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MOTIVATION, BEHAVIOR & CONSCIOUSNESS
A PERSONAL MYTHOLOGY

As I lay on the table, looking off to my left I could see the picture of my heart beating rhythmically. As I watched the tip of the catheter enter my heart, the dye was released and I felt a burning sensation in my chest and arms. Soon, as the doctors were chatting with one another, seemingly oblivious to the fact that my heart had stopped and I felt everything closing in and a terrible sense of panic. The world turned black for a moment, until the doctors ultimately revived me. It seemed surreal, but of course was absolutely real. After that day, everything changed for me.

Upon completion of my angiogram, I became far more conscious of my body, and began to diet and exercise on a regular basis. Since the doctors could do no angioplasty or other life prolonging procedures short of bypass surgery, my health was completely in my hands for the foreseeable future. That was nearly nine years ago and I have learned many valuable lessons since then. One of the most difficult lessons has been that "terror" is not a good long term motivator for me. After the initial shock and terror of my situation, I dieted and exercised faithfully—but little by little relapses to former ways crept into my careful regimen. As my weight began coming back and my discipline more relaxed, I began to wonder about motivation and behavior.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a reflection on mythology and personal transformation by integrating information acquired through reading, lectures and personal experience related to this particular subject. I believe that I have developed some conceptual tools that may be helpful to others in synthesizing important psycho-dynamic elements into their process of personal transformation and mythic development.

I can think of no better introduction to this subject than Feinstein and Krippner who state:

> Psychologists have offered numerous terms and concepts for helping people think about their inner lives. We turn to mythology because myth *is* the language that most closely approximates the natural workings of the psyche. "Personal Mythology," however, is sometimes misunderstood because "myth" in its vernacular usage, has come to mean a mistaken idea. Yet we know of no better term than *personal mythology* for capturing the way that human consciousness reflects deep mythological images while simultaneously being shaped by the mythology of the surrounding culture. Unlike terms such as *scripts, attitudes*, or *beliefs*, *myth* is able to encompass the archetypal dimension of the unconscious mind, which transcends early conditioning and cultural setting. A mythic outlook also reminds you that you are part of a larger picture than your immediate concerns. Bringing a mythological perspective to psychology yields a framework that is more potent in its facility with unconscious processes, in its sensitivity to cultural forces, and in the dignity it lends to the act of examining the human story. Pg. 9

Some years previous to my "procedure" discussed above, I had been involved as a consultant utilizing a behavioral assessment instrument called the <u>Personal Profile System</u>, developed by John Geier, PhD., This instrument was developed by Dr. Geier based upon the theoretical work of William Moulton Marston, an early twentieth century psychologist who wrote an obscure work entitled The Emotions of Normal People. Marston had developed a behavioral approach based upon Jungian "types", describing four basic sets of characteristics, 1) Dominance, 2) Influence, 3) Steadiness and 4) Compliance. Geier elaborated on the work of Marston and became quite successful in the field of human resource development through the psychometric instruments he developed.

