

Early Creation Stories

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this tutorial, you'll look at the idea of creation stories as they offer foundations for religion itself and how they tell of the unfolding development of civilization. This lesson will use some clear examples to demonstrate this. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. [Genesis](#)

2. [Poiesis](#)

1. Genesis

Creation stories often address life's **ultimate questions** that have broad application and many possibilities. These are not questions about the nature of mundane things, such as a horse (although mythologically, questions into the nature of a horse might be very interesting and revealing) but are questions having to do with subjects such as where humanity came from. Are we sparks of the divine like many of the religions put forth? What is the nature of this relationship between the creator and the created? It was once so clear and apparently un-muddled.

In the Jewish and Christian tradition, there is a fairly well-known creation story in the book of Genesis. This is the book where Adam and Eve appear in the Garden of Eden. According to this story, God created heaven, earth, and Man in perfect paradise. At this time, everything is divinely available, and the real toil of existence is yet unknown.

The tree appears, temptation arises, and the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil is consumed. God extends his judgment and punishment. Human existence is now under the guidance of its own free will with the choice to follow one road or another.

Now in the world, while making decisions and acting for survival, humankind manipulates, manufactures, and creates its own world. Civilization, institutions, and **technology** are created in the application of our intellect. These tools will help us understand the nature of the world, our life, and if we choose, the nature of God and the role that He might play in guiding the work of technology.

In spite of the condemnation and suffering of punishment outside the eternal bliss of the garden, Adam and Eve, representing humanity, build, grow, and wonder about it all.



TERMS TO KNOW

Ultimate Questions

Questions that aim not at a particular understanding but at a universal one; e.g., “What is the nature of the universe?” is an ultimate question, whereas “What is the nature of a horse?” is not.

Technology

The application of human intellect to the natural world.

2. Poiesis

Philosophy can help with understanding. It's been said that philosophy is the handmaiden of theology. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger in the 20th century had a lot to say about technology and what it really means for us as a species.

In his book *The Question Concerning Technology*, he refers often to ancient Greek thinking in philosophy. In the context of understanding mankind's ability to grasp the often confounding relationship between essence and substance, he employs the Greek term “poiesis.” Poiesis essentially means “to make.”



DID YOU KNOW

The word poetry comes from the term “poiesis.”

Poiesis is a verb that signifies a process of transformation or some kind of continuation of a process. Heidegger uses it to explicate, or lay out, how human technology is a bringing forth of something that has, up until now, been concealed or hidden. The goal might be to accurately represent truth through this process of poiesis and technology.

Now, you can apply this philosophical interpretation and understanding of human technology to the paradigm of the garden and humanity's expulsion. You can see Adam and Eve toiling in the mortal, earthly realm, constructing languages and cultures, towers of Babel, and everything else.

Technology is not, says Heidegger, a romantic longing for some past truth but an effort that might accurately reveal truth through some very authentic process. He says it is the sober readiness to be astounded before the coming of the dawn.



SUMMARY

This lesson started with the idea that creation stories offer a foundation for a religious tradition and that they also offer the story of the development of civilization. The example used was from the book of **Genesis** in the Jewish and Christian tradition. This is the story of Adam and Eve and the creation of the world. It also tells of the subsequent responsibility that humanity is given once cast out of the garden. The term **poiesis** was used to demonstrate this idea that mankind is constantly creating something.

Creation stories allow an insight into the purpose of technology, the purpose of creating, and the purpose of doing in the world.

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