

"From Myth to Philosophy"
Keith Douglas

a CEGEP Humanities World View course
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The goal of this course is to explore the distinction(s) between the mythological ways of understanding the world and the philosophical and scientific way(s) that grew out of them. As might be expected, there is a tension between these two and we shall learn that there is not always as clear a dividing line as one might like.

This class will be done in lecture-discussion format, with an emphasis on student discussion, instructor motivation and interaction both between students and instructor and amongst the students themselves.

Evaluation

<u>Kind</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Weight Each</u>	<u>Total</u>
Quizzes	2	5%	10%
Question for Review	1	5%	5%
Experiment Report	1	5%	5%
Class Participation	-	10%	10%
Summary Papers	2	25%	50%
Examination	1	20%	20%
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			100%

The quizzes and examination are open texts, but not open notes. I realize that many of you will try and squeeze my interpretations and lectures as well as other details in your reading packages. This is fine, but no extra sheets are permitted. The examination will require critical aspects and as such will not benefit as much from notes anyway. Quizzes will not be the whole period. Generally speaking they will be about 40 minutes and the lectures will take place after the quiz. (This is to discourage "skipping" the first part of class to study for the quiz.) Quizzes will be a mixture of short answer, multiple choice and mini-essay questions. The examination will be 2 longer essays. Students missing a single quiz may do the other one for 10% of the grade instead of 5% if they tell the instructor by the 29th lesson. Otherwise a 0 will be assigned. Medical and other legitimate excuses will allow the usual flexibility.

"Skipping" class is a great way to lose class participation points as well as being rather foolish if routinely done. I expect students to get on average a "6/10" on this section. Showing up to class more or less always and not being disruptive shall earn more or less this grade. Earning more can only be done by actually participating in discussions. Students may in principle earn up to 15/10 on this section.

The "question for review" comes in on the class dedicated for review for the final. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in this class as not only will they get the best they

can in this section of the evaluation, but also as this is the last chance they have to earn class participation marks. Furthermore, good questions that come up in this section might be good study material for the final ...

Summary papers are explained in detail as they are handed out. These are approximately 1500 words in total each and are longer versions of some examination-type questions.

Several days discussion is explicitly listed. This is not meant to imply that days with it not listed it is not expected or encouraged. The days it is listed it is requested. It is a good way to make sure the student gets her class participation points.

The Experiment Report due on the 29th lesson with the Question for Review shall be explained as is it assigned. It may be done with a partner, in which case both partners will earn the same grade. A student may skip this assignment and do an extra question on the final examination and hence take the exam for 25% of the grade. This question will be basically of the same style as the content of the report. A student who does not hand in a report is assumed to be doing this option on the final examination. A student who hands in a report and submits an answer to the extra question on the examination will have his answer on the latter ignored by the instructor.

Texts - Course pack, containing excerpts from:

Tales from the Igloo.

The Epic of Gilgamesh.

The Star Trek: The Next Generation Companion

Illiad

Odyssey

Works and Days

The Presocratic Philosophers: Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Empedocles, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Pythagoras, Leucippus / Democritus (* Might just assign this as a text.)

The Oxford Companion to Philosophy: Socrates

Plato Complete Works: Phaedo, Timaeus, Apology, Euthyphro, Republic.

Aristotle Complete Works: Physics, Metaphysics, On the Heavens, On the Soul.

De Rerum Natura

The Gospel According to St. John

The Development of Logic

The Atom in the History of Human Thought (for the arabs)

From Galileo to Newton

The New Organon

Discourses & Dialogues (Galileo)

Meditations on First Philosophy

Le Monde (inc. Traité de l'Homme)

Lesson 1

Details of the course. Explanation of focus (primarily European).

What is a myth? Myths and Religions. Myths and Stories. An example from the Inuit. Discussion.

Lesson 2

Introduction to the "Star Trek format." *Star Trek: The Next Generation's* "Darmok." Three levels of myth. Purposes of myths.

Lesson 3

The Epic of Gilgamesh.

Lesson 4

Comparative Mythology. Gilgamesh and the Bible. Updating mythologies. Greeks.

Lesson 5

The Greek poets, continued: Homer. Quiz.

Lesson 6

Hesiod. What happened? Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes.

Lesson 7

The ambivalence in Heraclitus; the danger of Parmenides.

Lesson 8

Anthropomorphism in myth and philosophy. The role of myth in early Greek philosophy. Empedocles.

Lesson 9

Hand out first essay topic, due on Lesson 16. Topics will be synthetic and summarizing in character. Discussion.

Lesson 10

Can we avoid anthropomorphism? The presocratic atomists.

Lesson 11

Socrates and the turn to the ethical.

Lesson 12

Myth and life of Socrates. The *Apology*. Plato (I).

Lesson 13

Plato (II) and his predecessors. The Forms, Parmenides and Heraclitus revisited. *The Republic* and metaphysics & myth.

Lesson 15

Plato (III) and myth. The *Timaeus* and *Phaedo*.

Lesson 16

Plato (IV) and myth, continued. Quiz.

Lesson 17

Essay topic #2 handed out, again synthetic and summarizing. Focus

on Plato and the atomists. Discussion. Due Lesson 24.

