Richard Schwab
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“Enlighten” – An Interview with Richard Schwab, Mythological Consultant, Storyseeds.org, NYC by Willi Paul, Mythologist, Planetshifter.com

Introduction -

“What's declining is Western Industrial culture and infrastructure. What's keeping most people in denial about our decline is the pervasive myth of progress that the human trajectory is always upward to something better. This myth is preventing real solutions to our growing problems from gaining traction, too.

I'm not a Campbell scholar, but I think Campbell's basic schema of the Hero's Journey is tainted by the same attachment to progress and guaranteed happy endings. Campbell wasn't a blind idealist, but he still often seems convinced that progress is a certainty. There are not enough chthonian aspects to Campbell's sense of the spiritual journey.

Our age of ecological upheaval, ISIS, fundamentalism, GMO (et al) what may emerge from our ordeal with these things (symptoms and by products of the collapse) may not be what some expect. We are likely heading for a humbler, slower, simpler future that will please some, but horrify others who expect an endless supply of ever better and cheaper iToys and living without concern for nature or others.”

Source: *"Integrating Permaculture, Transition, and Mythology in the Chaos Age" - eBook #21*. Conversations with Willi Paul and Authors Gregory Gronbacher, Peter Ruddock, Douglas Williamson, Arthur George, Gary Z McGee, Margo Meck, Stephen Gerringer and Ray Grigg. Page 10.

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Interview with Richard by Willi

New mythology or Modern mythology to me weaves our new apocalyptic journeys in Permaculture, Transition movement, and SpiritNature – driven by new archetypes, symbols and alchemies. How do you define “new mythology?”

Well, first I must define only “mythology” to define "new mythology". I have a slightly different definition than “a story involving a god” because we don’t actually believe in story characters these days. However, we still revere and worship our stories and our characters in very similar ways, if not consciously, we do unconsciously. So, in my work I've tried to grind this concept of a person or a people's mythology down to its truly core / kernel essence.

I've come to think of “mythology” as: the collection of stories we believe in. Now the word belief and beloved having similar roots, so that doesn’t exclude the stories which are beloved to us. So your “mythology” can be stories you enjoy, such as a film or novel, or these days a video game. Or, your mythology might be a story which lingers for you that you might not enjoy, like a horror film you saw the other night that you can’t stop thinking about.

Lastly, and this is key, I’m adding in our own internal stories we tell ourselves about the world. So now my mythology includes all of my own internal explanations. When I try to understand why I did something, or when I’m trying to understand or predict someone else's behavior. Now your mythology includes your dreams, your desires and justifications like why we go to our job or are so attached to some of our relationships or possessions.

That said, a "new mythology" is constantly happening inside of everyone all the time, every moment of every day with every thought, conscious and unconscious. I've tried for years to find a defining line between to be able to separate the difference between a thought and a story. I simply can't. All thoughts are based on other thoughts; they trail together into a narrative. And so I honestly have come believe that all thoughts are in fact stories, but that's another topic.

I think what you're getting at, though with the "new mythology" idea is more the group’s mythology. What happens when a bunch of us align our internal stories and are directed outwards by these stories?

Well, we see that in cultural moments. In film: Harry Potter, Star Wars, Lord of the Rings, now Game of Thrones. Sometimes it is in music like the Beatles on Ed Sullivan or Woodstock. Other times our own personal mythologies are aligned by large world events like 9/11 or World War II. Our own personal ego-based stories get co-opted into a larger one, with the effect of weaving people together.

By that rationale, I think the chances of getting a "new mythology", or at least a singular "monotheistic" mythology which unites people is getting to be more and more difficult to come by, for a few reasons:

One simple fact that would work against uniting all of us, is we are all increasing. In 1820 the world population was 1 billion. One hundred years later, in 1920 it was 2 billion. Now today, again almost 100 years later in 2020, it isn't 3 billion, it is 7 billion. That's exponential growth for you.

So it would become more and more difficult to unite every person's life. It's a simple math equation. What could have united 1 billion people in 1820 or 1920 wouldn't unite even a majority of people now. Especially with the broadness of the world, diversity of experiences, life stages and philosophies of everyone. You would need to engage in such a tightly woven archetypal story in order to incorporate and activates everyone's experiences, cultural ideas, life stages. And so you would need a new "polytheistic mythology" which builds all these things together unless you had one thing which everyone in the world were facing. The only thing I can think of is the one you mentioned, the apocalypse or end of the world.

But here's a fascinating thing about the word "apocalypse", it doesn't mean the end of the world. It comes from the Greek and means "to unveil". So it really means the end of your world, the breakdown of your own internal mythology or a revelation. The word "eschaton" is the word that means the end of the actual world. Of course, us with our thick western egos have latched onto the wrong word. Perhaps that's all of our collective unconscious minds playing a joke on us?

Another argument against a "new monotheistic mythology" would be the breakdown of the more or less homogenous culture from 70 years ago to a more diverse mosaic culture we have now. When there were only a few select group of people who were the storytellers back in the 1950s. Today, we have a plethora of television, films (though yes they are controlled by a smaller number of corporations which is ironic), but really what we do have is the internet and things like YouTube.

Today I have the ability to wake up, tell a story in my pajamas and upload it. People across the entire world will watch it and if it resonates, it will catch like wildfire for the all sacred internet "views". Some of these stories are so sacred, they are called them memes. And memes are the modern descendants of motifs in folklore if you think about it much. However, most memes eventually become a form of shibboleth in that they are used to see if someone is in the know, again a move against a single mono mythology and more of a focus on a polytheistic one.

How we tell ourselves stories in our day to day which craft our reality, but are essentially still "lies."

Well as I said above, we unconsciously do it whether we want to or not. In reading this text, you have a picture about who I am, what I look like, what my voice sounds like. That might be way off from who I actually am which you'd never know unless we met face to face. And then we have that startled moment of "oh, this is you" and we realign our inner stories and don't think about it too much.

But our brains have to predict the world around us. It's crucial to our function and our evolution. My brain right here is about the size of a cantaloupe and yet here I go all day long trying to predict the world. The earth is about 8.33 x 10^23 times larger than the average human brain. That's a pretty large number. My point being how can something so infinitely small predict something so much larger?

But we do all the time. We are constantly telling ourselves and each other stories trying to hold onto this reality swirling around us and if it works and keeps us either happy or comfortable, we don't question it. I mean why would we?

A great example of one of these myths, according to James Hillman is what he calls the religion of money. In his essay, he states money is basically a God which doesn't really exist. We can prove that by reading the history of moving from the gold standard in 1933 and again in the 70s under Nixon. And yet, we all have our various ways of worshipping this God, we call those jobs.

