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[Bron Taylor](#)

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of Indians, and accomplished the expropriation of their lands. For Deloria, the legal/scientific/political administration of Indians and tribal land reflects the same differences in worldview that he first sketched out in *God Is Red*.

In arguing that the tribes, many of whom have retained important though strained cultural links to their lands in spite of colonizing pressures, could “speak meaningfully to the modern world,” Deloria has provided younger Indians with a role model of a publicly engaged intellectual with a relentless critique of American society. The heart of that criticism, though darkened over time, is that tribal values and practices offer much-needed correctives to the fundamental ideas animating industrial society. In questioning the marginalizing design he finds shaping mainstream anthropological practice regarding Indians, he asks, for instance, whether

the festivals by which people reestablished relationships with the natural world [could] provide us with a vehicle for making our concern about the environment an actual change of behavior instead of a vague sense of warm sentiment about chipmunks? (in Biolsi and Zimmerman 1997: 220)

However, in functioning as critic, his role differs from that of his forebears, who sought to soften the impact of American society land-use aims on those turn-of-the-century Lakotas first confined to reservations. Deloria’s task has been not to soften, but to challenge those aims through creation of an alternative consensus about treaty law, about conceptions of the sacred, and about the future place of Indians in American society. His expertise in both law and religion has enabled him to play a crucial role in a variety of land-claim and land-use cases brought into the courts during the last decades of the twentieth century, and in the process to amend the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, which the high courts unanimously found insufficient to provide tribes with protection of traditional sacred sites. While serving as a critic of American legal culture, he has also consistently advocated the alliance of Indian and non-Indian in efforts to protect the environment. For Deloria, all Americans have an interest in the land claims which tribes have brought to the bar. “No real progress can be made in environmental law unless some of the insights into the sacredness of land derived from traditional tribal religions become basic attitudes of the larger society” (Deloria 1999: 213).

Although much of Deloria’s career has been taken up with addressing the practical and political dilemmas facing Indian tribes, he has consistently sought to analyze the conflict of worldviews underlying the contests between tribes and Western institutions. In such works as *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence* (1979), and more recently in *Red Earth/White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (1995), Deloria has challenged

the deepest assumptions about nature, God and truth animating modern Western culture. In these works, the knowledge claims of Western science, and the taken-for-granted-superiority of Western technology, take a thrashing for their reduction of nature to the malleable and controllable, a thrashing grounded as much in the metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead and methodological suspicion of Berkeley’s anarchistic philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend, as in the reconstituted tribal traditions that Deloria hopes to preserve. Scientific theory, Deloria has argued, has yielded not so much the authoritative account of nature, but rather “the folklore of materialistic industrialism” with “no basis in fact” (Deloria 1999: 275). His willingness to attack scientific consensus as well as Western religion has earned him many opponents, some of them other American Indian writers. Deloria has consistently played the heretic, however, not simply out of a polemicist’s desire to disturb the orthodox. Instead, he has held to a rather traditional Lakota conviction that though nature remains an intractable mystery, any possible progress in meeting human needs requires epistemological humility, and in the case of modern society, a good deal more humility than religion or science have been able to retain.

Matthew Glass

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See also: American Indians as “First Ecologists”; Law, Religion, and Native American Lands; Manifest Destiny; Mother Earth; Noble Savage; Sacred and the Modern World, The; Traditional Ecological Knowledge among Aboriginal Peoples in Canada.

Delphic Oracle

The Delphic Oracle, the most important religious center in the ancient Greek world, owed its existence to a unique natural setting. The Greeks themselves believed that the oracle derived its power from a number of geological features: a cleft in the rock; a spring; and a gaseous exhalation. A nearby cave and a second spring were also linked to the prophetic tradition at Delphi.

Nature visibly dominates Delphi. The temple of Apollo

and the sacred precinct lie cupped in a spectacular semi-circle of precipitous limestone cliffs, giving the effect of an open-air theatre. Below the sanctuary the ground plunges down to the gorge of the Pleistos River. The southern exposure fills Delphi with sunlight all day: "To argue about a shadow in Delphi" was a proverbial phrase for arguing about nothing. The surrounding cliffs, known as the Phaedriades or "Shining Ones," lie on the southern slope of the massif of Parnassus, one of the holy mountains of Greece. The waters of the Corinthian Gulf are visible in the distance to the southwest, so Delphi seems to hang suspended between mountain and sea. The special geographical position of the site was shown by the omphalos or "navel-stone" inside the temple, marking Delphi as the center of the known world.

