



## **Mythology as Preparer for Our Age**

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### **Abstract**

Since the 19th Century, there has been an assumption that ancient people made up stories to describe what they could not understand. Although the content of the Mysteries cannot be known through written records as their content was communicated orally, the Mysteries revered the Truth just as today's sciences do. This paper takes the view that mythologies are not to be taken as mere fiction meant to explain the unknown. Spiritual Science and, in particular, the work of Rudolf Steiner, will be used to show the roles played by the Mystery Centers in teaching their people their respective myths. The Akashic Record, also known as the Book of Jashar, is an important source used by Spiritual Science to understand ancient history. The priests and priestesses of the Ancient Mysteries, from their grasp of the past, could foresee how what was initiated in this past would play-out and manifest in the future. This vision became what we call mythology. It was a literal, pictorial description of events that occurred in the spiritual world. The initiates who understood those events brought those stories to their people to help prepare them for their future incarnations.

### **Keywords**

Mythology, Prometheus, Hephaestus, Anthroposophy, Ancient Mysteries

### **Introduction**

The term "myth" has become synonymous in common usage with untrue, with a story far removed from conventional concepts of reality. Webster's Dictionary lists "any fictitious story or account or unfounded belief" as one definition.

These views and attitudes are changing. Since the publication of Joseph Campbell's book, *The Power of Myth* (1988), the stance of modern historians has been moving towards greater appreciation for ancient mythologies as symbolic sustenance for the human soul. John Dominic Crossan (Web reference) lifted the veil over mythology further by stating "My point, once again, is not that those ancient people told literal stories and we are now smart enough to take them symbolically, but that they told them symbolically and we are now dumb enough to take them literally" .

This paper takes this evolution to the next stage by claiming that these ancient mythologies were describing not only events from the far past but also events to occur in the future, *as seen upon the astral plane*. This is a plane of existence (Wikipedia, esotericism) postulated by classical, medieval, oriental, and esoteric philosophies as well as mystery religions (Wikipedia, Greco-Roman mysteries) wherein the soul has its existence. Profound esoteric truths are expressed within mythology. This paper examines the historic situation and the intended purposes of mythology.

Hitherto, there has been an assumption that ancient people made up stories to describe what they could not understand. This arrogant modern position fades before the evidence of ancient accomplishments and wisdom arising from their mystery centers (Lockley, 2010; McGinn, 1991; Welburn, 1997). This paper attempts to correct the view that mythologies were false, invented stories meant merely to explain the unknown.

*We cannot truly understand the ancient myths without first aligning our concepts with those of these ancient times. We will focus on the Greek myths and will therefore use the Greek model of reality and its applications to the human being. (See Table 1, below). Modern concepts of reality typically accept only those models that apply to the physical world. Western religious concepts tend to accept a duality of a separate spiritual world that is "above" the physical world. Working with a complex concept of a four-fold bodily reality plus a hierarchy of spiritual beings integrated with human life may be a challenge for many readers.*

*Many readers may struggle to grasp the profound depths to the ancient myths. For the ancient peoples who shared these myths orally, each character represents qualities of shared human experience. Moreover, the gods of these mythic tales had well known roles and relationships. Modern readers, lacking these contextualizing details, are challenged to absorb the meanings of myths that go far deeper than the individual tales that are presented here. If you are new to mythology, you may find it helpful to read the myths several times with an imaginative mind in order to orient yourself and then move into their deeper meanings.*

### **The myth of Prometheus and Hephaestus**

Let's review this story as an example of an astral tale. Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus are the sons of a Titan, Japetus. The line of Titans originated as the sons of the ancient Greek god of Heaven, Uranus, and his wife Gaia (whose name means 'earth'). The Titans are beings who have characteristics between those of the Gods and of Mankind.

