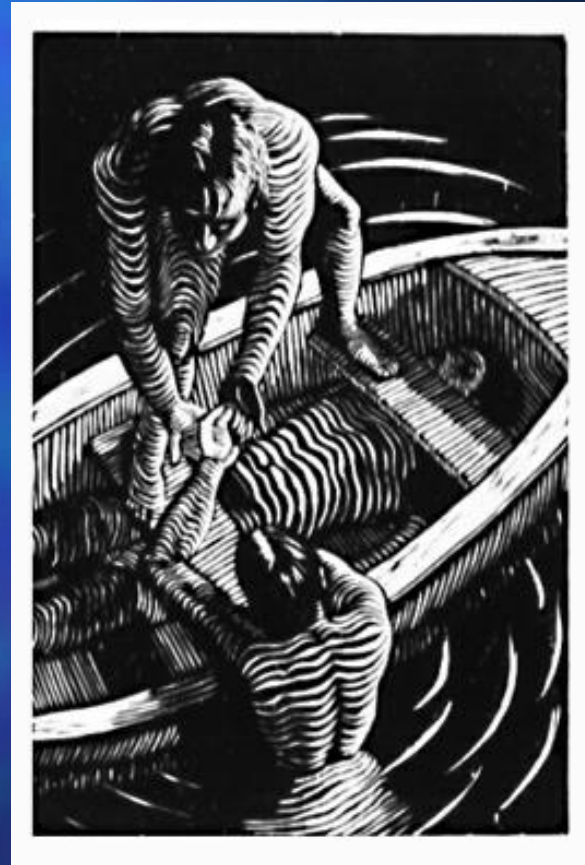
Example: in an Ojibwa myth, a giant tortoise rises from the primordial waters and the back of it forms land, called Turtle Island.



Turtle Island

Common Elements: *Earth-Diver Myths*

- Many stories allude to a time when the earth was covered by water
 - many myths feature a creature diving into the water to retrieve some earth to grow and form the Earth



Common Elements: *Animal/Human Relationships*

- Animals played key roles in many Creation Myths
 - often viewed as equal to humans
 - often reflect feelings of culture for animals



Common Elements: *Night, Fear, Fire, and Sin*

- In the creation myths of many cultures, darkness represents fear
 - the setting of the sun brought on fear and chaos
 - this fear and chaos was sometimes represented as fire



Common Elements:

An Instruction, a Sin, and the Consequence

- Many creation myths consist of at least one of these elements
 - The consequence is often what causes pain, hunger, disease, and all other evils which plague the earth



Common Elements: *Creation of Geographical Features*

- Many legends offer explanations for the formation of mountains, valleys, oceans, rivers, etc.



Common Elements:

Creation of Lesser Creatures (animals, plants insects, etc.)

- Almost all creation stories account for the existence of the forms of life that inhabit the planet.
 - May also explain the physical characteristics of the animals.



Creation Myths

- Much like our distant ancestors, we strive to uncover our origins and determine our place in the universe.
- Scientists advance new theories each year on the origin of the universe
 - For some, scientific evidence serves as a basis for creation stories
 - For others, deeply rooted ancient beliefs remain the cornerstone in their own theories