Now I heartily agree with what he said and with this notion. And, I think it's tremendously fun to bring up. But then you take me as an example, I'm someone whose "mythology" agrees with this story so you can ask what is he going to do with it? Well I'm going to go back to the work some of which I have to do just to pay bills. That right there is the mythology at work.

But sometimes we do have epiphanies which change things. Jung called this the Transcendent function. It's the key to pretty much every single hero story, at least modern ones. The moment of transformation within the person's character arc. So we all are really keen on that. Perhaps to change ourselves and free ourselves from our own darker stories. I mean the characters who never learn their lessons we usually toss into horror films.

How is the destruction of Nature the basis of new myths? Examples?

So, to stay on the thread of our inner myths, if you want a scientific term for this, you're going to quickly stumble onto the idea of "cognitive dissonance". Here's another example from my own life as I find it is easier to call myself out on this than others.

I had an experience this past weekend while canoeing and camping in the Adirondacks. I arrived at a campsite and found the fire pit filled with trash, mostly all plastic. That offended my sensibilities, first to leave trash but secondly the thought of burning plastic was even more profane. You see, I was taught that you don't do that. In my story, I had just traveled all this way in a quest for pristine nature and I get to pick up some asshole's trash. So that's when the reality collided with my own mythology.

Of course my mythology is the better one. We know that based on our current scientific research, climate change and the island of plastic in the ocean the size of Texas. So I felt I was in the right and vindicated. But after a day of patting myself on the back, I realized that after I'm done canoeing I'm going to go paddle back to the car and drive 4 hours on gallons (much more than the empty hot dog wrappers mind you) of gasoline made from the same petrochemicals, all of it being burned.

So what do we you do with this?

One conclusion might be to become charred over. This is the person who decides they can't fix things, save the world, it's all going to hell anyways. So they say well let's burn that plastic and that gas, my own impact is so miniscule. But no drop of rain believes it is responsible for the deluge.

And that's really what that conclusion hinges on isn't it?

Responsibility. That word right there opens up the question of which mythology are we dealing with? It's like Claude Levi-Strauss says in The Raw and the Cooked: all stories help us to massage navigating pairs of opposites. So the pair we've just tripped on is the senex vs the puer, or the old, responsible person vs the young irresponsible one. Of course I'm utilizing the positive of the senex more and the negative of the boy here. But that conclusion is equivalent of leaning back into infancy in a way, to declare oneself free from responsibility.

One might think another option is to flip hard to the other side and become a crusader. Then you're taking much more than your share of responsibility. Say you give up gasoline altogether. But that's not possible for everyone in today's society. It just isn't. Maybe in an urban area but if you've spent much time on the outskirts of Amarillo, Texas you know it's not going to work for people out there. And even if say I get a Tesla electric car there are still a lot of off-gassing in the production of that. So we are in a sort of Faustian dilemma here. The other problem we have is people who tend to

crusade tend to annoy others. By taking more responsibility we risk getting a backlash. I mean we all know someone like this, who preaches on and on about something until you just want to rebel against them.

Luckily, I think there is a third option and the rules of mythology encourage this. You must find a balance between what responsibility is yours and what responsibility isn't. So rather than give up purchasing gasoline, you might simply swear to never buy another gasoline engine. That way you start saving for an electric car, but you can still chip in driving around with friends which is the reality.

However, there will always be another mythology which comes to mess up your nice conclusion. As it turns out eating beef is much worse for the environment than petrochemicals, as far as greenhouse gases (particularly methane) are concerned. So a vegetarian driving a hummer is better for the environment than a meat eater in a Prius. So we need to be willing to expect that our mythologies will be challenged because they certainly will.

I think the core philosophy we need to have when dealing with our mythologies of Nature is the Japanese idea of kanban. This philosophy ironically, or mythically enough arose from the automotive industry after World War II, as the Japanese were trying to deal with the destruction of their own cultural identity. You see, they had for years told themselves they were superior to America in every way. So how then was it that these lazy oafs beat them? And they studied America's war efforts while we forgot them.

The conclusion they came to was that you must never make very large changes, but every day small improvements all the time.
The reason I think this is better is it's more practical. Most people can't stop eating beef or driving today. But they could stop ordering beef in restaurants this month, and next month stop buying it at the grocery store. This way, you are improving things and should a friend offers you a burger at a BBQ, you don't have to worry there if that's your concern.

Now if you want to talk about the destruction of Nature being the source of our cultural mythology, that's being questioned heavily right now. You are seeing more and more instances of sacred trees in our cultural films like Avatar or Game of Thrones or the film The Fountain. So that could be a start to healing this. However, the mythology dictates pairs of opposites, so if you make something sacred, there is a backlash of wanting to make it profane. The only solution I can see to this dilemma would be the cultural trickster who:

A) unites the pairs by being both sacred and profane, and

B) one who holds nature more sacred than others. It's a tricky recipe to be honest.

I attended a Symposium of Science and Storytelling at Yale some months ago where climate change scientists were desperately working on improving their storytelling skills so we all could swallow these ideas and make effective changes. But, they got so lofty and repeating this sort of "Garden of Eden", the world is sacred narrative that even I had my brain try to re-calibrate to the other side. And so I thought about what cultural tricksters I knew would help with this sacred vs. profane problem and I came up with it. Ace Ventura.

He's highly dedicated to animals but he makes fun of humans. Many of the people I know who don't agree with climate change or treating animals as equals still love that film. How strange right? So ultimately, I think it will be up to a trickster / clown mythology to work in this way, but one that makes fun of humans for all our imperfections. That's my prediction, if we do find it.

Can you give us examples of your work with ARAS as you illuminate folktale and symbolic references from the Book of Symbols?

Sure. If you're ever in Manhattan, venture over near Grand Central Station to 39th street. There's a building there where you'll find an entire art archive run by some of the sweetest and kindest people you'll find in New York. There's an immense archive of images organized art not by its place of origin or time, but instead by the symbolic meaning and

content. So you can browse around looking for images of revelations or epiphanies and end up in a stockpile of images of Norse and Maya lightning.

Now ARAS also wrote a tremendously useful book called “The Book of Symbols”. That’s the one you get when you want to begin speaking directly to the unconscious via mythic or symbolic language and need some good stories to help. So they help people look deeper into the world around them, or their own art or projects. It's an immensely well researched tome of the thoughts/stories of all time, anything from "why in so many cultures are dogs symbolic of death?" to "why did Jung say water symbolic of the unconscious?"

Well after some years of hanging out there as my go-to hang out place in NY between meetings, they asked me to help on a group project. They had the images and the associations but they wanted help collecting folktales which would be the proof in the pudding, so to speak. So we got to hunt for folktales which would make or break the interpretation they claimed. It was immense fun for me. I'd say, "If water means the unconscious, well let's look at the Eskimo folktale of Sedna and retell it, the father isn’t kayaking over the ocean anymore, he’s kayaking over the unconscious trying to avoid storms."