The rule of Uranus is brought to an end by his son Chronos (Time). Eventually, Chronos, too, is overthrown by his son, Zeus. The loyalty of the Titans was split, with all but two supporting Chronos. Those two were the brothers Prometheus (which means thinking with foresight) and Epimetheus (which means thinking with hindsight), who fought side by side with Zeus against the other Titans. All of those who supported Chronos were banished to the underworld.

Zeus asked the brothers to form bodies for humanity who, until that time, had existed only within the spiritual world. This was done, and humanity lived its course through several eras of Atlantean times, circa 25,000 - 9,000 BCE. "When Zeus took over the rulership of the earth from Chronos, humanity had advanced far enough to enter on a new phase, while the old faculties possessed by men from Chronos in ancient times were dying out. Zeus wanted to exterminate mankind and install a new race on earth" (Steiner, 1909, a). But Prometheus resolved to give men the means for further progress as did not want to see destroyed what he had helped to create. He gave Mankind the means to save themselves by giving them knowledge of the use of fire, as well as the arts and literature. Through

these gifts, he expected Mankind would develop sufficient freedom to no longer be entirely dependent upon the Gods, especially Zeus.

This filled Zeus with wrath. As punishment, Prometheus was chained to rocks of the Caucasus, a mountainous area east across the Black Sea from Greece. There he had to endure much suffering over a long period. One explicit suffering was that a vulture would each day gnaw at his liver, which would then re-grow overnight and be available for the vulture to gnaw the next day.

And Zeus, along with the other gods, devised further punishment. They caused Hephaestus, the god of technology, to make a beautiful woman automaton whose attributes could charm the human being. This automaton was Pandora, who was sent with "gifts" for mankind to Epimetheus. Despite the warnings from Prometheus not to accept such gifts, Epimetheus was persuaded by Pandora's charms. In opening the coffin-like box, the gifts of the gods escaped, to prey upon humanity as miseries and illnesses. Only the gift of hope remained within Pandora's box.

Prometheus knew a secret of which even Zeus was ignorant. Zeus sent Hermes to get Prometheus to divulge it, but Prometheus did not betray the secret. This ensured his eventual redemption, for it came to be known that Prometheus could be freed from his chains and his sufferings through the intervention of an initiate who is able to perform twelve remarkable deeds. The completion of these twelve labors could only be done as the achievement of an initiate. The initiate in this case was Heracles, who had undergone initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries, which were the most famous of the secret religious rites of ancient Greece. Despite all of this, there still needed to be a sacrifice of something in order for the new to arise. Chiron, a centaur (half animal and half man) who was already dying from an incurable illness, offered to be the one sacrificed for Prometheus. With this, Prometheus was redeemed.

## Methods

*The paper will use results from analyses of spiritual science (Anthroposophy, Web Reference). Spiritual truths and revelations must fit those human capacities that exist within each given era. Today, we cannot accept a truth unless it is proved with logical thinking. Thus, a spiritual scientist must investigate and state such truths so that it is possible for them to be grasped within the prevailing consciousness. Today, it is deemed by Anthroposophy that the boundaries of natural science can and are being extended.*

Spiritual science intends to establish facts of the spiritual world according to the scientific method. Modern "natural science" has restricted itself to encompassing only a physical world observable by human physical senses, or measurable by instruments devised by humans. Today, however, science is crossing a threshold where it confronts the reality of consciousness (Rosenblum, 2011; Lanza, 2010). Cultivation of spiritual science can, today, extend the boundaries of our physical sciences. Such a spiritual science and the development of expanded senses is the task assumed by the Anthroposophical Society. Begun in 1912 by Rudolf Steiner, Anthroposophy today supports spiritual science through various schools each devoted to a branch of a science or an art or literature. They each use modern scientific methods to ascertain spiritual truths appropriate for modern times.

One focus of Rudolf Steiner was to show the significant role played by Mystery Centers in the advancement of culture. The cosmic memory of all events along with their associated thoughts and feelings, have been recorded in the Akashic Record, also known as the Book of Jashar. Access to this was the historical source used by Rudolf Steiner (Web reference) that revealed human and cosmic evolution.

