

Glossary of Terminology

Mary Koenen Clausen

religious cosmology (also **mythological cosmology**) is a way of explaining the [origin](#), the history and the evolution of the [cosmos](#) or [universe](#) based on the [religious mythology](#) of a specific tradition. Religious cosmologies usually include an act or process of [creation](#) by a [creator deity](#) or a larger [pantheon](#).

Divination (from Latin *divinare* "to foresee, to be inspired by a god", related to *divinus*, [divine](#)) is the attempt to gain insight into a question or situation by way of an [occultic](#), standardized process or ritual. Used in various forms throughout history, diviners ascertain their interpretations of how a [querent](#) (one asking a question) should proceed by reading signs, events, or [omens](#), or through alleged contact with a [supernatural](#) agency.

Divination can be seen as a systematic method with which to organize what appear to be disjointed, random facets of existence such that they provide insight into a problem at hand. If a distinction is to be made between divination and [fortune-telling](#), divination has a more formal or ritualistic element and often contains a more social character, usually in a [religious](#) context, as seen in [traditional African medicine](#). Fortune-telling, on the other hand, is a more everyday practice for personal purposes. Particular divination methods vary by culture and religion.

channeling is a means of communicating with any consciousness that is not in human form by allowing that consciousness to express itself through the channel (or channeler).

automatic writing or **psychography** is a claimed psychic ability allowing a person to produce written words without consciously writing. The words arise from a subconscious, [spiritual](#) or [supernatural](#) source. Automatic writing is not the same thing as [free writing](#).

astral projection (or **astral travel**) is a term used in [esotericism](#) to describe a willful [out-of-body experience](#) (OBE) that assumes the existence of a soul or consciousness called an "[astral body](#)" that is separate from the [physical body](#) and capable of travelling outside it throughout the universe.

The idea of astral travel is ancient and occurs in multiple cultures. The modern terminology of 'astral projection' was coined and promoted by 19th century [Theosophists](#). It is sometimes reported in association with dreams, and forms of meditation. Some individuals have reported perceptions similar to descriptions of astral projection that were induced through various [hallucinogenic](#) and [hypnotic](#) means (including [self-hypnosis](#)).

planes of creation We live in a multidimensional universe. The physical plane is only the first (and most dense) of seven planes. The next plane is the astral; we dwell on the lower astral plane before birth and after death. The other planes are the causal, akashic, mental, messianic, and buddhaic.

Just as there are seven colors in the rainbow and seven tones in a musical scale, each with a different vibratory rate, there are seven planes of existence on the spectrum of creation. The slowest speed of

vibration occurs on the physical plane; the highest, on the buddhaic plane. From the buddhaic plane, energy returns to its source, the Tao.

- Physical plane: The densest of the seven planes; where we presently reside.
- Astral plane: The second plane of creation. Its medium is concrete emotional energy. It is where our consciousness is focused between lifetimes and when we're finished with the physical plane.
- Causal plane: The third plane of creation. Its medium is concrete intellectual energy.
- Akashic plane: The central, neutral plane of creation that interconnects the other six. The distilled knowledge of the universe is recorded there. This is the records generated of everything that happens in the universe as it occurs. The appearance is that all matter and energy have a sort of built-in digital recording device, storing its entire history in a photographic code, but the records are actually windows into the past. The records show events exactly as they were experienced, so the information in them begins raw-it is not clarified, understood, and assimilated until a consciousness takes responsibility for doing so. Once it is fully assimilated, it is stored on the akashic plane.
- Mental plane: The fifth plane of creation. Its medium is abstract intellectual energy, emphasizing truth. The infinite soul who incarnated as Lao-tzu taught from this plane.
- Messianic plane: The sixth plane of creation. Its medium is abstract emotional energy, emphasizing love. The infinite soul who incarnated as Jesus taught from this plane.
- Buddhaic plane: The highest plane of creation. Its medium is pure or abstract kinetic energy. We experience the buddhaic plane just before fully refocusing our awareness in the Tao. The infinite soul who incarnated as Buddha taught from this plane.

Vudon A traditional religion from Western Africa with an ethical focus on combating greed and promoting honour. It is based on the worship of spirits that are loyal to a [monotheistic](#), deistic (non-interventionist) creator god. It is more correctly known as *Vodun*, although other titles include *Vodoun*, *Voodoo*, and *Sevi Lwa*. "The name is traceable to an African word for 'spirit'. Vodun's roots go back to the West African Yoruba people who lived in 18th and 19th century Dahomey. That country occupied parts of today's [Togo](#), [Benin](#) and [Nigeria](#)". When West Africans were forcibly taken to [Haiti](#) and other islands in the West Indies as slaves, their beliefs spread with them, and also to [South America](#) and the [Caribbean](#) region in general. Voodoo was suppressed and its followers persecuted by [Christian](#) powermongers, and it was forced underground, with many believers merely pretending to be [Christian](#), and practicing Voodoo in secret. As a result of this, Voodoo priests were well-placed to orchestrate and inspire slave revolts. It is now acknowledged that Voodoo merged African beliefs with re-interpreted [Christian](#) saints and symbols³, but also that [Christianity](#) abused and mis-represented Voodoo, causing long term damage to its reputation. There are up to 60 million Voodoo practitioners worldwide, with about 16 million in [Ghana](#), [Togo](#), [Benin](#) and [Nigeria](#).

Vodun Beliefs

Vodun beliefs, like Christianity, is a religion of many traditions. Each group follows a different spiritual path and worships a slightly different pantheon of spirits, called **Loa**. The word means "mystery" in the Yoruba language. Yoruba traditional belief included a senior God **Olorun**, who is remote and unknowable. He authorized a lesser God **Oblata** to create the earth and all life forms. A battles between the two Gods led to the temporary banishment of Oblata. There are hundreds of minor spirits. Those who originated from Dahomey are called **Rada**. Those who were added later are often the deceased leaders in the new world and are called **Petra**.

There are a number of points of similarity between Roman Catholicism and Vodun:

- Both believe in a supreme being.
- The Loa resemble Christian saints, in that they were once people who led exceptional lives, and are usually given a single responsibility or special attribute.
- Both believe in an afterlife.
- Both have, as the centerpiece of some of their ceremonies, a ritual sacrifice and consumption of flesh and blood.
- Both believe in the existence of evil spirits or demons.

Followers of Vodun believe that each person has a **met tet** (master of the head) which corresponds to a Christian's patron saint. In Mary's case, it is Saint Jude, who is sometimes characterized as a black swan in her work.

Followers of Vodun believe that each person has a soul which is composed of two parts: a **gros bon ange** or "big guardian angel", and a **ti bon ange** or "little guardian angel". The latter leaves the body during sleep and when the person is possessed by a Loa during a ritual. There is a concern that the ti bon ange can be damaged or captured by evil sorcery while it is free of the body.