The group of us became a sort of Algonquin Roundtable reading and interpreting stories. But soon we were into current events too and finding the mythology behind politicians or the different generations, always finding ways to apply hidden wisdoms in stories in the world. We've now recorded a season of podcasts, gave a talk at United Nations, and now are teaching interpretive storytelling at Riker's Island prison. Oh and the group has dubbed itself Storyeon.

What is a Mythological Consultant? Can you please share examples from your work for professionals, creatives and individuals in support of their mythic journey?

Well a Mythological Consultant is a basically term some of my friends gave me. I'm not sure if it was a term of endearment or jokingly, but it stuck. That’s what you get after helping people identify their internal myths.

The idea hinges on my own definition of mythology, not just that of old stories. And just because we're sort of locked into stories, doesn't mean we're imprisoned by them. As one of my mentors said “When you begin to realize what myth you're living, you can live through the myth rather than the myth living through you”.

The requests I’ve gotten have been from everyone from lawyers to teachers to creative artists and filmmakers. But I usually break them into three piles. The creatives pile is people working on a story. So, you listen to them tell that story and make sure you really get it first of all. Then you can help find the bone-motifs or more of a consistent pulse to add some strength to it. Sometimes you can steer them away from a huge collision of a rock in their path and you almost always have to deal with them not knowing the ending. Of course if you’re good with symbols, you can usually see there’s three or four paths they can take, you lay those out and there you go. I’ve had a lot of fun with this and gotten to work on everything from a female-based version of Pinocchio to a re-imagining of the Maya Popul Vuh shoehorned into a Hollywood script. I really like that one by the way, we’ll see how they do with it.

The second pile is a result of “storytelling” becoming a new buzzword. Here you have professionals who are on the path to learn metaphors, storytelling and the like. But they’re usually very green at this and not really sure how powerful it is either. Even people in marketing aren’t sure you can wield story this way, which is fine by me, the last thing I want is to become the next Edward Bernays. Ugh.

But there are a lot of really good organizations who just need help conveying their message. I mentioned before the scientists and climate change, and so I do this when I can be of use. I recently had a wonderful conversation with an astrobiologist about how if NASA or a company wanted to build space elevators, they should utilize the huge amount of stories world over regarding the motif of the “sky rope” or the hero who climbs into the stars by way of a rope. I found easily 16 myths all around the globe on that one so it is already embedded in our consciousness and ready to go.

The third pile, is my favorite. That’s people working out their own stories of their lives. Usually finding motifs in their life or which part of their hero’s journey they’re in right now, that sort of thing. It just always gets to be so much more

meaningful and more real in a weird way. That and people really care when you are open to truly hearing their own life. So it isn't just writing a report and sending it off and not hearing back about it.

How do you create a new myth, or at least how do you use motifs to generate stories? Examples online?

Well, let's see. I once had a wonderful musical experience in the Catskills north of Woodstock, NY. A learned a process for song creation which was used by a fairly popular band in the area. Here is what they would do: first, someone would listen to a lot of Alan Lomax's collection of world music. If you don't know what that is, I highly recommend it. Then, they would wait until something caught them. When it did, that person would begin to play that chord or that progression over and over. Then, the other members of the band would riff on that until they had a song. They thought of it like taking a seed from a tree and planting another.

I thought "My god, that's a great idea for story creation."

Well you don't really have riffs in stories, we have motifs. Motifs are the things that catch us in story. So I tried this out. Now, at the time, I was working on a search engine fueled by Stith Thompson's Motif Index of Folklore and Literature. If you're not familiar with his work, he has about 50,000 motifs across probably a million or so folktales. So Thompson is a pretty good stand in for Alan Lomax I figured.
So I took a motif, and began trying to write a story from it. That's pretty difficult to do. However, another friend of mine from the Great Mother mythopoetic conference had told me the secret to writing a good joke was to write it backwards. So I began putting the motifs at the end of the story and having to write up to them and BAM! that's when it really clicked. Pretty soon these motifs were unrolling into stories much quicker than I had ever imagined possible.

I'd start with a motif like "A toad can't cry for the death of his children." and I'd write an entire short story, which I hadn't done much of mind you having gone to school for engineering and all. I might turn the toad into a toad-like old man. Well next I'd have to choose how his children died. But the weird part is why is he refusing to weep? Well that's a refusal of water, so let's have the kids drown.

Of course you can't stop there, you have to take his refusal to its max. I took him into the desert because that's another place which refuses water, just like him. By then, I had another story in the back of my mind which wanted to weave itself in. It was a Coyote tale from the Kalapuya people in Oregon about stealing water from the frogs in the desert by making reference to a rib bone. And it had frogs, which are like toads and the refusal of water too so I layered it in.

I must have had a good period of time generating hundreds of stories or story outlines this way. I really need to put them on the website. I even set up a little web robot to email me a random motif each day to write a story from. My friends took notice and soon we began sitting around in the pub all writing stories about helpful birds saving African bushmen who had hijacked airplanes. It was tremendously fun.
I'm working on a web version which recreates that bot so everyone can give it a try too. I really need an intern or assistant at this point I think.

In my work, I now champion the community as hero and not the individual. Feedback on this?

Well I feel I've addressed this above slightly in mentioning the polytheistic mythology versus the monotheistic one. Another "myth" I keep getting asked to do is the "Mythology of the Millennials". So I gave a lecture on that at the Pop Culture Association in Seattle this year.

Apparently these kids today don't make any sense and we can't reach them, or sell stuff to them, I've heard lots of variations on this story. So in working with that, I found the term Millennial comes from a book Generations which introduces Strauss Howe Generational theory. This theory states there are four different generations which repeat over and over and over. According to their mythology, I mean theory, the Baby Boomers (which they are members of) are a Prophetic generation which is largely self / individual focused whereas the Millennials are a Heroic generation and are much more focused outward, and work together in groups better to help society. At least they will when they hit their

calling, they're still a bit young. The last generation before them was the ones who fought World War II. and should they be properly mentored, could make some amazing social change.

It's a fascinating theory, but it's still a mythology. We simply can't know if it is a story or not, but it is a marvelous story.

Now the key that I'm seeing here is the mythology of the Millennials is already pivoting for this. No longer are we focused on the central heroes, we're having more complex casts and mosaics of characters working together (or not) to achieve their goals. Where we once were satisfied with Superman or Batman, now we're having both in the same film and soon will get the Justice League. In fact, almost every single story which they grew up with was clusters and clusters of heroes, many more than there used to be. So I think about that a bit.
The funny part about the whole thing is Millennials didn't want to come to that talk. They hate being called Millennials because everyone complains about how they're ruining everything. Search online if you don't believe me, there are articles on everything from Millennials are ruining the housing market to Millennials are ruining soap. Talk about a lack of responsibility, that's really what blame is.