Whereas different traditions have similar models for the composition of the human being, within this paper an Anthroposophical model of human reality is used because it closely aligns with the Greek model as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. The relationship of the four kingdoms of nature to the bodies of the human being**

Kingdom	Body	Element	Comment
Human	Ego, I-Am	Fire	Moral/immoral will is present, knows that it knows
Animal	Astral body	Air	Inner life, sentience, desires, instincts
Plant	Life body	Water	Livingness, metamorphosis, procreation, memory
Mineral	Physical	Earth	Only visible component, lifeless matter

Here, we see the four kingdoms of Nature. The base kingdom, the Mineral, is defined as lifeless matter. It relates to the element Earth in the Greek concept of The Four Elements (Moons, 2016). The next higher kingdom, the plant, adds life to matter with what is called a life or etheric body. Next, the animal kingdom is comprised of individual living beings, each with an inner life. The fourth, human kingdom includes an inner life with emotions and instincts and adds to this the knowing knower, the one who knows that he or she knows, the one with self-consciousness. This is called the Ego or the I-Am.

When one is awake, these four – the Ego, Astral, Life, and Physical bodies – are working harmoniously together. But when we fall asleep our consciousness changes because our Ego and Astral bodies leave our Life and Physical bodies in the bed. Should our life body also depart, we would experience death and our physical body would then be ruled only by the physical laws of nature. These would begin to cause the physical body to decay. So long as we are alive, the life body overcomes this natural tearing down of the physical body.

All spiritual development depends upon our inner being, our astral body and Ego, both becoming free of the physical senses and body. According to the Anthroposophical model, to become clairvoyant, which is to clearly experience the spiritual world without drugs or hypnosis, one learns how to remain conscious in that part that is otherwise unconscious during sleep. Thus, clairvoyance requires one's Life body to remain integrated with one's astral and ego bodies during one's spiritual experiences (Steiner, 1904, *b*). It is said that in early post-Atlantean times, the etheric body extended well beyond the boundaries of the physical body, thereby allowing for the astral body to have consciousness while it participated in its spiritual experiences even during daily life. But as the focus of humanity's soul descended to the mineral kingdom, the etheric body condensed to lie within the physical body. At this point, for one to have conscious spiritual experiences, one had to loosen their etheric body from their physical. This was what happened for neophytes while they lay as if dead for three and a half days within the Holy of the Holies, inside the Temple under the supervision of the Hierophant (Steiner, 1909, *b*). Alternatively, dreams, during the time of the Mysteries, provided certain people with pictures from their spiritual guides (Bertman, 2005).

## Results

*In today's world, with our materialistic concepts, it is difficult to understand the consciousness of the world in which mythology evolved. In that earlier period of human existence, humans experienced themselves as active participants in the mythological world.*

We find in today's academic literature three perspectives on possible interpretations of mythology: (1) exoteric, where there is no hidden meaning and the events are literally taking place in the physical world; (2) allegorical, where a spiritual story is portrayed through actual, living people; and (3) esoteric, where the events actually took place spiritually, but in rendering the story into common language, the author used people as symbols. Thus, both (1) and (3) have literal interpretations.

When the myths we are considering arose, people took them as literal, as true (Long, 1984). To understand this, we need to understand the culture during that era. Unfortunately, written works do not extend that far back in human history. However, later writers give a strong indication that cultural life once was rooted in the Mystery Centers that existed in every culture from about 3000 BCE until about 1000 BCE (Ruck, 2010). During this time, the priests and priestesses of each mystery center developed extensive living-lore that was handed down orally (Lockley, 2010).

It appears that the ancient Greeks held concepts concerning the reality of the physical world similar to those we find in the Vedic writings of India (1500 – 500 BCE). These cultures in the times before 1000 BCE may have looked upon the everyday, physical world as "maya", which is, illusion. For them, the real world, the important world, was the one where humans could encounter and converse with the gods. This was what esoteric traditions call the Astral Plane or the Astral Realm. Here, quite literally, was where the mythological events took place.

