

Full Length Paper

Survey of Mysticism in History

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Throughout history, mankind has always tried to explain any event that they could not understand, cope with, or that they were scared of, by the existence of secret and unknown powers. They sometimes personified these powers and organized various rituals, rites, and ceremonies to overcome difficulties and transferred these rituals to subsequent generations by making them a part of the culture. That human societies living in disparate geographic locations have explained natural events through similar stories and heroes for centuries is an interesting phenomenon that should not be overlooked. For example, people of warmer climates have defined supernatural beings with symbols such as fire whereas people of colder climates talked about mythological beings of ice. The sacrificial ritual of offering gifts to a being described as “God” is observed in almost all cultures. In other words, the rituals through which people of different cultures and geographies have tried to please the supreme beings of their own creation are similar.

In our age when science has elucidated many unknowns of nature, mystical factors and mystic philosophy still retain their importance. While science is searching for answers to many issues through research and experiments, elements of mystical culture that have been created millennia ago can still offer solutions to problems for many contemporary people. For example, relaxation through meditation is offered as a solution to psychological problems instead of modern medicine, places of worship are visited for wishes to be granted instead of working toward desired outcomes, or some contents in literary works such as the Lord of the Rings, and Harry Potter try to explain the unknown. The fact that mystical factors are still heeded by mankind, despite the achievements of science and technology in today’s world, is open to exploration via the examination of mysticism’s journey through various geographies from days past. Mysticism is a good product to be marketed, due to the secrets and promises that it entails so long as the rules of ethics are not forgotten in this collaboration.

Keywords: Mysticism; Religion; Ethics; Philosophy; Mythology; Penitentes.

INTRODUCTION

Our primitive ancestors could not have known much about the laws of nature, forces of physics, cause-effect relationship, and the order in which things happen. There was a time in the history of humankind when such things were not researched at all. Miracles were not considered to be violations of the laws of nature, but extraordinary events were considered to be too important to be the result of ordinary reasons. These people had unlimited capacity for faith and imagination, because neither imagination nor faith were questioned and directed toward different fields on rules based on experience (Fiske, 2010: 30). In this process, mankind responded to the obscurity of the universe by trying to explain the unfathomable in the world they lived through mystery. “Mystery” was putting events in a new perspective and thus human beings could become more resilient in accepting the outcomes of events. For example, they were explaining floods by the anger of the gods of sky, and earthquakes by the anger of gods of the underground. They were thus becoming psychologically more

protected against the difficulties of deaths and hardships that came their way through these explanations they had fabricated.

Those who went about this issue within the framework of “marketing” could be considered to be the “entrepreneurs” of the era. For example, the practice of magic is meaningful for the primitive man in accordance with the struggle of life against nature. The first category of this struggle is the rational toolkit, which is manifest in the scientific and technical applications today. For the primitive man who did not disregard this toolkit, magic was all about the effort to govern the field of the “unreasonable”. The individuals who sowed their seeds at the appropriate time, who did not neglect to take with them the sufficient technical equipment to be successful in hunting, who monitored the winds and did not go fishing without following the underwater streams, and who essentially adopted rational behavior that is characteristic of the modern man, cannot be convinced that just magic would be enough to make their hunt or harvest successful without doing all of the above. Practice of magic is a support mechanism for the individual beyond the fields of scientific practice, a mysticism of self-conviction. Through magic, the individual can govern the field of the unreasonable (Halis, 2009: 18-19).

Myths are created by cultures, and they are important elements of cultures. Culture is the aggregate of opinions, values, and perceptions that is common in a society, which is disseminated to its members. All cultures serve as guides for the thoughts and actions aimed to help human beings in solving the problems they face. In order for it to continue its existence, culture has to be able to meet the basic needs of the people living in accordance with it and provides orderly life for the members of a society (Haviland, 2008: 102-103). The rise of culture means winning over nature. Winning over nature, in turn, is the effort of the man to eliminate its culture (self). According to this paradox, it is possible to say that mythology delays the success of mankind over nature (and thus its own demise).

Myth speaks about extraordinary heroism and supernatural powers. It is prior and outside knowledge, cannot be scrutinized with practice, and is within the boundaries of faith. It was born by the need of knowledge-less mankind to explain the world (Hançerlioğlu, 2010: 334).

Mysticism (Christian) is derived from the Greek word *mystikos*, which means “about secrets”. It refers to western mysticism, which suggests that god can be comprehended through intuition. It has arisen from the retirement of the Christian to his own shell and searching for god there, after his giving up on the church (Hançerlioğlu, 2010: 334). Following these contentions, mysticism can simply be defined as a tool of protecting and relieving the inner self of mankind in his struggle against nature.

The aim of the mystics is to transcend from this world to the timeless outer world to comprehend the Absolute directly and unite with it. The mystic aims to comprehend the changing within the eternal and the eternal within the changing (<http://www.usdusunveotesi.net>). The goal of Mysticism is to explain the unknown, and achieve happiness and inner peace. Nevertheless, the methods that it uses to explain the unknown entail mystical and incomprehensible elements.

The mystic severs her relation with the external world completely, and seeks “the truth” through her ecstatic experiences (a special state when the connection between the spirit and the body is loosened to a certain extent and all connections with the external world are lost). The target that the mystic seeks to achieve is an elevated state of consciousness that is called enlightenment or awakening. According to mysticism, this is a goal that can only be approached in a staged process, through experiences that accumulate over time, and that is not known with certainty whether it would be indeed be achieved.