But when I toss out this new angle on their own mythology, wow do they really respond. I suppose we're starting to see some elements of this, maybe with the Bernie Sanders movement but according to the book, there will be a large crisis in 2019 or 2020 that will ignite their potential. But again, that's a mythology. How can we know? That's the Zen part of me talking.

How do you assess Community vs. Individual stories in new mythology?

I'd say, like above is to have a community of characters. This tends to violate our notion of stories having central characters right? According to Axel Olrik's Laws of Epics, it absolutely does. But he also says women can't be epic heroes so we're already breaking his laws.

That's ok, people throughout history did too. For example, in Wolfram von Eschenbach's Grail story titled Parzival from around 1200, we have a central character named Parzival. And right in the middle of the storyline he disappears going completely AWOL for a while. We then get to follow Gawain for several chapters and watch how he handles his journeys and deeds very differently. You suddenly get a knight who handles things with much greater diplomacy and aplomb than the joust-happy Parzival.

It sort of reminds you of Pulp Fiction in a way.

Now the caveat to stories that western culture hasn't gotten into very much yet is nested storytelling: where a character in a story begins to tell another story. You can see our culture yearning for it, there are examples like in Reservoir Dogs or in the television program How I met your Mother. However, this is child's play compared to something like the Baital Pachisi of India or the Thousand and One Nights of Persia. These are ancient stories which have been told for thousands of years and their motifs are so well polished it's the difference between a rock on the ground and brilliantly polished gem.

Either way, our storytelling in general is beginning to focus away from main characters and look at secondary characters with more interest. George R. R. Martin's Game of Thrones literally punishes you for becoming attached to main characters. And for the most part, you find yourself suddenly finding a secondary character come much more to the foreground, so there's less ego in that form of storytelling, and it's great storytelling.

Tell us about your web site: Storyseeds.org? What does it do and what have you learned?

Storyseeds is right now the home of the search engine I built of Stith Thompson's Motif Index and Literature. That's those 50,000 motifs found and mapped across cultures all around the world. I've tried calculating how many stories that is, and I'm guessing 1.5 million for now because there's no way to tell until you've collected them all, which we're working on and I hope doesn't become my life work either.

The reason I call it Storyseeds is based on the story above about creating stories. I really want to encourage people to use story, myth and motif more practically in their day to day lives. This is the idea of growing a new story from the seeds of another, which is sort of how motifs work.

Now I have a lot of other projects I'm getting ready to toss up there, some new and some old. I already mentioned the idea of motifs as writing prompts and a web version of that which allows people to quickly outline or write a short story. They can share it with their friends, publish it so everyone can see or comment on other people's. So that's coming along soon.

An older project I had worked on from 2005 until 2010 or so was called monomyth.org. It doesn't exist now; I was too busy to keep it going but it allowed people to create a hero's journey map for popular films or stories. It got quite a lot of usage, by teachers and the like so I think I'll bring that back but likely will need to hire an assistant to help manage it. I also have retooled it so that it doesn't only encourage people to use Campbell's work but also Vladimir Propp's or Stith Thompson's or the other variations on these ideas.

What I've learned through all this is if you want to get really into the world of applied mythology or interpretive mythology, there are a few things that can help. One is not to get attached to your own myths or interpretations. Please don't get stuck reading only Greek mythology or only reading Grimm Fairy Tales. You've got to move beyond this.
I avoid this by reading a new myth every day and jotting down notes for possible interpretations of it. This gives me a really strange repertoire. I have some amazing feminist stories from Tajikistan, or soul retrieval stories from Hawaii, or ones where a princess rather than getting stuck in a tower (cliché) builds her own tower out of the skulls of her unsuccessful suitors. That story is from India. Most stories I don't like, but inevitably I find ones which are truly amazing and which hardly anyone knows of. I actually built an AI which randomly picks a country from around the world and emails me stories from there each morning, so that helps too, but it's just as easy to crack a book you haven't read.

Second, I've learned that you really need to keep sharp on your work, on which stories you know and your thoughts on them. Just as stories can become clichéd if they are told too often, so can your interpretations and source materials. I like what the comedian Louis C. K. said he learned from George Carlin on this, every year take all your material and shelve it. Start new and fresh. There's more than enough stories out there, trust me on that. And that will allow you to avoid what I mentioned above, the "Greek and Grimm" problem which is people endlessly interpreting all stories through the lens of Greek myths or Grimm Fairy Tales.

I personally find this a very limited perspective on how the influence of humanity spreads. There's a recent New York Times article on the same problem in philosophy, where they teach all the Greek philosophers but hardly any from Persia, or China, or Africa. They don't use the word 'racist', but ask the question can we call this what it is? I could give you just as many Native American motif roots to current comic book heroes as I could Greek ones, and I'd argue those are tucked in there unconsciously too. Or that the entire vein of zombie stories comes the African god Nzambi and demonstrates a vilification of African religion via the slave trade which exists today. I mean we still do it, Voodoo is another particularly clear example of this which is really a hybrid mythology of Yoruban and Catholicism.

That's not to say you can't hold onto the motifs and ideas in those stories which are important to you or your heritage. I'm almost completely European, and so I from time to time read a lot of Arthurian stories or fairy tales. But even there, there's so much more room to broaden our story repertoire, culturally.

For example, if someone were to be caught on the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, that's great. They might even go into a huge rant (yeah, we all do this) interpreting Stairway to Heaven about the Pied Piper, etc. But what's that person really would benefit from knowing is that there's a fascinating book that got published last year of a whole collection of lost folktales from Germany by Franz Xavior von Schonwerth called "The Turnip Princess". Turn to the story in there called The Mouse Catcher or the Boy and the Beetle and you find a version of the Pied Piper of Hamelin which has a complete hero arc in it, the children aren't just kidnapped, there is one of them who has a helper beetle who helps him find a passage out. The story itself is also very synonymous with the famous story of Jung demonstrating synchronicity to his patients with a beetle in his essay On Synchronicity.

So that's where you get that burst of discovery again. That burst of finding a new world, a new realm. That's the addicting part for me. Gaining those new insights.

Can you discuss how New Mythology is creating new rituals? What are these? Are these new rituals and traditions replacing old ones?

I've been wondering about this of late, having lost a few older members of my family. The funerals were highly church oriented, but seemed to not hold nearly as much of a personal element as I'd want at my own funeral.

Well in my experience, ritual is when someone plays out their internal mythology in a symbolic language to deal with what is happening. Technically though a ritual is the ordeal which brings about the moment of transformation, like a rite of passage. A celebration is the gathering after the transformation has occurred, so the funeral would be a celebration rather than a ritual. Or a marriage would be a celebration, the ritual or ordeal would either be the dating or the wedding planning I suppose.