It is said that long, long ago, common people could directly experience events on the Astral Plane with what was then a picture-consciousness (Steiner, 1908, a). But as humans evolved away from a group consciousness to have their own thoughts, they likewise developed their own free will. To facilitate this evolution, until about the 4th century BCE, the initiates in the Mystery Centers retained the capacity to rise up to their gods so as to continue to guide their people. Vain, self-aggrandizing priest-rulers who spoke and worked out of their own ego, without regard to the gods, do not appear in human evolution until after 1000 BCE.

Rudolf Steiner describes the early post-Atlantean consciousness as a picture-consciousness (Steiner, 1923, b). Communication at this time was oral. No written record exists for the times before 3000 BCE except for cave paintings, whose purpose, it is speculated, was a form of communication to remember events such as hunting achievements. Communication evolved to hieroglyphs and later to the alphabet of the Greeks. This evolution of consciousness and communication supported the evolution from a group consciousness into which the gods could send thoughts to an individual thinking human.

"For the peoples of ancient times, there was a kind of collective consciousness. A man did not merely feel his personal ego within his skin, but he felt himself as a member of the tribe, of the city-community. Just as the individual human soul is felt to be the centralizing factor for our organism as a whole, uniting fingers, toes, hands, legs, so did man in very ancient times feel himself a member of the group-soul. Something of the kind still persisted in the early city-communities, even in ancient Greece. One common spirit, a folk-egohood, a tribal egohood, lived and weaved through the single personalities of the tribe or folk. But whatever could come to men's consciousness from this collective egohood had to be under the guidance of the Mysteries in the secret temples, where the priests directed the common spiritual affairs of a city or a tribe. And it is not a mere figure of speech, but in a certain sense an actual reality, to say that such a temple-sanctuary served as a dwelling-place for the city-ego, for the group-soul. There this group-soul had its habitation, and the priests of the temple were its servants. It was they who received the instructions of this group-soul through inspiration — through what was known as an Oracle — and bore them out into the world in order that one thing or another might come to pass" (Steiner, 1910).

Although we can find the "I think" slowly arising in Greek literature after 1000 BCE (Steiner, 1910), Greek authors still called upon the muses to aid in their story telling (Minton, 1960). In the time of Homer, around 1000 BCE, human intelligence was becoming a capacity for each individual. Writing down the mythological stories began as the time of Mysteries was fading, in the 4th century BCE. As the ability to pass along the fullness of oral traditions of the Mystery Centers was failing, permission was granted by the Mystery Center initiates to allow some of its lore to be written down, to become the possession of the physical world, preserved for future generations. What had begun as experiences in the astral plane now followed humanity in its descent into the physical world.

Alexander the Great, whose teacher was Aristotle, sought to establish the Eleusinian Mysteries from Europe to India and into Africa. It is the contention of this author that the greater mission given to Alexander the Great by Aristotle was to save the knowledge embodied as oral tradition within the mystery centers. Alexander's mission, unknown perhaps to himself, was to preserve what was fading away in the new, written form.

On the very day in 356 BCE on which Alexander was born, Herostratus, seeking fame, had thrown a flaming torch into the Sanctuary of the Mystery Center at Ephesus - symbolically bringing the era of the Mystery Centers to a close. Humanity was changing. A new individual intelligence had been rising only for a few hundred years. As it arose, something else would be lost. It was not that these Greeks could not remember the oral tradition, but rather that humans could no longer be relied upon to pass it along faithfully, without altering it according to the allegiances of the individual person conveying the stories.

What had been a collectively perceived myth story had become transformed into a story passed verbally from one person (who was a unit of consciousness separate from the collective) to a group. Later, it became even more removed from the collective awareness through the impersonal medium of the written word. And although the written word might appear at first thought to be a permanent record, it has the impermanence of being attached to shifting meanings as the collective of individual consciousnesses in societies evolved. Translations from one language to another produced even further drifts of meanings away from the original.