The method in mysticism corresponds to the irrational (or unscientific) experiments. Levitation, overcoming the scientific reality of gravity and ascending physically from the ground through transcendental meditation, or curing physical diseases by merely staring or touching are some of the mystical methods. Such methods provide different results for each human being. The general method used in mysticism is that of “rituals”. The Uncreated (God) can only be reached through ritualistic perfection of the created (mankind). Imitation of the harbinger of the religion (Prophets) is the way to reach God. This is what is referred to as “imitating the Messiah” in Christianity or performing the *sunnah* in Islam.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MYSTICISM AND RELIGION

A problem about mythology is mythology-and-religion. The mythology-and-religion problem is predominantly studied by history of religion scholars, anthropologists, and sociologists. All studies have generally been carried out through two opposing axes (Bayat, 2010: 79):

1. Those who dissociate mythology from religion, or those who argue that myths and religions were formed simultaneously or those who define myths as distorted variations of religious beliefs.
2. Those who cannot see any connection whatsoever between mythology and religion or those who consider mythology as a phenomenon that served as the source of religions.

Fundamentally, both concepts try to explain similar situations and provide human beings with inner peace; however, their methods are different.

Although mysticism entails religious themes, it hosts contradictions and conflict at certain points. This conflict arises from the fact that religion is beyond debate and gives explicit orders (preaches, sermons,) whereas mysticism is considered experiential, originating from the inner self.

Religious institutions differ from mysticism in that they entail going out, departing from the essence, turning away from affection and love and just offering some faiths and creeds as well as orders and prohibitions that pertain to the domain of feelings, doctrines made of only words and ceremonies just oriented toward display (visual), whereas mysticism manifests itself in the internal, essential, fundamental, real, Absolute Love (<http://www.usdusunveotesi.net>).

In mythology, nature, which is perceived to be alive, and its different artefacts each has its own gods or protecting spirits. In religion, Allah is the proprietor of everything. There is no

god other than that and the concept of spirit only pertains to human beings. In mythology, man asks for help from a God that reigns in that specific location or from the protecting spirit that oversees that region, feeling the protective presence of this spirit all the time. In mythology, man asks for help from spirits in dire circumstances and offers sacrifices to the spirits if he had offended them. In the Islamic religion, however, sacrifices are offered only to Allah the almighty, to whom prayers are directed, and from whom salvation is sought (Bayat, 2010: 82).

As seen, there are similarities between religion and mythology. Their differences, on the other hand, manifest in the methods, forms, and practices. Beliefs are various, but their goal is the same. As one gets closer to this goal, the ways (more or less) look like each other and they meet at the peak. The objective of mysticism in all religions is (i.e. the point which can be considered as the peak) *God*, who is also referred to as the “One”, “Absolute”, “Eternal”, “Supreme Consciousness”, or “Almighty Being”.

MYSTICISM AND PHILOSOPHY

Philosophers use myths to explain ideas that are abstract and hard to visualize in an explicit, simple, and concrete fashion. Sometimes they use traditional stories and personas, yet, they mostly invent these themselves. Thus, Empedocles, one of the first philosophers of the fifth century B.C., creates a myth that explains his view of the Universe. According to him, the eternal fight between Hatred and Love gives the four elements (earth, water, air, and fire) various forms, creates the Universe through successive ages, and then it falls apart to be later reborn (Estin, 2010: 86).

According to Bultmann¹, existentialist philosophy serves the purpose of making it clear as to what is meant by theological concepts like Islamic theology, blessing, and love. Nevertheless, philosophy aims to show that talking about the existence of mankind means only reaching out to others. On a certain-special existence of mankind, determined by the question of “how”, philosophy talks not about the how itself, but the “whatness of the how” (Kuşçu, 2006: 102-103).

According to Hesiodos, in the beginning, there was only Khaos (chaos). Khaos was an infinite emptiness. From this emptiness, first came into being Gaia (Mother Earth). Then came the deepest location of the land of the dead, Tartaros, followed by Eros (Love), and then darkness of the underground, Erebos, and darkness of the surface Nyks (Night). Erebos and Nyks merged to form Aither (Ether) that is the pure and luminous Sky and Hemera (Day) that are above the layer of air that surrounds the Earth. Mother Earth alone created Uranos (Sky), Pontos (Sea), and the Mountains. After that, merged with her sons Uranos and Pontos, to fill the universe that is now created with supernatural beings (Cömert, 2010: 20).

According to Greek mythology, the story of the creation of the universe and god starts like this and continues with the stories of the creation of humans.

While some myths suggest that Zeus creates humans, most myths suggest that they are created from the mud that Prometheus shaped, likening them to the looks of gods. While

¹ Rudolf Bultmann, Lutheran religious commentary and theologian.
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Athena was blowing life into these figurines, Prometheus' elder brother shaped animals and monsters (Tudem Publications).

In Plato's dialogues, Socrates uses myths to convince his students. In the wake of his death (339 BC), he tells them about the journey his soul would take to the Land of the Dead. His soul would be judged, based on his past deeds, and will then be rewarded. In the myth of the locust, Socrates' student Plato tells of the relationship of mortals with Muses and art as follows: "Legend has it that locusts were once human. They were the humans that existed before Muses. When Muses were born and song came into being, some of the humans of that era were prepossessed with the pleasure of singing, so much so that they forgot to eat and drink, and before they could realize what happened, they died... It is after this incident that locust species emerged from them" (Estin, 2010: 86).

Other philosophers reject myths. For example, Aristotle who lived after Plato, and did not believe anything but logical idea and scientific thought. Others go further. As a matter of fact, skeptics doubt everything. For example, according to Pyrrhon (330-270 BC), the truth cannot be known. According to the Epicureans, myths are unethical and cruel fabrications that reflect the fear of gods that humans have.

MYSTICISM AND SCIENCE

Science is an organic structure. All branches of human knowledge are complementarities of this common structure. Knowledge forms a collaborative whole, and gains meaning within this whole. As new knowledge joins the whole, they do not stand next to existing knowledge idly but integrate into them and create a change in the meaning of the whole. Knowledge is in the process of formation. Science creates new problems as much as it solves old ones. The gaps of science are filled by mysticism.