According to Greek tradition, the Delphic Oracle was founded by Ge or Earth herself, the mother of all things. Ge was followed first by her daughter Themis or Justice, and then by a succession of nymphs – female water deities. The site is indeed famous for its springs: Cassotis (the modern Kerna spring) inside the sanctuary and Castalia in a rocky cleft to the east.

The oracle played an important role in some of the most ancient myths. According to the Greek version of the Flood story, the two survivors Deucalion and Pyrrha took refuge on the summit of Mount Parnassus, and then asked the Delphic Oracle how they could repopulate the Earth. They were told to walk away from the oracle, throwing the bones of their "mother" behind them as they went. After some perplexity, they realized that Earth was their mother and rocks were her bones. From the stones that they cast over their shoulders, a new race of humans came into existence.

The Delphic Oracle was also believed to have given advice to such mythical heroes as Aegeus, father of Theseus, and Agamemnon, leader of the Greek expedition against Troy. In the *Odyssey*, Homer tells how Agamemnon received a riddling message at Delphi that indicated that his victory over the Trojans would come only after dissension and fighting among his own captains. The Delphic Oracle was famous for cryptic responses. Most famous of the legendary prophecies was that given to young Oedipus: "You will kill your father and marry your mother." The oracle neglected to explain that he did not know the identity of his real parents.

Most modern scholars doubt that the oracle was in existence before the eighth century B.C.E. The ancient Greek tradition has however received some support from archeological discoveries showing that a small town existed at Delphi as early as the Middle Bronze Age, roughly 1600 B.C.E. The importance of religious cults in this first settlement is shown by finds of terracotta figurines of female deities or priestesses (some seated on three-legged chairs or thrones), and a fine ceremonial rhyton in the form of a lioness' head.

An even older link between religious ritual and this region of Mount Parnassus was discovered in the Corycian Cave, a few kilometers north of Delphi. During classical times, pilgrims who came to consult the oracle at Delphi often hiked up to the Corycian Cave as well. Here the deities were not Ge or Apollo but Pan and the nymphs. But thousands of years earlier, in the Neolithic age, early farmers and herders were visiting the Corycian Cave for ceremonies of divination. Archeologists discovered thousands of "knucklebones" in the cave – the astragalus bones from the hooves of sheep and goats – which have been traditionally used in Greece and elsewhere in drawing lots or obtaining "Yes/No" answers to questions.

In essence, the formal oracle of Apollo continued this tradition of providing guidance in making difficult choices. During the heyday of the oracle from the eighth through fourth centuries B.C.E., thousands of pilgrims made their way by ship or overland to Delphi. There they received divine guidance on decisions ranging from founding a colony or launching a war to choosing a spouse or investing in a cargo. On days when the god did not speak, one could still receive a "Yes/No" answer to a question through the drawing of colored beans that served as lots.

But the major feature of Delphi was undoubtedly the performance of the Pythia, the woman who spoke for the god Apollo on the seventh day after each new moon in the spring, summer, and fall. The Pythia derived her title from the ancient name of the site, "Pytho," as did the legendary serpent or dragoness "Python" that the young Apollo had killed there with his bow and arrow. The Python had guarded a crevice on the mountainside from which Ge pronounced her oracles to humans. By killing the beast, Apollo was able to claim the oracle as his own, though he continued the tradition of speaking through the mouths of women. During classical times, the Pythia served as a medium for the god's voice, passing into a trance while seated on a tripod in the subterranean crypt or "adyton" of the temple. In no other spot could the woman be filled with the spirit of prophecy.

The service of the Pythia was exhausting and debilitating. During the glorious era when Delphi was consulted by Greek city-states and foreign monarchs alike, the Pythia who began the morning's session might later be replaced by a second woman, with a third held in reserve for days when the line of questioners was exceptionally long. Every Pythia was a woman of Delphi, but the office was not monopolized by any one family, as was the norm for Greek religious positions. The Pythia could be young or old, rich or poor, well educated or illiterate. The sisterhood of the oracle seems to have chosen the Pythias based on their aptitude for spiritual experience, specifically for experiencing a mediumistic trance. In this state, the Pythia would reply to questions either by chanting in poetical verse, or by responding in simple prose. In the latter case,

male temple attendants might compose a poetical version of the Pythia's response in return for a gratuity from the questioner. There is no ancient evidence for the popular modern claims that the Pythia spoke gibberish, and that the oracular responses were really composed by the male priests.