This shift in consciousness affected even nascent Christianity where we find 2nd century alterations to key early Christian documents (Collins, 1995; Ehrman, 2011). Aristotle knew this mystery knowledge had to be faithfully recorded soon. It is the author's contention that Aristotle intended this recording when he gave Alexander his mission. According to Plutarch, circa 45-120 AD, Alexander founded at least 70 cities that were named after him (Worthington, 2012). The number of cities directly founded by Alexander with libraries is known to be at least twenty (Kusch, 2012). Establishing the great libraries of these several Alexandrias served the purpose of recording for posterity such content of the mysteries that was allowed to be divulged in written form. Similarly, centuries later, the Grimm brothers in Germany undertook to write down the circulating traditional oral folktales before they were lost. In this case there was an awareness of the progressive fading of humanity's ability to accurately recall such stories, in addition to interpreting and understanding them.

We find in recorded history connections of humans to a higher consciousness. The Greek epics began with an invocation to the Muses (Homer's *Odessey*) to write through the author. Before 1000 BCE, it was felt that the gods thought into the priests and priestesses, who experienced the thought in their prevailing picture-consciousness. After 1000 BCE, the transition from a god-guided collective consciousness to individual consciousness ensued. By the start of the Renaissance, individual people had their own thoughts within their soul (Lockley, 2010; McGilchrist, 2009)

The Akashic Record, according to Rudolf Steiner, shows that during Atlantean times, it was commonplace to experience spiritual beings. Different senses were active back then, as even human

bodies and earthly conditions were different (Steiner, 1908, *b*). After Atlantis, in order to develop individual, personal freedom, our consciousness gradually evolved from a picture-consciousness, through various stages, to a logical thinking consciousness that arose with Aristotle. During this evolution of consciousness, communication of spiritual knowledge also evolved from a living, oral tradition to become what is, in comparison, a "dead" written form. Although writing preserved the stories, it also removed the mythological lore from the life of the soul. By the time of the Renaissance, when individual thinking had become commonplace, the written ancient myths could no longer live in the human soul. Logical thinking then came to rule reality.

"The farther we go back in the evolution of the Earth, the less do we find the abstract truths that are the pride of present-day humanity. More and more we find pictures, truths expressed in pictures. We wrestle our way through the deeply significant truths still preserved as a last echo of oriental wisdom in the Vedas and the Vedanta philosophy; we press on to the primal revelations hidden behind the myths and sagas, and we realize with wonder and awe that a glorious wisdom was once possessed by men who received it without intellectual effort as grace from the spiritual worlds (Steiner, 1923, *a*)."

Those who were initiated into one of the ancient mysteries could perceive far back in time to an earlier epoch when humanity reportedly had not yet assumed physical bodies. In those ancient times, we apparently existed as soul and spirit among other spiritual beings who were going through their own evolution. These beings were the gods described in mythology. And just as far back as one could see, so could one also see similarly far into the future. The events regarding humanity were perceived as taking place within the Astral realm. The initiate could experience within the Astral realm how future astral events might play out as an evolving fulfillment of an earlier event (Steiner, 1908, *c*).

As the descent from picture-consciousness to abstract, logical thinking progressed, a series of events took place. Initiates could see these past events, and could then see how they might play out and complete in a future time such as our times. Such initiates were said to have a Janus face, which could see forwards and backwards in time (Crystal, 2016).

The ancient mystery schools felt in their collective-picture-consciousness that they had a responsibility to guide their own people in life and to prepare them for their future. The myths are these *pictures* perceived within the reality of the astral world and presented to the people of a given culture so that they, with their picture-consciousness, could understand their situation and what lay ahead in their future. Such potent pictures are recorded in the etheric body and thus lived in the souls of the people not only during life but also after death, until their etheric body itself had dissolved. During the sojourn from death to rebirth, in order to rise through the heavenly spheres, only what is soul and spirit may proceed. As reported in near-death experiences, one's life is visible as a panorama (Greyson, 2009). This panorama is within one's etheric body. After death, the etheric body is eventually laid aside, and along with it these pictures are relinquished too. Later, they are gathered up again during the approach toward earth and rebirth (Steiner, 1923, *b*).