Both the mystical and scientific methods have the same purpose: overcoming ignorance and illuminating with knowledge. Despite that, experiment in the mystic method is personal. Although it aims to make the individual happy and virtuous, the knowledge it creates has to stay subjective since it cannot be experienced and documented by everybody. The knowledge that a mystic creates, even if it was experienced for itself, would only be dogmatic propositions to other people. As the witness to the experiment, knowledge, and life of the mystic can only be another mystic, these cannot be scrutinized on a scientific platform and its reflection on the society can only be towards faith. On the other hand, the propositions that another individual, who has been trained in the ways of the scientific method, makes to the society are explicit and experientially scrutinisable propositions. Since such propositions do not constitute a faith system, they exhibit a healthy proliferation (<http://www.usdusunveotesi.net>).

Today, mystical elements are being explained or trying to, with scientific reasons and support, in an effort to explain mysticism with science, due in part to the impact of marketing techniques. Mysticism, as explained previously, however, represents an individual situation and cannot be generalized and explained with the scientific method. The most frequently offered support for scientific explanation of mysticism is the predictions of Nostradamus, who was a scientist himself. Even if it is assumed that Nostradamus actually knew many of the

things he foresaw for the future, however, the predictions of the infamous predictor is an example of individual experience and this, by itself, is reason enough for its insufficiency in offering a scientific explanation.

MYSTICISM IN OUR AGE

Reoccurrence of mythological events that had come into being in the beginning is a yearning of the modern world. In order to be able to “talk” with the mythological figures of past ages, the modern man resorts to myths, thus renewing the communication that was lost as mythological symbols are deciphered. In this context, popular movies of recent times, such as *The Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, *Lord of the Animals*, and *Troy*, are of great importance concerning the reconstruction of mythological times and places to the modern world. European values and the western civilization constitute the subject matter of all mythological literary works. From this perspective, inspiration is continuously drawn from mythology for contemporary art and science worlds, wide and deep (Bayat, 2010:132).

What could be the reason for the recent preoccupation of people with mythological tales and mystical thought? The first answer that could be given to this question is that humans have lost some of their values with the advancement of science and technology, and they want or yearn to grasp them. This yearning manifests itself in various fields of art (painting, sculpture, cinema, music, theater) and reminds their spectators of these values. There has been a period in which science, materialism, and realism reigned under the influence of modernism. Nevertheless, this period distanced human beings from their roots (mysticism’s secrets).

The second answer is that technology has rapidly penetrated our lives and weakened our connection to our inner worlds. The void felt due to this lack of connection drives us to mystical philosophy and mystical rituals. Marketing science that recognizes this gap within the capitalist system has adapted various mystical and mythological elements to our day and offers them with a post-modern mentality, with the goal of “serving humanity.”

The *Harry Potter* series of books, which stand as an evidence from the fantasy domain for the notion that human beings are not alone in this world and that the concepts of might and wisdom are not exclusive to human beings, have drawn the attention of the Christian world as well as strong opposition from the Church at once. The presence of such features as magical wands, flying brooms, tomes of magic and a magnificent boarding school of magic that trains wizards (Hogwarts) in the books has spurred interest, particularly in children, to these issues. The fact that the creatures mentioned (house elves, wizards, etc.) mostly originate from mythology and have roots in legends caused a widespread desire in people of all ages to wonder and learn about the roots of such concepts, as well as somehow living in such a world, at least through their imagination. The author of the books, J. K. Rowling, has reshaped today’s way of life by recasting it into the molds of mythology (Bayat, 2010: 130).

The consumption (and consequently production) orientation of the capitalist system alienates people from each other and steers them into their own inner worlds. People of the 21st century, who have trouble in communicating with each other try to fill their void by using techniques such as “yoga”, “meditation”, “pilates” that date way back in time.

It has been said that mysticism originated from natural events that humankind could not explain with science. Could there be natural events that still cannot be explained with science today and can these have that big of an effect to generate modern myths of their own? Here are some of them (<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/fotogaleri/35132-yasam-bu-doga-olaylari-aciklanamiyor/1>).



Figure 1

In societies that depict hell predominantly with eternal flames, would not these sights make people think that they are punished by a supreme power (god or gods)? In societies where such phenomena that science has not yet fully explained are seen, maybe people are just in the creation of today's myths.

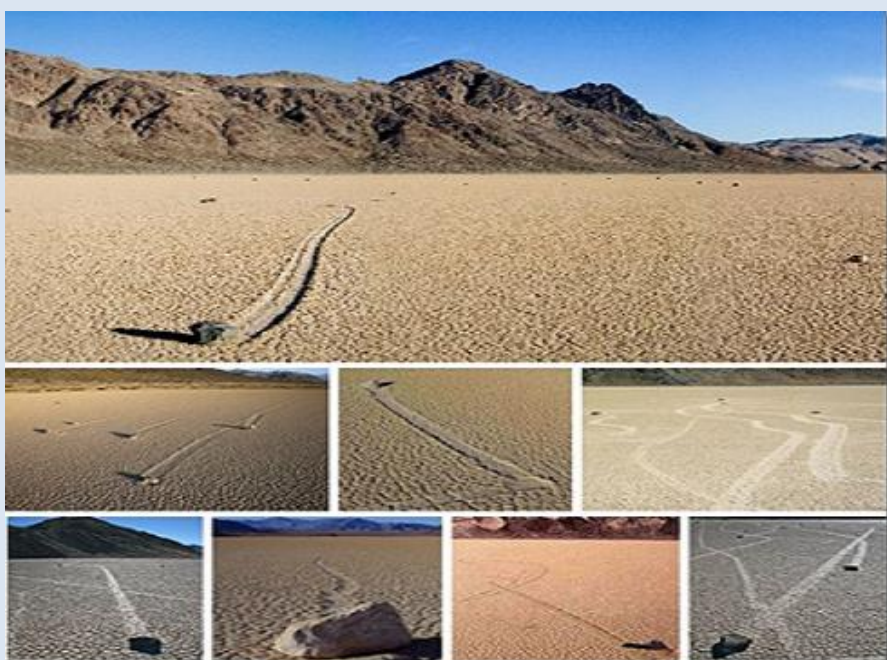


Figure 2

If we were to interpret this phenomenon of nature from a mythological perspective, "animism" (the belief that everything in nature has a spirit) would be most befitting.