Lesson 18

Aristotle and protoscience. The *Physics*.

Lesson 19

Aristotle's attitude to myth: *On The Soul*, *Metaphysics* and *On the Heavens*.

Lesson 20

Aristotle's scientific legacy.

Lesson 21

Epicureans and religion as unnecessary. Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*.

Lesson 22

The rise of Christianity. Greek philosophy and Christianity.

Lesson 23

Rise of Christianity continued. Jesus as purely mythological character?

Lesson 24

Medieval logic, the Arabic preservation of the Greeks, and the "Dark Ages".

Lesson 25

The scientific revolution (I): Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo.

Lesson 26

More reaction against the old (II): Descartes, Bacon.

Lesson 27

Experimentation day. This day will illustrate the revolution that is experiment, and contrast it with experience. Students will perform an experiment, and write it up. Due Lesson 29.

Lesson 28

Descartes' *Le Monde*. Its "danger." Authority and power. Dogma as mythology? The Royal Society and religion. Hints at the sequel.

Lesson 29

Review for examination: student led. Each student will be responsible for bringing in one question they feel would be appropriate for the final exam. The instructor will collect these. (See grading for more details.)

Lesson 30

Final examination. Summarizing as well as critical. The discussions throughout the term are practice for the latter aspect.

Please write 1400-1600 words on one of the following topics, appropriate to the given paper. Some of the topics require further reading beyond what has already been assigned. These instructions apply to each paper.

Topics For Paper #1

1. Describe the mythological elements in Empedocles. How are they different (if at all) from those in Hesiod or Homer?
2. One of the recurring themes of the course is that of evidence. Did the mythmakers (of any of the myths proper we have looked at) lack this concept? Illustrate with a discussion of a passage or two from these myths.
3. In your view, does the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode we watched itself count as a myth? Why or why not? Be careful of proving too much; if you are prepared to make all literature mythical in character, be prepared to defend just that.
4. Virtually all the myths we have studied have been in translation. Does translating mythology pose any problems beyond translating other forms of language? It might be useful to illustrate with myths from your own background that have been misrepresented due to translation difficulties, if such will fit in your discussion.
5. The lecture on Parmenides emphasized that he is often regarded as one whose reason out ran the factual evidence for his views. What would Parmenides reply to someone who felt that the myths of his time had better factual evidence for them than his (apparent) extreme monism.
6. Compare and contrast the story of Ut-napishtim with the two stories of Noah in the Bible. Explain the differences and similarities if you can. This can be done "in your view" or can be done as a miniresearch project on what the experts think. Do not rehash my lectures! You may compare and contrast your (or the expert's) view with mine, however.
7. How many myths of creation are there in the Bible? Defend your claim carefully. For purposes of this assignment you can include the so-called "New Testament" or not at your leisure; be sure to tell the reader of your paper the scope of your project.

Topics for Paper #2

1. Obtain a photocopy of the pseudoaristotlian treatise *On Marvelous Things Heard* from your instructor. Divide up the numbered sections into the following categories: "mythological", "factual and likely true" and "factual and likely false." Using one or two from each of these categories, explain how you came to categorizing as you did. Note: you are not being graded on your categorization, but on the elucidation of your method. If you feel that one of the three categories is empty in the entire treatise, you must defend why you think this category is empty.

2. As mentioned in class, Plato is only one of the sources we have about Socrates. Do you think he is more or less likely to mythologize him than Xenophon, Aristophanes and the others? Why? Restrict yourself to the so-called "Socratic" dialogues unless you can make a case for there being no difference between them and the others.

3. Based on what little you've read (or can dig up), evaluate the claim that the presocratic atomists were successful at banishing what the lectures called "anthropomorphism" from their world view.

4. In what way are or aren't the Platonic Forms mythological?

5. A research project: Compare Plato's (i.e. the Platonic Socrates') view of death in the *Phaedo* to that held by another thinker from approximately the same time. Focus on the topics we have discussed in the course.

6. Do the Platonic Forms together with the "world of becoming" successfully respond to the problems raised by Parmenides and Heraclitus? This will require reading a fair bit of Plato.

Exam Questions. As Above, Plus:

1. Do you think that the instructor's retranslation of parts of John 1:1-14 is more or less consistent with that part of the text being mythological?

2. Why do you think Aristotle's view on practically everything remained very popular (so long as there was inquiry at all) for as long as it did?

3. What is the function of the mythological elements in Lucretius' poem, given his explicit disavowal of religion in the same poem?

4. To the extent that free inquiry fell through a low point in Christendom during the "dark ages" and beyond, why do you suppose that logic was a subject that was less affected than others?

5. Copernicus' reason for his heliocentric hypothesis was by many contemporary views manifestly unscientific. Does this invalidate his insight?

6. Descartes' *Le Monde*, as we discussed, was suppressed by its author. Which part of it was potentially more upsetting to the reigning authorities: the Copernicanism or the implicit almost complete materialism? This question realistically would require oodles of research; here we are only interested in your defense of the view point you adopt as far as the materials we have discussed.