### **Prometheus and Hephaestus in modern times**

*Modern writers have been inspired to bring the story of Prometheus into their contemporary times.*

Mary Shelley, while returning in 1818 from a study group that dealt with mythology, got the inspiration for her story *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*. She saw the connection of the Promethean myth to the coming science of her time and the creation of a near-human creature through the use of electricity. She wrestled with the question of whether such a creature would be capable of morals and love and other soul/spiritual attributes of the human. Her foresight to our times was remarkable.

In his book, *Christianity as Mystical Fact*, Rudolf Steiner (1902) shows that the ancient mysteries anticipated the coming of a god from the realm of the sun to counter the descent of human life into the physical in such a way that humanity would eventually be able to ascend with its freedom intact and with the fruits of this evolutionary excursion into separate, individual consciousness. Steiner claims that these mystical expectations were fulfilled at Christ's baptism when the Kyrios, the Christ spirit, descended into the prepared body of a human being, Jesus of Nazareth. Three years later, this "incarnation" would culminate on Golgotha, the place of skulls, with what Steiner called the Turning Point in Time for humanity and Earth evolution, when a god would truly become a human being by experiencing death. By becoming a human, this act made it possible for all "to die and become" (Bellah, 1976).

Steiner reminds us that there were three crucified together on Golgotha. Besides Christ, there were two other beings who are intimately connected with human evolution, who were present symbolically. One represented Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12; Plato's *Timaeus*), known as the Light Bearer, who, on Golgotha, recognized the Christ. The other represented another spiritual being, Satan, the Prince of Darkness, who mocks the Christ during this mystical event. Modern Christian theology assumes there is just one Devil, but as Hugh Fogelman (2012) states, "Lucifer wasn't equated with Satan until after Jerome (d. 420)." Just as these two bracket Christ on Golgotha, so do they bracket Christ in terms of incarnations. Steiner places the incarnation of Lucifer about three thousand years before the event on Golgotha, in the East, where Lucifer's enlightenment led to cultural development that began in the East and spread westward through the post-Atlantean cultural ages.

Similarly, in the third millennium after the so-called Mystery on Golgotha, when a god became a human, thereby opening the door for humanity's ascent, Steiner predicted that there will come the incarnation of the other snake of Mercury's caduceus, namely Satan. Because of confusion regarding the name 'Satan', Steiner chose to use the name 'Ahriman' from Persian lore, Satan's gifts include calculating, weighing and measuring, materialism, and attributing a mechanical concept to nature, to the human, and to the heavenly bodies. Lucifer and Satan each desire to take humanity into their own realms of spiritual-bliss-without-ego (Lucifer) or earthly-power-through-ego (Satan). Thus, they balance each other on Mercury's staff as the white and the black snakes. When one snake predominates within us we become unbalanced and eventually become ill in order to facilitate a rebalance.

The gifts from Lucifer are similar to those of Prometheus (Walker, 1983), while the gifts of Satan, such as robotics, resemble Hephaestus' automatons. Indeed, Pandora, as one of Hephaestus's humanlike robots, had similar appeal to the sexbots now coming to market (Weisman, 2016). Through Lucifer's gifts we became free of the gods but to do so we had to descend from Eden to Earth, from life among non-physical beings to a life chained to the lifeless.

Along with Hephaestus' machine, Pandora, come many miseries and new illnesses from the gods. Similarly, through Satan we will learn how to construct automatons and other mythological machines. According to Steiner (1919), with the imminent incarnation of Satan, preparation within our soul is needed so that we are not led off course by his compelling intelligence, flushed with egotistical temptations, along with dealing with the looming drastic loss in jobs to robot workers (Geek weblink).