Now, if you read a book like "Inner Work" by Robert A. Johnson, he discusses dream interpretation and Jung's active imagination and highlights the symbolic language you can use to talk to your unconscious. There's only a few people I can think of who do that better. So, if you have a dream or imagination of someone coming at you with a flaming sword, you don't run away, you simply turn yourself into saltwater and simply extinguish the sword until it rusts away. But because you're salt water, well that's like tears, so are also telling your attacker how disappointed you are they are taking out their anger (flaming sword) this way.

Ritual, in essence, is doing the same thing but asking a friend of yours to dress up as that person and play it out. You might do this in a dream seminar, like the type run by Jeremy Taylor or Robert Moss and when you let the internal mythology exist outside, it feels silly at first (trust me, I'm one of the most skeptical about this) but when it suddenly clicks, it can be amazing. Something deep down in ourselves really registers it.

I've done quite a bit of ritual design because of my knack finding variations on the right stories and because that's how work in myth usually gets demonstrated to be as powerful as it is. I've done everything from rites of passage with young men to divorce rituals and I even once helped a young woman design a ritual to help her deal with her needing to have an abortion.

In ritual, you need to be aware of the message the symbolism is carrying. So when I did rites of passage out west in Seattle with the non-profit Rite of Passage Journeys, we began to speak to the kids early on symbolically. "I'm going to enjoy taking you out into the woods, killing you and seeing what creature walks back in your skin."
Sure that's a bit gruesome to say to somebody, but 13-year-old boys are about that gruesome so they got it quickly. We also did a lot of work with masks, having them spend a day in the wilderness by themselves and reflection on the death of their own selves and the beginning of who they truly are deep down. It's amazing work.
A divorce ritual is similar but obviously very different too. In it, rather than allow them to tell the stories of their lives in a way of mourning, you allow them to tell the stories of their relationship, but both the good and the bad, though people sometimes focus on just the bad at that point.

Obviously a divorce is a destructive act so I like to encourage people to perform a symbolic destruction which usually involves fire or water or both. So someone might burn their wedding dress, cover herself with the ashes and jump into a lake to both cleanse by fire and water. One caveat is there needs to be someone present in divorce rituals because there are usually witnesses at the wedding rituals. That makes it more potent. When people don't have a divorce ritual, which many don't, they commonly play out the destructive component unconsciously in their next relationship or relationships. That's what we call rebound relationships.

I once helped with one woman who was a scientist and highly skeptical of this ritual, myth, all this stuff. But she felt miserable and couldn't just think her way through it. And so I explained to her how the left hemisphere of the brain has language but the right does not. Instead, it experiences the world as symbols, each charged to so much importance that it is mythic for us. So this ritual, if it worked, would effectively get the memo over and she might feel better. She

designed her own ritual which is very important to allow for by the way. It involved a lot of what I said above, having a conversation with the child and looking at the experience as a difficult choice, but saying no to the time not the child. When she was finished, she was like a new person. Not only that but she was absolutely fascinated by how this worked. She said she had felt a heavy weight lift off of her shoulders, that had been there for a long time.

Talk about bliss and finding our way - or - what creative / spiritual powers are available to us in support of our personal journeys?

My favorite thing I've learned about Campbell's phrase "Follow your Bliss", is that he regretted saying it. This was what I was told by his biographers Stephen and Robin Larsen whom I worked with at the Center for Symbolic Studies for about seven years. I guess because people took the phrase a little too hedonistically, he quipped after "I wish I'd said 'Follow your Blisters'". I should get that bumper sticker.
Now I've asked a large number of people about this idea of “Following your Bliss”, and the thing that happens with it is that the question itself seems to trigger a hero arc in your life. So be very careful asking about it, even mores about the idea of what myth you’re living. Hero stories are never ever pleasant. I mean if they were - they’d be boring. That's what the whole road of trials / obstacles thing is, to test you and to be difficult. And you usually fail at those over and over again.

But I believe the thing Campbell was truly saying was say yes to the obstacles and while you’re in them, do the things you love so the obstacles become meaningful too. That's the key to it really. Don't ask "how can I follow my bliss?" ask "what's one thing you could do today that's truly meaningful?" or "what's one thing you could do today that would remind you who you are?" or "have you feel down in your bones, in your guts, in your soul who you really are?"
I think that's what he was getting at.

I frequently get requests from people to help them discover what “their bliss is” and what "myth they're living”. That one comes about after they understand how their personal myth swirls around their bliss. Now perhaps I'm getting old and grumpy but I refuse to tell anyone what myth I think they're living or what their bliss is. Not because I'm right or wrong, but because it really is a ripe moment sort of thing. I think it was Stanley Kubrick who refused to interpret his work, stating "the potency is in the self-discovery." That’s the case with someone’s myth. Let them discover it, it’s not a math problem. It’s a journey to even find it or figure it out. I’ll give you books to read or films to watch, but I can’t know what deeply resonates with you until you tell me.

What can you share about the Riker's Island project?

Well many details there are obviously confidential due to working in a prison, but I can tell you a bit about the intention and method. The Storyeon group has a few of us going to Riker's to teach storytelling. Our short version of why is "teach storytelling and people will begin to change their own stories and the story of their life.”

Now, that sounds great in theory/myth but when you get into the reality/prison and are sitting there telling stories, it's a bit different. We've broken it down to a method of three things. First we tell stories, second, we ask what catches someone in that story and why and third hope that turns into another story, which it usually does. Of course when most people are telling you a story, they don’t know they are so we like to stop them and say “now tell me that again like it’s a story.” That ups the ante a little.

The tricky thing is letting go of the stories you know and listening to these people’s stories or you'll have little or no effect. It's like mentoring, you're not the hero anymore. They are. You have to help with what they need, on their journeys not yours.

I think it took 3 sessions before we even got to hear much about what life was like for them there and yeah, it's hard to imagine facing a life like that, every morning when you wake up facing all that fear and that culture of survival and the choice are you predator or prey.

But I have to say some of them are tremendous at story interpretation. One of my favorite stories is The King and the Corpse, the collection of dilemma tales from India. The gist is there's a corpse telling a king stories, but each has no ending. If the king guesses the ending right, the corpse lets him continue on his quest. And the king has great answers, they're all wrong but they're usually really fascinatingly thought out.

Well I told these guys the one with the boy who gets sacrificed by his parents and king to a Giant. And I've told those stories for years in countless sessions public and private, and I've yet to have anyone get one of the King's interpretations right. These guys were right on it, but then again, that's why I was telling them that story. It's a great story to tell someone who is in prison.