Figure 3

That this phenomenon occurs at the same spot, at the same time, and for the same length of time every year is reason enough to generate a myth about it; you just have to let loose your imagination!



Figure 4

How many people would know, or even understand when being told about this scientific explanation? Since, according to myths, the sky is the residence of gods; could this not be of their making?



Figure 5

Attributing a mystical meaning to the natural dyeing of traditional white garments of people by some kind of liquid pouring from the sky at one location on the earth (which incidentally happened to be in India, where mystic rituals are a dozen a dime) and creating a legend out of it is not a big challenge.



Figure 6

This natural occurrence, which takes even its name from a mystical element, has too many mystical characteristics to be given a mystical meaning.

Figure 1: Devil's Fire: Or fire tornado. A tornado that is formed by flames that can reach several meters in height. It has last been seen at Budapest, the capital of Hungary. The deadliest fire tornado ever happened in Japan, in 1923. It was formed after the Great Kanto Earthquake and the giant fire tornado had a death toll of over 38 thousand people in 15 minutes.

Figure 2: Sailing Stones: Death Valley, which is at the border between the states of California and Nevada in United States, has been attracting scientists for years with its "sailing stones." The movement of stones that are kept under close observation for days at a time still cannot be explained. According to one thesis, the wind makes the stones slide over sand, but no wind of strength that is sufficient to move stones weighing hundreds of kilograms has been recorded. Besides, how on earth the stones that start their movement at the same spot end up moving in different directions could not be explained by anyone so far.

Figure 3: Black Sun: Millions of birds come together in Denmark every spring, about half an hour before the sunset, and fly in the sky forming amazing figures. Why millions of birds that come together half an hour before sunset behave in this way, starting early March and until mid-April cannot be fully explained by scientists.

Figure 4: Fire Rainbow: Rainbows are formed around the world, all the time. Nevertheless, rainbows of the State of Idaho (at its border with State of Washington) in United States are quite something that both surprise and amaze those who witness them. This is because these rainbows are of a different breed. Scientists examining these rainbows that look like they are made of fire, spread over vast areas, explain this phenomenon as follows: When the sun is 58 degrees above the horizon, when Cirrus-type clouds are formed by hexagonal water crystals in high altitudes, rays of sun passing through them create these spectacular colors of the rainbow.

Figure 5: Crimson Rain: All rainfall that poured down on the Kerala region of India between July 25 and September 23 in 2001 were crimson. This rain colored the traditional white garments of the local people to almost blood-red. The Indian Government intervened and the reason for the "crimson rain" was studied. Estimations suggested that microscopic red algae living in the Indian Ocean led to this phenomenon. Nevertheless, Godfrey Louis and Santhosh Kumar, two scientists from Mahatma Gandhi University who continued their research on this phenomenon in 2006, said that extraterrestrial isotopic reactions that occurred in the atmosphere had led to it, bringing the issue under spotlight again.

Figure 6: Penitentes: This can be seen at some mountaintops. It is suggested that the rays of the sun reflected from glaciers form them. Since they resemble a cortege of walking nuns wearing pointed white caps, they are called, "penitentes" [Spanish for "repentants"] and it is not known why this natural landscape feature is formed only at certain locations.

MEANINGS THAT MYSTICISM ADOPTS BASED ON DIFFERENT REGIONS

Europe has a cultural history dating back to earlier times, although its surface area is relatively smaller compared to the vast African and Asian continents. A portion of this heritage is the rich collection of myths that change in accordance with the various cultures spread across the continent and that include thousands of legends. These constitute a broad spectrum, ranging from the stories told by Slavic nations of Eastern Europe, to the myths of Norwegians of Northern Europe, and from the complex pantheons of Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire to the stories of knighthood from the middle ages. Most of these traditions are widely recognized across the world due to the long history of written European culture (Wilkinson, 2010: 12).

While mythological stories can be found on many diverse topics including the meanings mysticism takes in different regions, this paper only focuses on myths, mystical elements (forms of worship/praying, rituals, symbols, etc.), and sacrificial traditions.

EUROPE

When we make a differentiation between mythology and mystical elements, more appealing mythological stories come out of Europe.

CLASSICAL EUROPE

Ancient Greek and Roman myths that talk about stories of love, gods, and heroes occupy a major place in world literature.

Greek Mythology

Greek mythology is the result of a genuine interaction among different peoples who spoke Greek that started their migration from the Balkans to the Mediterranean for the first time around 2100 BC.

Six sons, 'Titans,' and six daughters, 'Titanides,' were born of the union of Gaia (Earth) and Uranos (Sky). These creatures are anthropomorphous (having a human form). The giants are hideous: thick hair, a hedgehog-like pointy beard, legs of snake bodies ... The offspring of the first creative powers have come about to be in the form of giants, perceived according to the value system of these powers. Often times, the heroes' job is to eliminate them. For example, Herakles kills the monster called as the lion of Nemea. Nevertheless, a new generation is in the making: Kronos, the last of the Titans, would rise to power, with his sister Rhea, and creates the gods and goddesses who will take residence at Olympos. Some of these gods are Zeus (reigning over the sky and the atmospheric events), Hera Zeus' wife, goddess of marriage and birth, Hades Zeus' brother, keeper of the riches at the depths of the earth, Poseidon Zeus's brother, god of seas, Apollon Zeus' son, god of light, prophecy, poetry, and music), Artemis {...} Zeus' daughter, goddess of animals, plants, and children)... (Estin, 2010: 96-98).