One of the fundamental principles behind the <u>Personal Profile System</u> was that all behavior is "motivated." What Geier had done was basically to identify some of the specific fears and desires that underlie the various types of behavior. What I developed over the course of the next several years of dealing with this material was a synthesis of the Marston model with that of Abraham Maslow and later the work of Kiersey/Bates based upon the work of Meiers/Briggs. This synthesis, represented in fig. 1, is the basis of the story I told in our class projects for the Personal Mythology class (See Appendix). This model represents an important portion of my personal mythology.
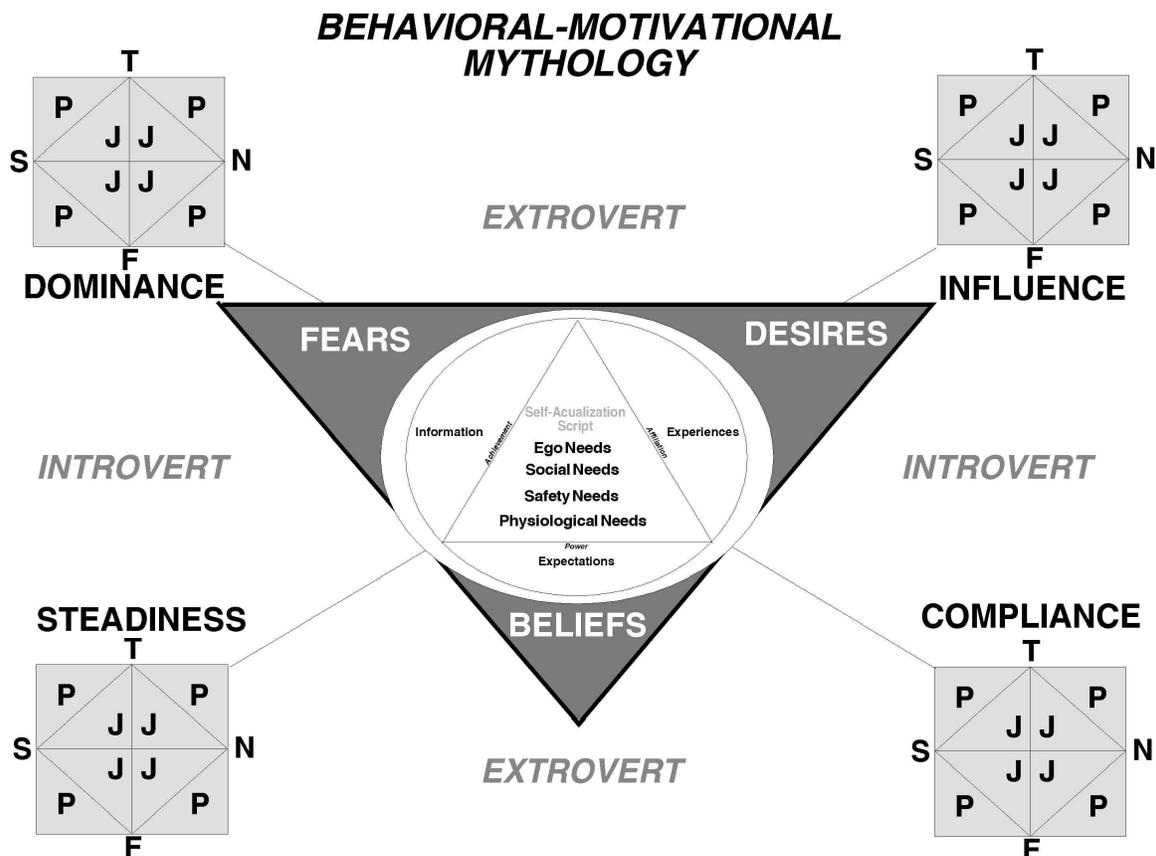

Figure 1

The heart of the model is based upon a modified version of Maslowe's Hierarchy of Needs—representing the basic motivational structure of virtually all human beings. Surrounding those basic needs are ideas expressed by McClellan about the three needs of Power, Achievement and Affiliation, which I think are probably included somewhat in the higher needs as expressed by Maslowe. According to the Jungian typology there are four main behavioral branches designated by the Marston nomenclature of Dominant, Influence, Steadiness and Compliance. Within each of those primary behavioral types are the sixteen variations of Kiersey/Bates, Meiers/Briggs of Introvert/Extrovert, Intuition/Sensate, Thinking/Feeling/, Judmental/Perceiver.

I believe this is a fairly accurate synthesis of some of the things that are actually going on in the real world. Unfortunately having such a wonderful theoretical framework for others was not helping me cope with some of the medical problems of my life. Many people have been faced with survival choices and were able to live under extraordinarily difficult circumstances for extended periods of time. My thoughts turned immediately to Viktor Frankl and his famous work Man's Search for Meaning. In Frankl's estimation the difference between survival and perishing, outside of "luck" was the factor of having some overwhelming purpose to life outside of the facts of personal existence. In other words, Frankl was talking about each of us having a personal mythology.

Perhaps I was in the position of Jung, when he wrote in Memories, Dreams, Reflections (pg171),

> "But in what myth does man live nowadays? In the Christian myth, the answer might be, "Do you live in it?" I asked myself. To be honest, the answer was no. For me, it is not what I live by. "Then do we no longer have any myth?" "No, evidently we no longer have any myth." "But then what is your myth—the myth in which you do live?" At this point the dialogue with myself became uncomfortable, and I stopped thinking. I had reached a dead end."