7. What is the difference between an experiment and an experience? Those of you who speak French may find this question particularly interesting.

Lecture 1

- Explain intellectual aims in broad outline

World views form an important part of our intellectual "equipment." They help us answer questions such as "where did we come from?" "what is the universe like?" "what are human beings?" and so forth. In this course we take a historical approach to looking at how these questions have been answered.

In particular, we are going to look at the development of one way of looking at that world, one that might be called (in broad terms: we shall explore nuances and subtleties all semester) the scientific or perhaps the rational approach, out of another, one that might be called the mythological or religious approach. As we shall see, these traditions interacted; those of you who are aware of the contemporary intellectual scene may recognize there is still an interaction. Since we only have 30 meetings (including this one) to discuss, debate, and evaluate such matters, we shall be stopping our course at the beginning of what is usually called "The Scientific Revolution" in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Nevertheless this gives us several thousand years of material to take a look at, so we shall certainly have a lot to do!

- Hand out syllabus

Before we discuss more the material of this course, I would like to handout a copy of the syllabus I intend to follow. This includes information on how to contact me, how you will earn your grade in this course and a brief list of lecture, discussion and pedagogical topics.

- Read through details of evaluation

Please notice carefully that there are 8 components to your grade in this course. I have indicated on the timetable when each of these items is due or will be done as the case may be. Note also that the quizzes are on classes with regular lectures or discussions. This is explained in your syllabus, along with the important class participation policy. If you feel you may be unfairly graded in this respect because your first language is not English, feel free to speak to me about your concerns.

[pause for questions]

- Why European?

The focus of this course is going to be on both European myths and European philosophy. There are very ancient and interesting myths from around the world, as well as at least two other very influential philosophical traditions besides the European. My choice to restrict our discussion to primarily European thought and writing is two fold. One is that it is what I am (regrettably)

most familiar with. I would certainly like to be able to discuss Indian philosophy or African mythologies as well as I can the European material, but not this year ...

The second reason is simply time. We are already doing a fair bit this semester, so restricting ourselves for the most part to European materials makes sense from this perspective. That said, students are welcome - nay, encouraged - to discuss and write about materials from any tradition or background that interests them. Furthermore, our first example of a myth in this course shall be one from a background that is perhaps unfamiliar to many of you. It was unfamiliar to me once; I have benefited from long discussions with friends and colleagues on this. I hope you will do the same.

- Hand out Inuit myth

This myth is an Inuit one, somewhat retold in more "white man terms" as an Inuit friend of mine would say. Before we read through it together, I would like to say a few words about who and what the Inuit are so that we have some common point of reference. I shall do this sort of anthropological or historical introduction to most of our topics throughout the semester.

The Inuit are an indigenous people of North America, with similar groups found in northern Asia, particularly Siberia. They are sometimes known as "Eskimos." The Inuit prefer the term "Inuit" as it is their word for themselves. The term "Eskimo" is regarded as a bit insulting. You may have heard that this is because it means "raw meat eater." It is, however, true that the Inuit traditionally ate raw meat. (And I don't mean sashimi!) This is not the source of the insult. It is instead because the term is not their own: "Eskimo" is a Cree word. Many of the Inuit traditionally live above the tree line, and so do not see many plants. Those that live near the coast, as many did (depending on the ocean for some of their food) often saw logs and other tree parts wash up, however. Many animals in traditional Inuit territory would hibernate or restrict movements during winter, and so the long winters were a grueling time for these people.

As one might expect, their stories reflect this cold, snowy, but ultimately happy way of life. My friend tells me that Inuit love to laugh, saying that it is perhaps through humour that they have been able to deal with the hardships of living in such an extreme climate. That said, however, the story we are about to read may strike some as a bit depressing. I want you to pay attention to two things in it, however. One is "the point" of the story. I do not mean to suggest (or deny!) that the story has a single point, moral, or lesson or anything of the sort. It may well have none - simply be a yarn to tell over seal liver and frozen whale blubber. But it still may ... The second is the components of the story as it pertains to world view more directly. I haven't told you yet what exactly a world view includes - but be on the look out for views about the nature of the universe, how we know about it, what

human beings are, what the relationship between humans and other animals is, what the nature of chance and determination are, what the nature of the good is and other questions you feel are related. Do not feel you have to see all of these questions addressed even obliquely in the work. Also, as this **is** our first class, I shall not expect you to defend your views and interpretations to any great extent. By the end of the course, you will have learned to debate and discuss these sorts of issues at length. We will then spend the remainder of the class time discussing the work, and give you a chance to get to know each other.

If you have trouble with any of the words in the text, feel free to flip briefly to the one page glossary I have supplied as the last page of the handout. These sorts of items (vocabulary) are good topics for quizzes, so you may also wish to review them at your leisure later.

[read myth]

- Class discussion on "message" of the work; what is it **for**?

As I said before we started reading, we have two discussions - which are not separate - to do next. I realize this may be awkward in the first day of class, but I'd like to turn the floor over to you and see what you got out of it, structuring your responses to the questions I posed to motivate the discussion earlier. When I call on you to answer or to speak today for the first time, please state your name, what you'd like to be called if it is different from your name, and your program of study here at CEGEP. I am asking for both your name and your preferred appellation as I only have your official name in my records so far and I want to also address you how you prefer to be addressed.