Such preparation was the intention of the ancient myths, such as that of Prometheus. In one's sojourn through Purgatory, one reviews the events of their past life. During this reflective time, as the Egyptian Book of the Dead says, the deeds of the soul are weighed. After Purgatory, these memories, including the myths, are laid aside. Memories from earthly life are set aside so that one's sojourn in the heavens can continue for several centuries after Purgatory, unencumbered by earthly things. The path to the next incarnation returns through this Purgatory (moon) sphere when the incarnating souls are approaching earth for their upcoming incarnation and weaving into it their karma. In this sphere, the



myths such as the story of Prometheus and the role of Hephaestus rises up again to aid in this preparation for the new conditions of a new life. When one returns to Earth again for their next incarnation, the memories retained in the etheric Akashic pages from previous incarnations serve to determine one's future karma.

## Discussion

Few could be initiated into the Mysteries. The priests and priestesses selected individuals based on bloodline and high moral character, as seen in their aura, a field of subtle, luminous radiation surrounding a person. Respect and reverence for Mystery knowledge meant that one kept it a secret, to be shared only with other initiates. "It was accounted dangerous to 'betray' the Mysteries. This meant 'betraying' the origin of the gods of the people. And the right understanding of this origin is wholesome; misunderstanding is destructive (Steiner, 1902)." Thus, betrayal of the secrets meant death.

Initiates who could see both into the past as well as into the future, had a responsibility to their people to guide them in life and to prepare them for the future. Such initiates were said to have a Janus face.

In the time of the Ancient Mysteries, 3000-1000 BCE, not only perceptions, but also memory was different than it is today. People were able to retain epic stories in their memories with one hearing of these tales (Jaynes, 1976). These powerful stories persisted in one's memory, in their etheric body, and helped to prepare for their coming life. Normally, this cycle would be about a thousand years, although for some the cycle of reincarnation was much faster. Conditions on the earth needed to be significantly different so that something new could be attained from earth life (Steiner, 1909, c). Alternating sex from one life to the next allowed for at least two incarnations within the period of the precession of the equinox from one astrological sign to the next.

In more recent centuries, the so-called fairy tales, like mythologies, helped prepare children for their current lives or, in spirit existence, helped prepare a young soul for a future life. An example is Grimm's story of Briar Rose (aka Sleeping Beauty). Here, the princess falls into a long sleep upon pricking her finger on the needle of a spinning wheel.

To properly grasp the essence of these fairy tales, we must see each of the characters as aspects of our own soul or spirit. The princess or heroine typically represents our soul. The prince who comes to awaken her is not part of the kingdom of the princess but comes from another realm – suggesting that solutions to our problems may be sought and found outside our culturally-bound realms of thinking, and must await a time that is not of our own choosing. The spinning wheel represented, in its cultural time, the height of technology. Into our times, our soul still sleeps with its gaze turned to technology and the mineral kingdom – that is, the lifeless world. The uninvited "witch" had cast a spell intended to cause the princess to die but the twelfth "witch" was able to alter this spell to be just "a sleep" from which she could be awakened – a commentary on how we can amend the goals of evil to arrive at the good. The princess sleeps until this new spirit can awaken her to the reality of the spiritual world. The sleep of the princess is like Kali Yuga, as foretold in Vedic texts, the age when humanity's atavistic ability to experience the spiritual world with its picture-consciousness would cease. We are now in the time when our Briar Rose should be awakened.

The stories of Prometheus and Hephaestus have similar themes and should be seen as related. Here, the human attains independence from Zeus and the gods through the act of Prometheus – but at a cost, a distancing of ourselves from our connection with the spiritual world as we become chained to the material world. But this new fire had to be contained and so what Prometheus represents within humanity is bound to the mineral kingdom with chains made by the god of technology. The Promethean aspect of the human suffers greatly during this era, as represented by the vulture (or

eagle) gnawing during the day on our liver, which then regenerates overnight when we have access, through our dreams, to our unconscious awareness of our spiritual connections to higher powers. Our daytime consciousness attacks our liver, which is the seat of our angers in Greco-Roman and Eastern traditions, with pain pills, vicodin, statins, and alcohol. Further attack our liver occur through hepatitis, a sickness of the liver, and the astral desires of the stomach, insatiable for ever more material things to feed our earthly desires. Prometheus runs through a whole gamut of suffering. It is the fate of great Initiates to take on life's suffering.