The hardest thing about Riker's isn't really the youth, or the amount of paperwork to get clearance or id checks or hand stamps it takes to even get in there. It's that soul work is so foreign there, but yet it's so needed, so ripe for this. I mean most people in the world don't get this stuff, until they experience it, until they see it, they don't even know you can do things like this with story. But we're getting there. The guards are starting to see what we're doing and are trying to help bring in the right people who are most receptive. Some of them are even telling their own personal stories as well which interestingly enough gives them more cred, or makes them more real to the youth.

I think it was Michael Meade who said in his mentoring workshop some years ago, mentoring is like casting seeds. You're never sure if anything will grow or take hold, so don't focus on that. Focus on the work.

That's what Riker's is.

Round Two

On being called a Therapist:

No I don't consider myself a therapist, mainly because I live in NY and you can't call yourself a therapist here unless you have the right permission slip. Secondly, I prefer the experience many of my mentors have given me, which is best thought of with the following Persian quote: "A real prophet will point out the wisdom from your own heart." As far as what I do, it's like encouraging someone to make a sandwich. They usually have all the ingredients, you just need to slice the bread and help them arrange it.

I'm also not convinced this is what I'll be doing in 5 years. The work keeps changing for me, so perhaps you'll find me doing something else, but utilizing the mythology to do that. I tend to wear lots of different hats /masks.

On personal myth:

The idea of personal myth began with Jung:

"I was driven to ask myself in all seriousness: 'What is the myth you are living?' I found no answer to this question and had to admit I was not living with a myth, or even in a myth, but rather in an uncertain cloud of theoretical possibilities which I was beginning to regard with increasing distrust. I did not know that I was living a myth, and even if I had known it, I would not have know what sort of myth was ordering my life without my knowledge. So, in the most natural way, I took it upon myself to know 'my' myth, and I regarded this as the 'task of tasks'".

Campbell continued this likening various experiences he had to mythic moments. For example, when visiting Jung for the first time and almost getting hit by a silent electric train in a midst of fog, he felt it was like the story of Yvain visiting the castle with the gate crashes right behind him.

So you can find small moments in your own life, when you might feel you've crossed a threshold, or are on a road of trials, or are getting calls to adventure. But what I've found happens if you push a little further, is you begin to connect very strongly with archetypes, like the warrior, or the martyr or the magician. The best book I know on that subject is "The Hero Within" by Carol Pearson, at least shaping different variations of hero arcs to our own lives.

But sometimes I've had people's life stories begin to connect so amazingly close to the storyline of a fairytale or myth, that it's as if you're encountering the current incarnation of the character. I've run across Parzivals and Musashis, Odysseuses and Fisher Kings, Psyches and the Girl from East of the Sun West of the Moon, Coyotes, Artemises, Alchemists and the woman who marries the Beast, not that that's a bad thing.

The problem I see in it is that a lot of these stories have really similar beginnings and very different endings. So you really mustn't lock your ego into a storyline or you'll be wrong. That and the ego tends to gloss over the unhappy parts of a storyline in order to keep itself heroic and justified. Well, heroes rarely stay out of the muck, they get beaten up, dirtied, wounded, messed with, crushed and all else. Heroes get remembered because they get dismembered.

That and throw in the idea of the polytheism of the soul, thanks to the depth psychologists, and I've come to the conclusion, that all of our internal archetypes each has its own mythology which sometimes is nicely woven together but frequently not. So then you have different storylines within your soul fighting for acknowledgment and attention. And that's where our culture which is so utterly good at repression comes in and perpetuates that. You don't need to let the dark, repressed parts of your inner myths overcome you, you just need to be willing to sit with them and accept those parts of you too. You can't love yourself unless you can love the parts you reject too. You just don't let them make choices for your behavior is all.

On Mythology of Permaculture and Global Warming and New Myths:

Now as far as your work in permaculture and in trying to tackle the mythology of Global Warming for example, there are a few problems. First, this story is soon to be integrated into all of our mythologies whether we want it to or not but that's not a problem if you're working on connecting people via a single storyline. Second, by Robert A. Johnson's definition, a myth is a story which demonstrates the wound, but also how to heal that wound. And we're obviously not to that yet if it's at all possible.

So the mythology you're working with is that of the wasteland. You can find that in loads of cultures, particularly ones which are
a) nomadic and
b) near deserts.
The pair you want to tackle from it is that of the paradise, which also is featured in similar cultures, though not always. Arthurian folklore isn't primarily a desert culture, but it has wastelands and paradises too. You can also include snowy tundras in your estimation of wastelands, so for example the Norse Fimbulwinter or mighty winter qualifies. Also, in hunting cultures, the wasteland frequently deals with loss of water, loss of herds / animals, so you might want to look at stories like the Cheyenne story of the origin of the Sun Dance or the Jacarilla Apache story of the Origin of Food, both in Erdoes and Ortiz. That will give you groundwork or blueprints for how people have tackled these ideas in long-lasting ways in the past.

Of course in our modern day, someone could say we won't ever be able to fix global warming and that could likely be the case. We might need to flee to the Moon or Mars or less hospitable planets if life on ours begins to die, but those planets are also wastelands too, so any strategy by NASA or any other space agency will eventually trigger a wasteland mythology consciously or unconsciously.

On the topic of Global Warming, there's a fascinating component already in its mythology. In the conclusions of a leaked memo from political strategist Frank Luntz in 2003 (you can read on motherjones.com) talks about changing the term "global warming" to "climate change" because "climate change" is less scary. And so, to this day, even many advocates for the dire consequences of global warming still use the term climate change.

So any mythology would need to have that portion of the story told, not just our willingness to confront things which are against us, but include a dark trickster component which encouraged us to stick our heads in the sand.

Now I personally wonder about if we can stop it, or slow it down and if we will. While I don't believe that human beings are always ignorant, in fact we are quite surprisingly motivated in the face of apocalypse. And we will (eventually)

respond as a group against this, I am unsure what it will take for us to begin en masse. Sure, we are beginning to see more and more apocalyptic stories (if not most of the films these days) which is our way of dealing with it but none of them actually directly confront global warming as the cause, except maybe the film Waterworld or Spielberg's AI and they don't deal with it directly, it's just a set the story in motion sort of thing.

So we haven't yet come up with a plan to undo this if there is a way, but there's always a way. It just might be out of mankind's reach. But that isn't to say we don't have time to work at it. And the point of the mythology would be to seed this interest in the next generations who are going to be growing up with this, who will be thinking about it more than money.

Now another study published in slate says that food prices are the single largest cause behind political instability and revolutions. What I'm curious about is whether or not the part about Global Warming that will really engage people (especially those resistant to the idea or consequences of Global Warming) to action is to point out that should Global Warming become problematic enough, well then the Himalayas will melt, causing floods in India and China. If this is the case, you have almost half of the world's population out of food. But China in particular has a lot of funds and could just buy food from America, which would in turn raise our food prices, and what then?