[discussion]

Lecture 2

- Introduction to the *Star Trek* format
- Historical background to the series and episode

What we are going to do today is a bit unusual, though I am hoping you will like it. I have brought in a recording of one of my favourite pieces of television. It is about mythology and also about "World Views" in general.

Back when I was younger than you are now, a very popular - at least in certain circles - syndicated television show was *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. A spin off from a show from my parents time, this in many ways groundbreaking television show ran from 1987 to 1994. Since I graduated from high school in 1994, you can see how the show may have played a role my youth.

The premise is superficially this. The crew and passengers of a

spaceship, the USS *Enterprise*, are on a mission to explore our galaxy. Free to do so because of an Earth effectively free from war and poverty, humanity takes the time to better itself through knowledge, science, and striving to learn. As you will see, their captain, a cosmopolitan man by the name of **Jean-Luc Picard** is scholar, a parent of sorts (though not biologically!), and if necessary, warrior. But he is first and foremost the scholar of these three. His crew are like his family - this "band of brothers and sisters" approach is a deliberate part of what creator Gene Roddenberry felt was an important piece of wisdom to impart to his creation. This episode, called "Darmok", aired first on September 30th, 1991. This made it the 2nd episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation's* fifth season, and is often regarded as one of its best. It involves an interesting puzzle the principle characters work on, and, if you haven't seen the episode previously, try and solve it yourself. If you have, please be silent until the end so as to let your classmates mull. If you are lost as to who is who, please read over your handout on the characters in the show. (You should do so eventually anyway, as even names of the major characters is quizzable material, in principle, as are of course plot points.) A final note, about the technology of the show. The previous episodes establish the "Universal Translator" as being a well functioning piece of technowizardry. As we will see, even a translation of vocabulary and grammar is not always sufficient ... If any of you have questions on what is presupposed by this story, speak to me after class.

- Levels of myth

Also, watch the episode while paying attention to what might be called "levels of myth." There are at least 3 in this story. I will not attempt to characterize what I mean by this "levels of myth" notion just yet, as to explore it too much now would spoil the story.

- Watch the episode

I hope you enjoyed the episode. We have a few minutes left for discussion of our "levels of myth" issue I left hanging. This in turn also relates to our purposes of mythology we discussed last class. I had in mind by the three levels the following. One is the obvious one - Picard's telling of the Epic of Gilgamesh to his counterpart. This is a "real myth" - i.e. there really is an Epic of Gilgamesh. We shall even discuss it next class! Another reasonably obvious level of mythology is the Tamarian mythology presupposed by their language. But here mythology is not "just" a bunch of old stories for some purpose we have to uncover, it is a very active part of their culture. Until Picard and his crew learn the secret of the Tamarian culture, they are not only unable to communicate, but even risk conflict with them. But there is also a third level of myth. A lot has been written on *Star Trek* in its various incarnations (and indeed science fiction and related genres in general) as contemporary mythology.

A question to focus our inquiry is then as follows. Consider the mythology of either the Tamaritians or that of the Epic of Gilgamesh as presented by Picard. Are there features of these that are also found in *Star Trek*? Both are fiction, or so most of us would claim. But this raises some interesting questions. In particular, is this a legitimate category to describe the ancient works?

Was there any **non-fiction** to compare it to? Certain works of what are mythology in our sense (how this works we shall see in due course) are believed to reflect "the truth" or "a truth" by people to this day. Truth is a very thorny concept, with a very long philosophical pedigree.

Furthermore, even if fiction is taken as forming a necessary part of the characterization of mythology, perhaps it is not sufficient. Lots of fiction has been written over the years, some of it with more, one might say, mythological feel, than others. Plato, as we shall see, wrote dialogues where he depicted real people such as Socrates and Theaetetus engaged in discussions which did not happen. Are these mythical? Shakespeare wrote plays both about fictional characters such as Portia and Antonio in *Merchant of Venice* but also fictionalized histories in works such as *Richard II*. Are these mythological? Some might say "fantastic elements" might be needed. But what these are is also hard to specify. *Hamlet* contains a ghost; *The Tempest* an air spirit. Does that make them fantastic in the relevant way? Is there a difference in kind, or not, between Data of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and Ariel, of the aforementioned play? Throughout this course, we shall see how other approaches to life broke away from mythology. But the reason it is so hard to answer the questions I have posed in today's class is that this breaking away was not sudden, nor is it a terribly well posed question until we get more of a grip on what mythology is and what it seems to do.

Next class we shall look at some of the earliest mythology of Europe and the near East, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. As we shall see, there are people who take a version of some of its stories seriously (what that means will become clear later) to this day!

Lecture 3

In this class I am going to lecture extensively on the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and other related writings. Again, I begin with some history and anthropology. The *Epic of Gilgamesh* comes to us from ancient Mesopotamia, which is in what is now known as Iraq. Here we have the oldest civilization known. The Epic of Gilgamesh is no doubt composed of still earlier stories and legends, and concerns itself with an ancient theme. Gilgamesh, a warrior-king, travels the world in search of immortality. This basic theme concerns an essential feature of the human condition: our mortality.