As can be seen in this story, the unknowns of genesis have always been a topic of concern for mankind, and it is a question that is still not fully answered today (although there are some theories). We can tell at once that these are "stories", with what we know today. The boundaries of imagination expand in line with the boundaries of the unknown (ignorance).

In Greek mythology, prayers are offered standing; and the palms of one or both hands remain open toward the sky to pray {to} gods in the sky, and they remain open toward the ground to pray {to} gods living under the ground (khthoinos). During burial ceremonies, sometimes people prostrate on the ground. Offerings include coins, biscuits, first of the harvest, hair, and any earnings beyond proportion (game, fish, trade). Sacrificial animals (generally having white skin on their head) are offered to god living in the sky in the morning, and on an elevated altar. The priest dismembers the sacrificial animal, eats from its meat, and distributes the remaining parts to the faithful. For gods of the underground realm, sacrificial offerings are made in fear and at dawn. The animal has black skin and all of its meat is burned as an oblation (Estin, 2010: 62-63).

We come across sacrificial offerings starting in our childhood. For example, in Andersen's tales, witches look for children to kill, or forgiving of the sins in one's life in such tales only happens by the sacrifice of another living being (see Snow White, Hansel and Gretel).

In almost all mythologies, supreme gods are known for first trying to terminate human beings, and then settle down upon sacrificial offerings. For example, Zeus has created who-knows-how-many generations, did not like what he created, and eventually terminated these generations with floods. Deukalion, the only human being who "somehow" survived Zeus' last flood, could only escape the wrath of the god by sacrificing an animal upon his disembarkation. This flood is mentioned in the same way by Sumerians. The only difference is that the name of the man who survives the flood is not Deukalion but Ziusudra (Süzer, 2002: 7-8).

These rituals are alike in many cultures even today, with only slight differences. For example, physical elements of prayers are practiced in similar ways today. And while the specific way in which sacrificial offerings are made can change, in accordance with the species, form, color, etc. of the living being, it is seen in almost all societies. According to one belief, blood has to be spilled when the sacrificial animal is killed (as is the case in Islam). As a reason for that, it is argued that a certain kind of energy comes out when blood is spilled and it is argued that this energy can be channeled in accordance with one's intent. According to this perspective, gods need power and they take this power from the sacrificial offerings given to them.

Would it be too imaginative to explain the wars that took place in human history with this perspective! Do those in power acquire and maintain their power by adopting a god-like identity or spilling blood in the name of that?

Roman Mythology

Romans adopted most of the gods of the Etruscans who lived before them in northern Italy and they transformed them in accordance with Roman thoughts and beliefs. These gods were eventually merged with the gods of the lands that Romans conquered. Many ancient Roman gods are similar to those of the Greeks but they generally have different names and sometimes even different myths (Wilkinson, 2010: 76).

Aeneas (the son of Venus, the goddess of love, and Anchises, a mortal man) was given two prophecies that would shape his life. The first of these was that he would be the founder of a great dynasty, and the second was that he would destroy the city of Carthage in North Africa. After the War of Troy, he set out {on} the journey that would fulfill these prophecies. Along with him, he took his father, Anchises, who was wounded in the War of Troy and who later died en route. After crossing the Aegean Sea, they went to the Cyclops, vicious single-eyed giants, and sailed back into the sea running from them. Goddess Juno, Venus' rival, did not want Aeneas to reach his aim. Thus, she asked Aelous, the god of winds, to create a storm and sink Aeneas's ship. They dragged Aeneas and his colleagues to the shores of Carthage... (Wilkinson, 2010: 76).

The story of genesis in Roman mythology goes only back to gods, and does not have

information on the times prior to the existence of gods. They entail more humanistic themes.

Like the Greeks, Romans too bless the gods that protect the household and the family. Their altar rises next to the hearth. Two Penates watch over the food cupboard. They are offered incenses on festivities and a few bites of food every day. A ritual is performed for the God Lar, who sits at the hearth, on the 1st, 9th, and 15th of each month, as well as on special occasions. For example, inside of the hearth is filled with wreaths made of flowers and family members pray. After a death, a sheep is offered to him as sacrifice, to purify the house, and the new bride coming into the family offers a coin to him on the night of her wedding (Estin, 2010: 210).

Romans too have the rituals to offer gifts and sacrificial offerings to gods, with the same desired outcome pursued through different methods.

NORTHERN EUROPE

Viking warriors of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have wreaked havoc upon the people living at the shorelines of Western Europe between the end of eighth and the beginning of the eleventh centuries. They were renowned for their expeditions that they went on in their sturdy ships, which gave them a reach as much as across the ocean. Primitive cultures of Far Northern Europe have created a number of myths on the creation of the universe, and lives and adventures of the gods. The effects of these magnificent stories slowly reached far and wide (Wilkinson, 2010: 89).

Norse Origins (Viking)

There was nothing in the beginning, except for the great void, called Ginnungagap. Slowly, two countries emerged on both sides of this void. Muspelheim, land of warmth and fire, was in the south, where as Niflheim, land of cold and ice, was in the north. In the middle met the warm air of Muspelheim and the cold air of Niflheim, starting to melt the ice. Droplets of melting ice eventually turned into a huge giant made of ice, called Ymir. Ymir slept and started to sweat as the warm air coming from Muspelheim brushed over its body. Other giants emerged from his sweat. A male and a female giant came into being from beneath its left arm, and six other males came into being from its legs. In the meantime, the ice continued to melt and took the form of a giant cow, named Audhumla. This cow fed the ice-giants with its milk. Aushumla was sucking water from melting ice. As he sucked, another giant came into being; first its head, then its body; and after three days have passed another ice-giant came into being. With this last one, a group of giants formed in Niflheim. Audhumla and the first ice-giant it created had a son, called Bor, and this boy married to Bestla, the daughter of the ice-giant Bölthorn. They had three kids, named Odin, Vili, and Ve. These three children were the first of the Nors gods, and Odin was their leader. The three gods were fighting Ymir, who was attacking them. At last, they joined forces and killed Ymir. Ymir's blood, which poured out of his veins as a flood killed all giants but two: Bergelmir (Ymir's grandson) who escaped on a rowing boat made of a hollow tree and settled at Jotunheim, and his wife. The three gods then created the world from Ymir's flesh. Its bones that were not shattered made the mountains; its blood made the rivers, lakes, and seas; and its skull formed the dome