Now you see, I've just created a mythology, a story which hasn't occurred, though it could. The problem is that people are now experiencing unconsciously simulated starvation which causes people to re-act rather than to act clearly. So a mythology like that might easily cause people to become highly nationalistic or racist or aggressive and violent. So whichever story we put forth needs to have a strong leadership to focus what to do next to avoid this, including anything from learning to plant our own gardens to having fish in fish tanks.

If we were to build this as a myth, the best template would likely be near future sci-fi. So, I'd begin with characters in a yet to be born generation of people but I'd give them a chance their ancestors who caused the problem, (as they frequently do in myths) didn't have.

They'd have:

A) a world which believes fully in global warming,

B) Access to self learning AIs (neural networks) some of which could be their mentors too and

C) 3D printing or perhaps self-replicating machines which would allow someone even the age of 12 to create an immense kite to "filter air" or whatever that 12-year old's idea was.

And the mosaic portion of the story would be to brainstorm as many different potential ideas, pros, cons, and sort of make it follow the 12 labors of Hercules, but from different people's experiences. It will take a group effort honestly.

Then I would say within less than 25 years, if that storyline connected with people, there will likely be a generation of people who are ready to jump on these ideas, but have already tried variations in simulators and once the technology arrives can begin diligently trying to reverse the spread of and find a way to collect the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

The problem then becomes whether or not we learn to control weather, because surely that would be weaponized by one government or another. So yeah, there's never a happy ending, or there'd be no more stories.

On the Transcendent Function:

So have you ever taken one of those Myers Briggs' tests? The personality ones where it says oh you're an ESTJ or INFP or what have you? Well those were based heavily on Jung's four functions of consciousness: Thinking, Feeling, Intuition and Sensation.

The easy way to remember those are there's two ways we take in information: Sensation (via our five senses) or Intuition (via a sixth sense / the unconscious). And there's two ways to process it, we think about it or we feel about it. Different people do different things.

There are a lot of story models by the way which represent these four functions in society. You could argue something like The Wizard of Oz, Dorothy's four functions are her friends, but most lacks what they are (she's a teen/child so her consciousness is underdeveloped): The Scarecrow is Thinking because he lacks a brain, so he's underdeveloped thinking. The Tin Woodsman is Feeling because he lacks a heart, again underdeveloped. The Lion is Sensation because he's afraid of physical injury, again underdeveloped. Toto is intuition but he's not underdeveloped, he's great from the get go, biting Miss Gulch because he knows she's a bitch or pulling the curtain because he knows the Wizard is a fraud. That's part of women's mythology by the way, they usually have a smaller intuitive character, though certain men heroes do too, it just isn't as common.

Curiously enough, if you want to follow that story thread, there are loads of examples like these you can toss into the four functions of consciousness, anything with fours in them seem to work. The houses of Hogwarts, the Ninja Turtles, the kids in the first Narnia book, the kids in the Breakfast Club, the characters in Requiem for a Dream, I could go on.

Anyways, the point that Jung put forth which got left out of Myers Briggs isn't to hyper identify with one side. You are very much not supposed to say "Well I'm an ESTJ, done and done." or whatever, because your unconscious still has the other functions in it, they're just underdeveloped.

What Jung said in his essay on the Transcendent function is that once you actually push yourself to develop the parts you lack, that is to say, for an introvert to go give a public speech or do storytelling, you get a rush from that. Your repressed portion which has been all pent up, but has a stockpile of energy in it now gets to step out. And you can do that for all of your underdeveloped parts, and you get that rush. That rush is the Transcendent function.

It can give you new ideas of who you are, allow you to grasp your own life in different ways, and integrate new aspects of yourself into it. This is the idea of realizing your "super powers" if you want to bring it to modern parlance. But we don't like to step outside our comfort zones much, so it's really only for those who are feeling particularly heroic isn't it? I mean not everyone can go on the journey of the hero, or it wouldn't be as meaningful to us.

On the Rules of Mythology and Pairs of Opposites.

I'm not sure the rules of mythology really, but I'm getting better at understanding the rules of a successful mythology. I think humanity didn't make the rules up as much as we discovered the rules of our own lives and souls as we told stories over and over for hundreds of thousands of years.

Say you had a personal experience and told someone about it, they might retell it as a story around a fire, but not the way you did. Parts would fall away but the portions that connected with them would stick. And that's why myths are the polished gems of story. They've been retold so many times, and polished in the memory and resonance of the human psyche, they're what we keep around even thousands of years later.

So I'd say the first rule of mythology is a story should resonate with your audience. That's my own opinion as to why the biblical stories needed to be retold in the Middle ages as the Knights of the Roundtable stories, which are now being retold as comic book heroes. The point is the biblical stories all came from other places, and you can demonstrate that pretty well. I personally don't find many of those stories resonate with me, perhaps because they aren't allowed to be retold the same way anymore. Once you write something down, it more or less kills it or freezes it in time. But it works for other people, so I acknowledge that too.

Another rule, that of speaking symbolically the unconscious mind, well that's a tricky one. Here's where you have things like balance between symbols. I think that might have been something we evolved because of food. If you eat the same food all the time, well then you get sort of sick of it. Humans have been successful because we literally will try to eat anything, and we do. I can't prove this idea, but once we crack how brainwaves work and we are able to then decode

the mythologies of koala or panda bears who only ever eat eucalyptus or bamboo, I wouldn't surprised if they enjoy much more repetition than we do in their mythology.

Have you ever had a moment where you picked up a puppy and it was so cute that you just wanted to squeeze it, and I mean like in an almost suffocating / violent way? That's the human brain at work. Once it gets overwhelmed with one emotion, then it re-calibrates by throwing us into an opposite. So cute/aww switches to anger/violence, hopefully not actually. And I think this mechanism is clear in stories, and so the human psyche itself is forged into these stories. I know a few folktales which rely heavily on repetition as a storytelling mechanism and I only tell them to people I really like or I really don't. Because you either are going to enjoy what I'm doing there or you aren't. I told one of those at Riker's, it worked perfectly.

On Dreams and New Archetypes:

I personally don't really have very many dreams which influence my stories. Not usually anyways. I tend toutilize self meditation or active imagination to achieve this, so it could be that my unconscious has more than enough opportunities to express itself and so my dreams are usually pretty tame and forgettable, though I get an interesting one from time to time.

That's not to say others haven't. Robert Louis Stevenson in his "Chapter on Dreams" used to talk to the little people of his dreams before he slept and invite them to perform stories for him before he'd wake. That was how he got fuel for his stories. I personally haven't tried this, at least successfully though I have made requests to my unconscious on things like how to roll my R's while learning other languages which I've had a dream answer.