But there is more: quite a bit more, in fact, if one looks hard enough. We shall examine some of these features today. The opening verses praise Gilgamesh's wisdom and experience. Even in these

days the recognition of the importance of intellectual qualities is presented. He is credited with founding a city, producing monuments, and other parts of civilization. This is not Tennyson's "idle king" for sure!

Before I go on to the next point, I would like to discuss briefly an issue concerning more directly "scientific" issues in mythology and religion. Many times I will point out that we have learned that such and such a view or bit is false understood literally or even as an allegory. We shall explore literalism much next class when it comes time to examine some "flood myths" but for now let me note I am **not** saying myths were, never mind ought to be, taken literally. It is a detailed, complicated matter trying to extract morals. One of our perennial concerns is whether mythology is relevant in some respects today, and if so how. We must thus contend with literal meaning issues.

That said, let's look at Gilgamesh's curious heritage. He's described as being two thirds divine and one third mortal. From the perspective of our understanding of genetics this is ridiculous. But what did the authors of the story have in mind by this pronouncement? It isn't clear - perhaps they chose to make him more than just a demigod to "one up" other stories of demigods. To have him three quarters something would be considered possible even by the people at the time. Like the Greeks (as we shall see) the Mesopotamians talked about families of gods, so this possibility was not ruled out on that ground.

Moving on, then, note that the Epic describes Gilgamesh as being literally formed by the gods, and he is compared again to non-human animals. Metaphor and simile seem to be well developed. A belief in prayer is also prominent: the people of Uruk are described as petitioning the gods Anu and Aruru. Not only this, the story says that the people's wishes were granted: Enkidu, Gilgamesh's companion, was created for this purpose. You may find the footnotes to this section amusing: I will not discuss them further here.

The view that the gods can be petitioned by prayer or other activities is an ancient one. We know from other writings of this area, for example a document called the *Enuma Elish*, that the people in question regarded the forces and features of nature as being under control of the gods. For example, one god, Marduk, is credited with slaying an oceanic demon, Tiamat, to placate the ocean enough for it to be a useful component in making the world. This ought to be compared to a view that many were to adopt later - that if the gods exist at all, asking them for favours is unhelpful. Sometimes this comes along with the view that nature is self sustaining. Even that phrase indicates a change in subject: "nature" as an entity may well have not been recognized by the Mesopotamians. We shall learn more about this in future lectures on the Greeks when we talk about *phusis*.

Enkidu, Gilgamesh's companion, is also described as being

superhuman in various respects. He is also described as being animal-like. But note towards the end of I, iv. Enkidu acquires knowledge. How does he do this? The way is curious. Enkidu becomes knowledgeable by having sexual relations with a prostitute. He not only is supposed to have learned something, but he's also now one who terrifies other animals. The prostitute tells him that he's now become like a god. This is not surprising if you pay attention to the fact that Shamhat may well be a temple prostitute. This is an ancient profession. In a certain respect, we can interpret this passage as saying Enkidu became civilized in a certain fashion.

The next part that I will draw attention to is the emphasis placed on dreams: you can read through the details yourself, but note that Gilgamesh wonders (like many of us have, no doubt) what his dreams mean. This was even to concern Plato and Aristotle!

In the next tablet, eventually, Gilgamesh and Enkidu discuss parting on a quest. Neither is a quick, hasty man of action. They deliberate and debate. Even a group of counsellors are said to give Gilgamesh, as mighty as he is, the counsel of reason.

Tablet III tells of the advice given to Gilgamesh. He is told to respect the wisdom of Enkidu. Note also that this makes Gilgamesh less than an absolute monarch. He may be king, but he is told that there are things he cannot do, and advice he should listen to. He even asks his **mother** for advice.

Tablet IV discusses a journey and the explicit courting of a dream, and one that is said to be favourable. This suggests a belief (a very ancient one) in the prophetic power of dreams. There's also an interesting remark about some putative powers of plants. Enkidu is said to have protected himself from the fear of death by rubbing himself with plants. No context or further development of this is given. It is not completely clear even from the translation whether this was meant to be for courage or to actually protect against injury. (Of course, the two may well have been conflated in the Akkadian mind.)

In tablet V, the relationship between religion and nature is briefly discussed. Gilgamesh and Enkidu stand in awe towards the mountains and forest and their spirits and gods. This is in spite of their "natural strengths" and godly origins. Again here also what we'd call "natural forces" or the like - the winds in this case - are under the command of gods - Shamash. But note that they basically do so at the bidding of Gilgamesh, despite this. Gilgamesh is able to defeat Humbaba because the gods make the winds in his favour. But Gilgamesh is more than a pawn. Enkidu has to persuade Gilgamesh to do the gods bidding. It is unclear exactly what got Gilgamesh to change his mind: the relevant parts are lost. Enkidu seems to both appeal to his sense of glory and his duty to the gods. The sense of glory will connect importantly to the Greek notion of *arete*, which we shall meet later. There is clearly an ethical dimension - however strange to us - to Gilgamesh's tribulations.