of the sky. They threw the sun, the moon, and the sparks that created the stars from Muspelheim. The gods then created the first man, called Ask, from an ash tree and the first woman, called Embla, from an elm tree. (Wilkinson, 2010: 90).

The source in the Viking mythology, which entails a very clear depiction of the connection of mythological stories with geography, is depicted to be ice. Myths expose the geography and climactic conditions in which a society lives. In addition, a perennial struggle for power and wars is a central theme in both the Viking mythology and other mythologies.

The Viking mythology tells stories about the fights amongst the gods, as well as their numerous fierce fights against old enemies and giants (...) The Viking mythology is also full of endless stalemates and unfruitful conflicts in which the sides cannot overcome each other. These conflicts represent an obsession with life perennially going on on the earth and the duality between the possibility of rebirth and the death of the individual. Most importantly, it is believed that a new world will not emerge until the War of Ragnarok, which is a unique doomsday notion that is specific to Vikings in the European mythologies. Among Vikings, land was very scarce and the rituals and ceremonies were held in few open spaces available. During blot, the most common ritual performed for the gods, generally animals like a pig or horse were sacrificed. The blood of the sacrificial animal, which was believed to possess special powers, {was} sprinkled over both the icons of gods and those in attendance. These rituals were performed to ask for wishes to be granted and to conciliate the gods. (NTV publications, 2010: 228-229).

A doomsday notion seen in the Viking mythology in European mythologies suggests that mythology not only builds stories of the past but also of the future.

Sacrificial offerings have been given to gods for various reasons over the millennia of human history. Some of these reasons are quite interesting. For example, among Assyrians and in ancient Greece, sacrificial offerings are known to have been used for prophecies. Assyrians used to look at the liver, whereas the Greek used to look at the intestines of the sacrificial animal to predict future (...) It is known that decisions pertaining to the future were made based on dreams seen during sleeping over the intestines of a goat that was sacrificed in ancient Egypt (...) There seems to be a notion held by mankind that the vast rift between human beings and the gods is decreased by sacrificial offerings (Süzer, 2002: 8-10).

Sacrificial offering, despite the various ways in which it is performed, seems to be a very common way of "making the god happy" in almost all cultures. The aim of the sacrificial offering that started with mythological events is spilling blood more so than killing. This tradition continues to exist in many religions today. The common aspects in all cultures are offering a gift to God, asking for mercy, prevention of anger, and using the sacrificial offering as an envoy (or bribe) to offer an oblation or make a request.

WESTERN EUROPE

Ancient Celts are a European people and their influence on mythology has lasted for centuries. Their legends still make up the theme of many novels and movies.

Celtic Mythology

Celts include a number of related Indo-German tribes that inhabited France (Gaul), Spain, Southern Germany, Hungary, and Northern Italy until around 50 BC. Teutates, god of war, Taranis, god of skies and lightning (which resembles the Roman god of Jupiter), and Belenus, god of fire (which is likened to the Greek-Roman god Apollo) were some of the more favorite gods (NTV publications, 2010: 254-257).

As seen, names change in this geography, but the essence of the stories (myths) used to give meaning to natural events does not.

In Celtic mythology, the legends of genesis are thought to rely on nature, before relying on gods. For example, mountain, river, tree... cults².

Offerings and burial ceremonies used to play an important role in the Celtic religion culture. Like in many other religions oriented towards {...} nature, offerings were aimed to settle gods whose domains of influence human beings were fool enough to interfere in. Animals were commonly sacrificed and weapons were offered as oblation before skirmishes and wars. In addition, there were different ways of offering human beings as sacrificial offerings. Humans were thinking that this would continue the cycle of life and there will be a new life after death. (NTV publications, 2010: 257).

ASIA

Whatever he chooses to do, a man is but a reed blown by the wind (saying from Mesopotamia) (Wilkinson, 2010: 147).

SOUTHERN ASIA

Hinduism predominantly affects southern Asian mythology. Having thousands of gods and goddesses, Hinduism constitutes one of the largest ranges of mythological tales in the world.

Indian Mythology

Genesis has many different faces in Indian legends. The universe is composed of a cycle of four ages, the golden age, secondary age, tertiary age, and the Dark Age. The main themes of the genesis tales in Indian mythology are self-sacrifice, annihilation, and renewal. (NTV publications, 2010: 288).

In the Indian mythology, genesis is believed to have happened by a giant's (Purusha) being torn into pieces by gods and everything is created from this. This tearing in pieces brings order to the cosmos, and the tradition of sacrifice is instilled. Protection of the newly formed order depends on the continuation of the sacrifice tradition.

² Cult: The source of the word "Cult" is *cultus*, Latin for "worship". (Wikipedi)
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EASTERN ASIA

Eastern Asian mythology is extremely complicated, including thousands of gods, goddesses, and demons. These creatures have influenced the lives of both ordinary people and the rulers of societies.

Chinese Mythology

The wisest of all mythological tales of genesis is arguably that which was created by the Chinese.