The most remarkable element of the prophetic ritual was the part played by an exhalation of natural gas or vapor within the temple. The Greek term was *pneuma*, which also meant "breath." According to a number of ancient Greek and Roman writers, the Pythia mounted a tripod that straddled a cleft or fissure in the rocky floor of the adyton. She would then breathe in the *pneuma* rising from the cleft, and then be empowered to speak in the words of the god Apollo. The *pneuma* normally triggered a benign trance, in which the Pythia could sit upright (though relaxed), see and hear the questioners, and give audible responses. On occasion, however, the Pythia was seized by a violent delirium, and would rave and thrash wildly. After one such frenzy, it was recorded that a Pythia in the time of the Roman Empire actually died a few days after the oracular session.

The source of this information is Plutarch, priest of Apollo at Delphi for many years and therefore an eyewitness to the workings of the oracle. In his three essays or dialogues dealing with Delphi ("On the E at Delphi," "Why the Oracles Are No Longer Given in Verse," and "On the Obsolescence of the Oracles"), Plutarch made it clear that even the priests were not let into all the secrets of the women who served as Pythia. However, he did provide many insights into the relationship between religion and nature at Delphi, particularly in the third dialogue.

Plutarch cast "On the Obsolescence of the Oracles" as a debate between conservative religious belief in the limitless power and eternal existence of the gods versus rationalizing natural philosophy. Pious visitors disapproved of the idea that Apollo or any other divine being should need to use a transitory, fluctuating natural phenomenon such as the Delphic *pneuma* to work his will. Skeptical philosophers on the other hand attributed the behavior of the Pythia merely to the physical effects of the gaseous emission, or dismissed the oracles as mere guesswork. At the end, Plutarch attempted to reconcile Science and Religion by stating that the gods were indeed divine and eternal, but were compelled to use the corrupt substances of this earthly world in order to communicate with mortals.

In the course of this fascinating discussion, Plutarch provided considerable information about the *pneuma*. It had a sweet smell; it was detectable to the priests and questioners outside the adyton, although faint and unpredictable; it could reach the surface either as a free gas or through water; and its flow had diminished through time. The weakening of the *pneuma* was identified by Plutarch as the cause of the oracle's decline. He advanced three possibilities to account for the change, all of them physical

or geological. First, the vital essence in the rock that produces the effect on the Pythia may have simply worn out over time. Second, heavy rains may have washed the vapor away. And third, it may be that the great earthquake of 372 B.C.E. not only destroyed the old temple of Apollo but also blocked up the vents that allowed the *pneuma* to reach the surface. The first observation is an early recognition that natural resources are not inexhaustible, and the third a reminder that Poseidon the Earthshaker was also worshipped in the temple at Delphi.

From the Renaissance to the end of the nineteenth century, modern scholars took these reports of geological activity at face value. But when French archeologists failed to find a large chasm in the rock under the central part of the temple, skepticism set in. In the first half of the twentieth century, a number of articles and books were published which purported to debunk the ancient tradition. Adolph Paul Oppe published the seminal article "The chasm at Delphi" in 1904, and Pierre Amandry summed up the evidence against the ancient tradition in his book on the oracular procedure at Delphi in *La Mantique Apollinienne à Delphes* (1950). The latter work included the claim that it was geologically impossible for an intoxicating gas to have been emitted at Delphi, since such exhalations can be found only in areas of volcanic activity. The new skepticism was embraced by historians and archeologists throughout Europe and the Americas, and established itself as the dominant opinion concerning the oracle.