Prometheus is eventually released by the twelve labors of Heracles, who was an initiate of the Eleusinian Mysteries (Steiner, 1904, a). Heracles represents those initiated not only into wisdom but also into deed. This is the new prince. Our Prometheus can be released only by our becoming mature enough to unchain ourselves from the mineral-only reality that is proclaimed by natural science, and manifests in the materialistic focus of our thoughts and actions in the modern world. This is a story about freeing humanity little by little by lifting humanity above the lifeless mineral realm to directly experience the realm of the living.

It is important to hold onto our understanding that ancient people did not think as people do today, with abstract thoughts. They thought in pictures, more like dreams, and taught lessons through myths and stories. During Atlantis, the Earth's atmosphere was different than today. Genesis 2:6 claims, "there went up a mist from the earth ..." The air was full of water vapor. Without clear air there could be no rainbow to be seen because all sunlight was dispersed by this dense vapor. The objects of the physical world did not reveal themselves with sharp outlines. Instead they appeared more like a street lamp does on a foggy evening (Steiner, 1909, b).

According to Rudolf Steiner, the focus of the human soul was not on the physical plane as it is today; rather, it was on the etheric (prana) plane. This is to say that the Atlanteans directed their astral attention to work upon the etheric plane. Today, the attention of our astral body gazes only downward upon the mineral kingdom. In those ancient times, this mineral kingdom was deemed to be Maya, illusion, but since the Renaissance it has become "the-only-reality".

There was godly purpose to chaining us to the Rock. To become free of our chains, we must spiritualize the mineral realm. Thus, we can perceive a metaphoric message behind the words when Christ calls Peter the Rock upon which his church is to be built.

## **Conclusions**

In ancient times, initiates of the mystery centers could see back to a time when humanity did not yet have physical bodies but existed as astral beings among other astral beings such as the Greek gods. We have explored how our descent from a god-filled paradise into a god-manifested physical world is told in the story of Prometheus who, by giving humanity fire, i.e. ego-freedom, was chained to the mineral kingdom, the Caucasus rocks, using chains from Hephaestus, the god of technology. Such myths told a literal story as experience in the astral realm. The myths were told to the people to help them, when next incarnating, to prepare for what they would meet in their new life.

Are many of us who are alive today once those who were so prepared in ancient times by the myths? Yes, many of us are. Now we carry a responsibility to help humanity prepare for the next two or three thousand years. This is to be done out of wisdom, love, and virtuous deed. The battle, as it was for Prometheus, is for the survival of humanity. Even attaining spiritual insights as a science will not be enough to free us to become full human beings if we cannot recognize and willingly sacrifice our animalistic qualities within our soul, which is our centaur within.

What myths will we choose to live out as we go forward now?

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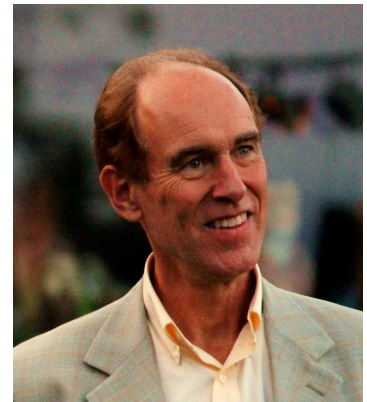
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## Resources

Anthroposophy <http://www.goetheanum.org/Anthroposophy.anthroposophie.0.html?&L=1>  
 Automatons of Hephaestus: <http://www.theoi.com/Ther/Automotones.html>

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