As for your idea of New Archetypes, that's a new one for me. Most of what I've ever read is the idea that the Archetypes are pretty consistent. But that's because I have a very stringent definition of an archetype, which is a character who I can find in at least one story pretty much anywhere in the world. Last year I lectured to some 5th graders in a local school and I introduced them to the idea of archetype. I asked them to identify some and gave them choices like Hero, Monster, Villain, Mentor, Knight, Princess, etc.

You can find heroes anywhere. Monsters too. I haven't tried finding Villains everywhere just yet, but I'd say so. Mentor is technically a Greek character, but his name has been amplified so I might say that, but I prefer the term Helper because that category is much more common. It seems it's only the European myths where heroes are so stupid they require mentors. I'm teasing, but seriously, it's not as common until you expand it to helpers.

Now imagine the response you get when you ask a room full of sixty 5th graders if a Princess is an archetype. Of course half the room couldn't care less, whereas the other half ranges from yes to "OH MY GOD I'M PEEING MY PANTS YES". And I said I didn't think it was. I think a Maiden or a young girl is an Archetype, but I can't find Princesses everywhere in the world. Of course I got the Pocahontas argument, but is she a princess because we call her that to identify with her? I mean her father wasn't the King of the Powhatan people, he was the Chief. So I could argue the same for King vs. Chief vs. Leader. I then went on to say the same about a Knight, whose Archetype is really that of the Warrior, like a Samurai.

Now the thing which opens this up for our understanding is when you say but a Knight isn't exactly a Warrior, or a Princess isn't a normal Maiden. Now you're thinking right. This is the combination of our pairs of opposites theory with that of Archetypal theory, and so you're onto it. Knights are the combination of the Warrior Archetype with a focus on the sacred. So any storyline which brings forth the idea of the Knight will have a sacred Knight and likely a profane Knight, which you find in their villains.

Princesses are maidens with abundance, as opposed to maidens with scarcity, though they commonly have their wealth taken from them, as does Cinderella or Snow White depending on which version we're talking about. But the axis of the story again is wealth vs scarcity, and so we get a character motif or an inflection about this Archetype.

I personally don't think you'll find new Archetypes much, at least for a while. I mean you got me thinking here because to be honest, at one point in time there were no stories of Wizards / Shamans / Magic people, but then someone

thought that up, so there has to be moments where that arises. However, I do think in the next years, we're going to see a re-emergence of myths with characters matching certain binary flavors. The idea of the world now being a paradise vs a wasteland, is the idea of the sacred vs profane, so you might see stories with people who are warriors for the sacred which is no longer some bronze age deity in the sky, but now the sacred world we live in.

I would also argue the stories revolving around wealth, or worth, are going to change. Money will likely become more and more vilified, as it has in recent years, because the explanation for a lot of the increasing difficulty for people in the future will be explained by the greed of those (us) from the past. You can see this already happening in the current American election as a result of the protests in Zuccotti park / Occupy Wall St in 2011. And that narrative is being thrown back and forth by major political candidates now whereas the American Presidential race at that time was largely silent about it.

I'd be curious which New Archetypes people are noticing because this theory I have is relatively new (I've only been working on it for maybe 5 years) and so I've yet to publish anything on it because I want to see if it holds up. Most of the lists of Archetypes I've noticed seem to be pretty all over the place, so I rarely have one that I refer to.

This goes back to how Jung thought them up, it was shortly after his friendship with Freud was absolutely destroyed, and he was absolutely miserable and began journaling in his black books. He would have visions of a character in his mind's eye and would grab him and hold onto him, having a sort of Protean wrestling match until the character showed him it's true original form, that is took off the mask. And even then, I'm yet to see he made a list of these things, but you can correct me there.

Perhaps that's why I focus on motifs more so than Archetypes, it's like the moment that the Archetypes meet the stories, but are the recipe for the which pudding sticks to the wall. I thought about this this morning a bit while walking the dogs... I'm not really that into mythology itself, as in I don't really care about knowing all the deities from all the religions just like I'm not interested in knowing all the characters from all the TV shows either.

Instead, I'm just really interested in what makes a story or idea become part of a mythology? What makes it resonate?

What makes it stick?

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In Conclusion: Rants on New Myths? (Willi) -

+ Are there truly new myths? Are not all myths based on the assimilation of previous ones?

+ When and how was the first myth shared? On a cave wall, a paddle or in blood? Who heard the first myth?

+ Is the practice of myth based mostly on: Science? Fiction? Logic? Faith? Self-interest? Delusion? Profit?

+ Are there myths on Mars? Should we invent some mars myths here (and plant them there like a flag)?

+ More and more, I see mythology as a journey for the individual – or the several thousand mythologists bumping and grinding away for a leadership title in this techno age. Is this is a battle, fraught with insiders and outliers, a few opinionated super egos that seem to capture too few active imaginations?

+ What if we didn’t have any mythologies, would we still have the same mess on this planet as we do today?

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Bios -

Richard Schwab
Mythological Consultant, NYC
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Richard is a "mythological consultant" living in New York who works to make stories memorable, useful and meaningful.

Richard teaches storytelling, gives lectures on myth, interpretation and practical uses for story in our lives. He has worked with groups such as the Joseph Campbell Foundation, Rite of Passage Journeys, and ARAS (the Archive for the Research in Archetypal Symbolism) in New York.

While working as Research Scholar at the Center for Symbolic Studies, Richard built a search engine of 50,000 story patterns from 1200 cultures. The goal was for people to more easily find the common connection between stories worldwide. He gave a TEDx talk about in 2013 where he demonstrated uses of this project in creativity and youth mentoring. He is currently working with ARAS and the Storyeon storytelling project to teach storytelling at Riker's Island prison to help inmates shift their own life stories.

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Willi Paul has been active in the sustainability, permaculture, transition, sacred Nature, new alchemy and mythology space since the launch of PlanetShifter.com Magazine on EarthDay 2009. In 1996 Mr. Paul was instrumental in the design of the emerging online community space in his Master's Thesis: "The Electronic Charrette." He was active in many small town design visits with the Minnesota Design Team. Willi earned his permaculture design certification in August 2011 at the Urban Permaculture Institute, San Francisco.

Mr. Paul has been interviewed over 30 times in blogs and journals. See his early cutting-edge article at the Joseph Campbell Foundation and his pioneering videos on YouTube. Willi's network now includes multiple partner web sites, a 3 Twitter accounts, a G+ site, multiple blog sites, and multiple list serves and e-Community Groups including his New Mythology, Permaculture and Transition Group on LinkedIn, and his popular New Global Mythology group on Depth Psychology Alliance.