According to Chinese mythology, the world is the result of a long-lasting evolution. The universe has created itself, without the help of supernatural creatures, and thus does not have a creator. The first stage of the universe, according to Chinese mythology, is chaos. The two complementary elements, yin and yang, emerged from chaos. The first living being of the world, P'an ku is the ancestor of human beings. After the death of P'an ku, the architect of the universe, pieces of its body turns into various things like mountains, rivers, and plants. An example of the wisdom of the ancient Chinese people is that Chinese mythology talks about a cosmic understanding, that is, the expansion of the universe. For example, the underlying reason behind the inventions of gunpowder and fireworks in ninth century AD is to banish the evil spirits residing in the sky. (NTV publications, 2010: 328-330).

The yin-yang philosophy that captures opposition is built on balances such as those between day-night, sun-moon, female-male, good bad, strong weak, etc. Disruption of balance between these dyads leads to problems for mankind.

AFRICA

Africa has generated more cultures than those of the rest of the world combined, because it is the place where our ancestors used to live. In African tradition, it is generally believed that one creator god has created everything. According to African mythology, nature has spirits and everything in nature possesses life. Intervention of human beings in nature is necessary for survival. Thus, sacrifices should be offered to nature to pay for the damages inflicted.

Ancient Egypt

Ra, the creator god, has risen from the Nile, the first ocean of nothingness. When Ra sneezed, Shu, god of dry air, came into being from Ra's nostrils. Then Ra spits, forming Tefnut, the god of humid air. Ra sent both gods to a trip, crossing over the ocean, and then, using his skills to create and to perceive, has created the first elements. In doing so, he uttered their names and watched them come into being. During this time, he also created Ma'at, god of universal harmony, who is charged with maintaining order over the things Ra created. (Wilkinson, 2010: 236)

AMERICA

The best-known tales of American mythology belong to Aztec, Mayas, and Incas.

Aztecs

According to sacred Aztec scriptures, eternal world is composed only of water and darkness. The god Ometeotl creates itself and emerges from within the darkness. Since it is both male and female, it gives birth to the four Tezcatlipoca {...} the four gods create the only godly creatures. Creation of the world is tough; each time the four Tezcatlipoca attempt to do it, a giant alligator, called Cipactli, devours or destroys everything they have created. Out of the four siblings, the black one immerses his foot into the water to use it as bait. The other siblings then seize the opportunity and tear the alligator into pieces, thus creating the world, god of rain, and the first human beings from its remains. (NTV publications, 2010: 380).

Aztecs used to offer human hearts and blood in their annual festivities as sacrificial offerings to boost their fighting powers. (Wilkinson, 2010: 382)

Mayas

According to Mayan mythology:

Creation starts with a lifeless universe that is filled with water and darkness. The only light in this universe is the little glow that surrounds the three snake gods beneath green and blue feathers in the water. One day three other gods, known as 'the Heart of the Sky' come to these three snake gods. The six gods meet and think together. They are all aware of the need for the world to start. At last, two snake gods decide it is time. With their synchronized shout 'the World!' the world emerges from within the water. (...) Mountains are erected from within valleys and a jungle of trees and vines spring into being with the gurgling flow of water on the ground. Then animals are created; and finally human beings. (The gods first try to create human beings from mud, but since mud people melt away easily, they destroy mud people and create them from wood. Wood people, who are devoid of souls, start acting like animals. Since they are not happy with the result, the gods turn them into monkeys and then re-create human beings from corn. (NTV publications, 2010: 394)

Incas

A creator god is talked about in Inca mythology, who then creates the other gods.

Ancestors are connections to the supernatural world (their bodies are preserved in embalmed form). Special spirits that human beings can visit live inside the characteristic aspects of the physical world (mountain peaks, rocky protrusions, plants, and pebbles, etc.). (www.itusozluk.com).

AUSTRALIA AND OCEANIA

Australia

Myths about the indigenous peoples of Australia are various, yet, despite that, there are many commonalities. These myths contend that human beings have been in existence since the pre-eternity.

The earth was created during a dream and spirits emerged from the earth. They walked across the country, visiting small lakes and spreading the spirits of unborn children around. They taught the human beings how to live and then some of them married human beings. Some of them returned back into the earth. Human beings can perform rituals to get into this dream world and they can become spirits themselves by tracing the journey of creation. (www.itusozluk.com).

Oceania

The legends of creation of the island peoples of Oceania differ from each other. Creator gods and demigods are notable in these legends.

According to the legends of creation of Oceania, the islands emerged from the ocean. All Oceanic societies had creator gods and demi-god creatures like Maui and Tiki. Maui is the most popular Oceanic hero. Once, he decided to slow down the journey of the sun since he was not happy with the shortness of the day. He climbs a mountain and catches the sun with a lasso that he had woven with his sister's hair. The sun pleads to him to release it and promises to make the days longer during summer. Thus, days are short only in winter. Rangi and Papa were considered as the first ancestors of gods. Societal order was believed to be granted by gods. Tangaroa was a creator god and god of the sea. According to faith, creation of the sky and the earth are due to his coming out of the shell of the world. After his breaking this egg shell, the upper side turns into the sky and lower side turns into the earth. (NTV publications, 2010: 456).

CAN WE TALK ABOUT HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY IN MYSTICISM?

We defined mysticism as tales, interpretations, legends, and rituals that people have created to make sense of natural events that they could not decipher. According to this definition, although myths are tales that are created based on real events, the fact that they rely solely on interpretation poses a barrier before talking about the history of mysticism. Thus, the history of mysticism can be said to be as old as the history of mankind.

The answer to the question 'can we talk about geography in mysticism?' is more complicated than that of history. Considering the shape of earth thousands of years ago, it is intriguing to think about how it could be possible for myths of countries in the north to be strikingly similar to the myths of countries in the south, especially given that communication was limited to face-to-face interactions and there were people living in the world without knowing about other people.