In the following tablet, Ishtar the princess proposes marriage to our hero. Gilgamesh what he could give her if they were to marry, and goes through a list of animals, amongst other things. This is curiously parallel to the story of Genesis 2 where god (Elohim, in this case: see next lecture) tells Adam to pick an animal for a mate. But note also that Gilgamesh says that Ishtar has had and done virtually everything, and what she ruins. This she takes as a terrible insult, and turns to her father, Anu the sky-god, to punish Gilgamesh for his insolence. She persuades him to let loose the "bull of heaven", which rampages around, killing and destroying in her anger. Enkidu manages to capture it and tells Gilgamesh that their arrogance - similar to the Greek idea of *hubris*, for those of you who may know that idea - has brought upon this calamity. Curiously enough, the solution is to kill the bull. A sacrifice of some kind, this time, however, to Shamash. This can be interpreted also as a desire to take one's fate into one's hands. Of course, it enrages Ishtar further and she talks to those in her well-developed religion (the prostitutes). Note the units of materials here too: a sophisticated system of standards for many things is clearly indicated. But the people of Uruk loved Gilgamesh and Enkidu for what they did. Finally is the remarkable metaphor, if it is a metaphor, of having Enkidu call Gilgamesh his brother.

Tablet VII has Enkidu worried about another dream, this time one an assembly of the gods. The gods for the most part worry about the bull. Ellil by contrast says that Shamash encouraged them. But Gilgamesh and Enkidu are still torn up that one of them is to die for their deeds. Notice again they take the dream as reflecting reality. We get the confirmation of the metaphor of brotherhood a bit later, after Enkidu's plea to spare his friend. Enkidu has another dream and Gilgamesh laments for his dying friend.

VIII opens with the dawn and the mourning of Enkidu by beasts and men alike. Gilgamesh promises that his friend will be missed. He even displays his biological knowledge about hearts:

"I touch his heart, but it does not beat at all."

Taboos are also mentioned, and then Gilgamesh angers over the death of his friend, sacrificing to his memory. It is a shame that much of this part of the story is for now lost: it would be very interesting reading.

By tablet IX, Gilgamesh has realized his own mortality. He looks for his ancestor, Ut-napishtim, who supposedly found the secret to eternal life. He attempts to show his strength to get himself closer, but people disbelieve him. His grief and mourning attire do not befit his name. He explains that Enkidu's death has hit him hard: look how **modern** he seems. This could be any of us. His desperation also sounds timeless. Once Gilgamesh hears from the alewife what to do, he sets off. The boatman asks him the same things the alewife did, and Gilgamesh answers, pretty much word

for word. This is not surprising, as epics were often sung, recited and so forth. It is easier to remember if Gilgamesh has less unique to say. Ut-napishtim is finally met, after a dangerous journey across treacherous waters. The danger of the sea would later play an important role in Greek legends.

After Ut-napistim has heard Gilgamesh's praise of Enkidu, he tells him that even he is mortal, and that his grieving is unnecessary for death is part of life. Gilgamesh's response is unfortunately largely lost to us.

But he does say at the beginning of tablet XI that he wonders how Ut-napishtim came to have immortality - he tells of the similarities between the two. It is here that Ut-napishtim tells a story of a flood. [...]

Before I finish, I would like to draw attention to one recurring feature of the *Epic*. Notice when any character is about to speak it is prefaced with "[someone] made his [her] voice heard and spoke," An interesting interpretative question is why this is put this way. Some people think that it represents the idea that thought is internalized speech - or rather the opposite in this case, that speaking is externalized thought.

[Say if not finished: You are responsible for reading the rest of the Epic on your. Pay close attention to the story of Ut-napishtim.]

Lecture 4

In this lecture we will discuss how mythologies change over time. Recall the story of Ut-napishtim, from last lecture on the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Some of you may have already thought that they know this story, or a version of it. The book of Genesis, in the Bible, contains similar stories. In fact, scholars believe that the latter is later retelling of the same story. We will compare the two to see what the differences are, and perhaps explore possible reasons for the changes. Note also that we shall focus on both versions of the story in the Bible. In order to do that, first let me show you why scholars say there are two versions.

First note that the bit about the clean and unclean animals reflects a later preoccupation. Only later on in the Bible, in the book of Exodus, do we meet Moses who (according to the story) received the laws about the cleanliness of animals, amongst other things. So one change to the story is to reflect the new taboos. But there are others. Another interesting one concerns the power of the gods reflected in the story. A lot of the Bible (and here I restrict myself to what Christians call the Old Testament - the Jewish Torah and prophets) concerns itself with discussing the power of god - or gods: one word used for "god" is plural in form - Elohim. Some think this too reflects syncretism. Elohim is in fact used in some Noah story passages, and some use another term, Yahweh. Genesis 6 uses the former, the rather different story in Genesis 7 uses the latter. Which of these do you think is more

Genesis 7 uses the latter. Which of these do you think is more similar to the Ut-napishtim story? Are any of these elements about such matters as (a) what the world is like? (b) what is the human place in it (c) what should people do? These are world view related questions, and they are reflected in many ways in mythology, and of course later in philosophy. Thus here we have the some tricklings of the exploration that will characterize this course.