Starting in 1996 an interdisciplinary team from the United States carried out geological and archeological field surveys at the oracle site, followed up by laboratory analysis of rock and water samples. The team included geologist Jelle de Boer of Wesleyan University, archeologist John Hale of the University of Louisville, chemist Jeff Chanton of Florida State University, and toxicologist Henry Spiller of the Kentucky Regional Poison Center. The team's fieldwork showed that the temple of Apollo had been built at the intersection of two geological faults, dubbed the Delphi and Kerna faults, at least one of which was still active. One of the springs rising along the Kerna fault emerged in the interior of the temple. The architecture of the temple had been adapted to the geological setting, with a sunken interior so that the natural surface of the mountainside could be reached by Pythia and pilgrims. The builders also constructed an off-center niche for the adyton at the spot where the spring reached the surface.

The underlying bedrock proved to be bituminous limestone, with a petrochemical content of up to 20 percent. Geologist de Boer theorized that friction due to movement along the fault would heat the rock to a temperature at which the petrochemicals vaporized. The resulting gases would rise to the surface along the fault, along with ground water. During laboratory analysis, traces of intoxicating

light hydrocarbon gases, including methane and ethane, were found in the travertine rock that had been laid down by the spring in antiquity. And sweet-smelling ethylene, also an intoxicant, was detected in the modern Kerna spring directly up the slope from the temple.

When seated in the enclosed, poorly ventilated adyton inside the temple, the Pythia would thus have been exposed to a mixture of gases that could trigger a trance state. Of particular interest was ethylene, which is known to produce both mild out-of-body experiences and (on rare occasions) violent delirium. The results of the interdisciplinary project confirmed the validity of the ancient literary sources, and suggest that the scientific observations of Greek natural philosophers should be carefully considered.

The existence of gaseous emissions and springs under the foundations of Apolline temples elsewhere in Greece and in Turkey make it clear that Delphi is not an isolated instance, but rather the center of a widespread religious tradition – a tradition that linked the worship of Apollo and the presence of oracular power to geological features in the landscape. The temples of Apollo at Ptoon in Greece and at Claros, Didyma, and Hierapolis in Turkey were all built on such sites.

In about the year 362, the Pythia at Delphi received a visit from envoys sent by Julian the Apostate, the last pagan ruler of the Roman Empire. Julian was attempting to combat the tidal wave of Christianity that was sweeping away the old pagan cults, and he asked the Pythia to prophecy once more in order to show the continuing power of the old gods. The woman replied, “Tell the king the fair-built hall has fallen. Apollo no longer has a shrine here, nor a prophetic laurel tree, nor a talking spring. The water of speech is silent.” Even in these last verses from the last of the long line of Pythias, the natural features of Delphi dominate the scene.

John R. Hale

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See also: Greece – Classical; Greek Landscape; Greek Paganism; Water Spirits and Indigenous Ecological Management.

Demons

The demon is a traditional designation for a hostile and/or evil spirit entity. As a concept, it becomes part of Western culture through the influence of Zoroastrian thought that polarizes the world between good and negative forces. The dualistic framework has become part of gnosticism, hermeticism, kabbalist doctrine and the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. However, the term “demon” derives from the Greek *δαίμων*, Latin *daemōn* the “divider” – the one who apportions the resources of the natural world among recipients. The daemon was originally a part-human and part-divine spiritual entity that was amoral rather than immoral. The transition of this superhuman power into a devilish being reflects the loss of an earlier understanding based on the sanctity of nature’s plenitude and its subsequent institutionalized transformation into dualistic theologies that posit the natural as something inferior and impeding to transcendental evolution. As a result, the demonic has become synonymous with impurity, sensuousness and harm. The ambiguity of the threshold zones associated with the Greek daimon as demi-god has been likewise translated into a long-standing vernacular fear of liminality. Passages, entryways, bridges and the like become regarded as unsafe and unclean. As Mary Douglas contends, this antipathy toward the liminal extends to the human body and its openings considered as dangerous places. By positing a framework that holds purity and impurity to be good-and-evil opposites, such natural negatives as miasma, illness and misfortune become ethical issues. The historic trajectory of the demon is, therefore, a narrative that describes the superimposition of a hermeneutics of ethics onto natural conditions. It is the story and legacy of Western civilization’s distortion of the organic and holistic into an artificial world that is divided and opposed to itself.

With the advent of Christianity, the nature spirit, the genius as intermediary between the human and the divine, and the power of the pagan gods were turned “by an easy, traditional shift of opinion . . . into malevolent ‘demons,’ the troupe of Satan” (Fox 1987: 137). While the classical