Providing a clear answer to this question is not yet possible. One possible answer that can

be offered is the “unity in essence” view. According to this view, people living in different parts of the world might be different from each other in form; but, in fact, (generally speaking) they have the same essence. For example, if we have the opportunity to save the life of a person who is facing imminent lethal danger, we might risk our own lives to save them. This is an action taken without thinking or contemplating about it, and the average response (positive or negative) that most people would give in such circumstances is the same. Lightning is lightning everywhere around the world; it creates a tremendous sound and light, burning where it hits, and frightening to people witnessing it. Could not, then, someone who does not know about this natural event consider it a supreme power (a god) and offer oblations (sacrifices) to make it happy? The human being who lacks the knowledge, regardless of where she lives in, can arrive at the same results.

Secondly, it is possible to suspect extraterrestrial intervention, by working out some clues³ (like the legend of Iliad, and the Old Testament, and other books of religious origin). What are these clues, then? The chariots of gods that emit clouds and smoke (space vehicles of aliens!), these vehicles were always rising into the sky and disappearing (like the notion of ascending to the sky and thus getting closer to God in mystical philosophy, e.g. transcendental meditation), annihilation of societies that are not obedient (by first sending them a messenger) and the fact that the ways in which such annihilations occur are known before they were hit (e.g. the Big Flood of Noah, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions). The fact that even today we cannot know exactly when such natural events would hit us makes one think of two options: either they are the miracles of the God, or there are extraterrestrial civilizations that have far more advanced technology than we do and they have access to all parts of all geographies of the world.

The similar mythical aspects commonly found in different geographies, suggest that it is more correct to talk about a lack of geography, rather than the existence of geography.

CONCLUSION

Marketing’s View of Mysticism

Mysteries and promises are the magnificent duo for the marketing of a product. These can manifest in so many different products, but none of them have the level of the meaning they have in mysticism.

All cultures have mystical aspects. These aspects are so important that they have been protected, and transferred from generation to generation. The importance of the said mystical aspects is that they carry on the “secrets” and the “promises” they entail without losing them – often not changing them at all from the original – until today. Mysticism has rightfully earned the close attention of marketing science, since it has been successful in doing that.

According to Campbell⁴, myths have four basic functions. The first one is the mystical function. The myth, leads to the realization of the secret dimension, the secret that underlies all forms. If secrecy manifests itself in everything, the universe becomes a sacred picture.

³ Elvin Süzer, Secrets of the Year 3000, “Troy and ‘Gods Riding Chariots’ that Destroy the City”.

⁴ Joseph Campbell: American mythologist and author.

Second is the cosmological dimension. Science is concerned with this. Science describes the form of the universe, but it does so in such a way that secrets emerge again.

The third function is the sociological one. Supporting a certain sociological order and validating it (...) is this sociologic function and it is out of fashion now.

Campbell in talking about “ethical laws” maintains that the validity of the ethical laws defined in the first millennium BC has to be scrutinized today. There are considerable differences between the social order of that day and our day. What technology and science bring to our lives distances us from nature every passing day. The modern man wants to win over nature and reign over it, but in the meantime also distances himself from himself (from nature) due to this new modern (mechanical) order. The problem arises here of both conquering nature, and having inner peace. Marketing, a function of which is to meet the needs in the society and to offer services to that end, comes into play right at this point. There is need, there is demand (or it is created), there is secrecy, and serving as a mediator towards realizing the promises becomes the task of Marketing.

Campbell explains the fourth function as the pedagogic function. What he means by this is that myths can teach people how life should be lived under all circumstances. This too, is a field of expertise of Marketing: adapting mysticism in accordance with new circumstances.

Is It Really Mysticism That Is Marketed?

Is the mysticism that marketing adapts to new circumstances real mysticism, or is it really mysticism itself? Products of mysticism that are marketed range from mystical philosophy to little blue beads used to ward against the evil eye. To what extent do these products comply with its essence and express their real meanings? When people are working twenty hours a day, without a break, to obtain more and not caring about anything else; is going on a ‘faith tour’ for a few days a year, or buying mystical products (clothing, accessories, etc.) once in a week or month to participate in mystical rituals really internalizing mystical philosophy? Or is it simply surrendering to the power of marketing?

Optimistically speaking, we can say that the pedagogic function that has been explained as “living and sustaining mysticism given the circumstances” is fulfilled, or the mystical elements that include values from the past of the human race can be said to be getting support from marketing in order not to disappear in our age where science and technology is increasing its importance every day. From this perspective, marketing-mysticism makes a good duo.

One of the classical 4P's of marketing, Promotion, has a function of making a product more desirable, in other words turning it into a totem. Determining the buyers of the product, which would be promoted, guides the promotion efforts. Turning the product into a totem also means classifying the consumers. In this process, the consumer is given a message that says, “You are different, you are one of those special people in the (...) group.” The important point here is that the turning of a product into a totem defines a special group formation that cannot be compared with other groups relying on class differences (Williamson, 2001: 47).

Mysticism is a good product that can be used as a totem. It does not need a special class to

cater to, for the products that are created to offer the mystical philosophy has been embedded in the genes of its consumer for hundreds of years. What is left to marketing is to just bring it to the surface. For example, an evil-eye-bead represents the same thing for all people, regardless of their group attachment (rich-poor, old-new, educated-uneducated), and meets the same expectation of all (those who believe in it): protection against the evil-minded gazes of other people. It is a totem and what needs to be done is to turn this into a need and draw attention to it.

First human beings have endured the difficulties they have come across with myths and could prevail with the help of this psychological defense mechanism. When they were weak against so many things in nature, they started fighting against it with their minds and eventually started to win.

While, on the one hand winning against nature made their lives easier, it also represented an effort to destroy the world in which they lived, stated differently an effort to destroy themselves. Nature, which had brought human beings to their knees in the beginning, is now taking its revenge. Humans are not happy about the 'chaos' that nature or they have created thus they have embraced mysticism again to come to peace with nature.

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