The change to reflect the later beliefs about "clean" and "unclean" animals of course an ethical consideration. But it is not only such. [...]

It is important to realize, though, that not all apparently similar myths are related. There are many flood stories around the world, but they are sufficiently different in relevant respects that they are certainly of different origin. Furthermore, many groups simply do not have them, either. They all reflect a certain awe and fear towards events that humans even to this day do not fully control.

Note! Next time we have a quiz on all the material we have done so far at the beginning of next class. It is open text, but not open notes, so bring along your *Tales from the Igloo* passage, the Epic of Gilgamesh extract, and Genesis 6-8.

Lecture 5

Today we shall continue the Greek mythology from last time. As I said last time I am lecturing on various mythologies to draw out various features that they have in common and differences. However, as your syllabus (and the last class!) reminded you, we have a quiz to do first. This quiz is designed to last 40 minutes. I will lecture for another 40 minutes after the quiz with more details on the Homeric epics.

As you can see the quiz is 30 questions at one point each, fill in the blank and multiple choice, and one ten point essay. Please put away your notes. As promised, you may keep the *Tales from the Igloo* passage, the Epic of Gilgamesh extract, and Genesis 6-8 open.

[quiz]

I hope that wasn't too arduous. I hope to have those back to you by next time.

Moving on to the lecture for today, then. As with last time, we are focusing on what "world view" roles the myths convey. I will draw attention to several that might be of interest to you. I encourage you to read the text with some attention, as there are no doubt many more. Those of you who are (by chance) familiar with the later greek theatre productions may find it useful to perform similar analyses to them. They too reflect world views in an interestingly conscious way.

[...]

Lecture 6

[rewrite below]

Today I briefly talk about Hesiod, another poet often compared to Homer. It is often said, however, that his poetry is even closer to the more rational speculation of philosophy. Let us look at a passage from his *Works and Days*.

Some of the interest here lies in the literal meanings of the names of the gods mentioned. Okeanos is the name which became our "ocean", as you may guess. Kronos, similar to Chronos, became "time", and, most interesting to philosophy later, at least, is Rhea or flux, change. Remember her when we study Heraclitus! Ouranos is ambiguous in Greek. It can mean either "sky" or "heaven." This ambiguity is also found in classical Chinese, where t'ien or tian means both, as well as in Hebrew, where shamayim is also used for both. The meaning "heaven" for Ouranos can be seen in that he is said to be the seat for the gods. Ge or Gaia is earth. Some of these names are already translated. The passage is very anthropomorphic. What exactly one should take "Chaos" to be is not obvious.

[...]

Now we jump to our first philosopher. Some of you no doubt are wondering: how do we count the first philosopher, and why is he regarded as such? No, it is not that the first philosopher wrote in prose - although **he** did, many of his successors, still called philosophers did not. That answer is too facile. Also is the answer that he removed the gods from consideration. Even in the Greek period, which was in many ways more atheistic than the Christian and Arabic periods which were to follow on, (I will talk briefly about the Roman stuff later) atheists strictu sensu were rare. So what is the sea-change that characterized philosophy? What did **Thales**, our first recorded philosopher by the first non-ironic historian of philosophy, Aristotle, do?

One aspect is his striking out on his own. Educated Greeks learned things such as how to write from studying Homer even up into the beginning of the Christian era. The Gospel according to Mark, in the New Testament, some say, is similar in style and even explicitly reflects this heritage. We shall not go into that, but the point that even "Mark" would have learned his Greek from Homeric epics is correct. But although it is very likely that Thales inherited the intellectual and mythological tradition of his fellow Greeks, he blended it with what he had learned from elsewhere. At this time, travel (at least around the Mediterranean!) was becoming doable, and the story is that Thales went to Egypt and studied from what one might call the practical geometers - land surveyers and what not - that were found there. Thales himself, however, is credited with making a contribution in this domain that is uniquely Greek. He invented the notion of

domain that is uniquely Greek. He invented the notion of mathematical proof. While the Egyptians and others had excellent land reckoning, and the Indians and Chinese (for example) afterwards were to have excellent "practical arithmetic" and even a few technical innovations such as the invention of the zero, none of these are as characteristic of mathematics as we now understand it as proof. But what, you might say, does proof have to do with philosophy?

A mathematical proof is a specific sort of argument in favour of a conclusion. In particular, it is a **demonstrative** argument. While not all arguments in philosophy are of this form, some of the features of the demonstrative argument are used in philosophy to this day. One of these is that the truth of the premisses guarantee the truth of the conclusion. This feature is now known as **validity**. We also wish to appeal to premisses that are rationally understandable. Sometimes this means things the audience of the demonstration already grasps, sometimes this means things that can be quickly shown in a subproof called these days a "Lemma". We also want the premisses to be scrutable in a certain way. Thales can point to the triangles he drew - it was very difficult to point to Zeus of the Homeric epics.

Further, the arguments of proof and others like it was exactly that, an **argument**. Homer doesn't tell you **why** you should believe something, but the demonstration should. There is yet another feature of Thales' innovation, one that will be with us for a long time - the question of anthropomorphism. Zeus in the epics is in part responsible for lightning, and Gaia for the earth, and so on. Instead of making the world around us personal, there is a tendency in philosophy, as opposed to myth, to remove this attitude. But matters are not quite that simple. First, up until sometime after Thales, a complete deanthropomorphic world view was never put forward. Second, Thales' more philosophical statements that have been recorded for posterity include the statement "Everything is full of gods." This hardly sounds like a movement from myth. However, what Thales seem to have meant is that everything has a motive principle. Supposedly he was inspired by seeing a stone from Magnesia - what we would today call a magnet. The questions of motion and related issues were then and are today fundamental questions about the nature of the world. This characterization can easily be extended to what else is recorded as being a view of Thales': "Everything is made of water." This speculation about the ultimate constituents of reality is not uniquely philosophical. But it is unique in so far as (according to tradition) Thales attempted to argue for the position, rather than merely assert it. But this feature

Thales' successors, including his pupil, Anaximander, extended this speculation. Anaximander's *arche* was said to be a very curious substance, of which even the translation is awkward. It is said to be *apeiron*. (Those of you who remember old games on the Mac might remember a Centipede clone with that name. Andrew Welch, the author of the game, assures me that this usage was intentional

- he is quite the amateur classicist!) Another early philosopher, Anaximenes, returned the postulated *arche* to something more easily understood, air. Or, more correctly, *aer*. (I'll leave off the diacritical marks for the moment.) I stress the Greek term here as it has connotations that "air" doesn't share in modern English: in particular, it is regarded as being "more solid" or more obviously corporeal than the English word. Let us examine some of the fragments that are left to us from these latter two authors on the question of the *arche*.

Let us return to Anaximander first. Various different versions of what he had in mind are on your handout on him. Note the emphasis on "coming into being" and also the emphasis on the world cycle. While we do not have the arguments Anaximander put forward for his theses, there is still a difference between them and the view of the world from Homer and Hesiod. The latter two promoted a world view that was characterized from external authority. Anaximander and his disagreement with Thales concerns the ability of humanity to figure things out, not merely take things authoritatively. We can see a strong echo in this where the fragments remind us that Anaximander was a pupil or follower of Thales. Some of you may catch something very unusual in the A and C versions of Anaximander's views. This is the view that he believed in multiple worlds. What this is supposed to mean is not clear, but some feel that it reflects reasoning from a very ancient philosophical argument called an indifference argument. This is a particularly complicated sort of argument: the gist is that if one has no reason to break a symmetry, don't. Another fragment about Anaximander reflects this sort of consideration as well, so it is not too implausible that he should use it here. Hippolytus reports that Anaximander thought that:

"The earth is held on high, held up by nothing, but remaining on grounds of its similar distance from all things."

Anaximenes, said to be a pupil of Anaximander, by contrast, has some of his argumentation preserved by Theophrastus, one of Aristotle's students. In particular, he explains how he thinks air transforms itself into other sorts of stuff. He says that when it becomes finer it transforms to fire, and when condensed it becomes water, then earth, then stones. The four of these stuffs (i.e. apart from stones) are later to become the famous Greek elements, which although often thought to be popularized by Aristotle are actually due to Empedocles. As we shall see, Aristotle modified this scheme slightly.

Furthermore, Anaximenes tried to explain hot and cold - features of the world often attributed to the gods - by the same scheme of rarefaction and condensation. Plutarch reports even that he offered as evidence what happens to breath as our lips compress it or not. (Try it!) This appeal to evidence is quite special. It is not quite an experiment, in the modern sense. But it does involve the rational interpretation of an observation.

I will stop here and hand back quizzes. As usual, if you need assistance or are struggling, see me.

Lecture 7

In this lecture we discuss two philosophers who are superficially similar in character to the three ones we met last time. They are both concerned with issues concerning the structure of the world, coming to be and other such matters. Nevertheless, there is a certain attitude they take that in some respects may be regarded as regressive. The mythological way of understanding the world is not easily shed. Heraclitus and Parmenides are our topic for today. Not only are these two important for the struggle to rationally understand the world, but they were tremendously influential thinkers. Arguably, Plato's system is Heraclitean in some respects, Parmenidean in others, Pythagorean in still others, and Socratic in yet still others. Since Plato himself was to have an incredible impact on the future development of philosophy, Heraclitus and Parmenides also had a tremendous influence, albeit indirect. That said, we shall also meet Pythagoras in the next class and Socrates in lecture 11.

It is difficult to study Heraclitus. Even in antiquity he was known as "the obscure." What he wrote is not easy to unravel, and he wrote in short, gnomic sentences. Let us start by examining some of what he is recorded to have said about something called the *logos*. Take a look at the passages marked 194-196 on your handout. [...]

The notion of the *logos* was to later be adopted by the Stoics, who we will not discuss in this course. (Unfortunately: but we have little time to do so.) It was in turn adopted by the Christians, who use it in a very specific way which we shall examine later. But already we can see a movement from philosophy to religion and myth. Our course title is not quite accurate in that respect.