Some years earlier I had encountered Joseph Campbell on his PBS series, The Power of Myth and subsequently purchased the book by Bill Moyers based upon that show. After reading the Creative Mythology book of the Masks of God series, it occurred to me that the problems I was experiencing were really personal mythology problems. As Feinstein and Krippner stated the problem:

> Much of the psychological suffering people experience is entangled in personal myths that are not attuned to their actual needs, potentials or circumstances. Attempting to follow a persona myth that is not in harmony with who you are or with the world in which you live is painful, and a mythology that is unable to serve as a bridge to deeper meanings and greater inspiration that you can find in the outer world is often accompanied by a deep and nameless anxiety. Pg. 2

So rather than a purely academic interest in mythology, creating a better personal myth for myself was actually a matter of life and death. One of the things I needed to do was harmonize my Christian belief system with the fundamental nature of mythology. The thoughts of the theologian Theodore W. Jennings, Jr on the Christian Mythos were very helpful. He indicated that in regard to imagination and the Christian Mythos, the functions of religious imagination were:

> We must now examine the way in which the mythos functions to mediate and represent the sacred. Here I will identify four ways of functioning which, while they are generally characteristic of the religious imagination, are also of direct importance for an understanding of the Christian mythos. The functions of the mythos are those of representation, orientation, communication and transformation. Pg. 54.

Later when we discuss archetypes and symbols those functions will prove to be very useful.

Two authors who further helped in my quest for reconciling the Christian mythos with other mythic systems was Westman dealing with the bible from a mythological perspective and Edinger's work looking at aspects of the Christian mythos in terms of depth psychology. Within a newly emerging paradigm I could understand the Christian mythos within a context of consciousness raising. Of course, the problem with consciousness is that no one really understands it. As the physicist Nick Herbert said:

> Science's biggest mystery is the nature of consciousness. It is not that we possess bad or imperfect theories of human awareness; we simply have no such theories at all. About all we know about consciousness is that it has something to do with the head, rather than the foot. That's not much but it appears to be more than the ancient Egyptians knew: the Egyptians threw away the brain before beginning their elaborate embalming procedures, judging it to be a mere accessory. Pg. 249

And then he asks a wonderful question:
> Is it possible that consciousness is some sort of quantum effect?

Taking up that theme is a recent work by Satinover discussing exactly how the brain could be utilizing quantum mechanics in order to produce consciousness. Another recent contribution by Pico explores some of the non-quantum processes that could produce consciousness, processes discussed by such authors such as Dennett and Ornstein. A fascinating survey of a number of various theories is presented by Charles Hampden Turner, discussing sixty different maps to what can only be considered the Mythology of Consciousness.

So I began to understand the bible as an ethical/moral expression of that Mythology of Consciousness. I'm sure there are others that have come to a similar conclusion, but I began to discover some real power in the Christian Mythos when considered from that perspective. However, with the inroads of modern science there are definite signs of the breakdown of the Christian mythos—and when mythic systems breakdown there are negative and disturbing consequences for society and individuals as we discussed in class.

Within the structure of my little story and the above model, I was beginning to get my "dogs" to work together. What was needed in my personal mythology was focused on the desire side of the chart. If I wanted to live, I needed something to live for, or at least some powerful archetype to animate my existence.

That's where symbols and archetypes come into play. Symbols largely defy definition or classification. Bond says that:

> In order to experience myth we must first come to terms with the symbol…A symbol is a mysterious thing. When we grasp at it, we find it leading us ever deeper, like a twig in the ground, into the roots of the psyche under the firm reason of earth….The symbol is a living thing. It lives only in its natural habitat, the psyche…The symbol is a frustrating thing because it is irrational but not illogical; concrete but not literal; specific but not unequivocal; multivalent but not ambiguous. Pg 78

While not as poetic, according to the theologian Paul Tillich, the six fundamental aspects of symbols are:

> 1) They point beyond themselves, 2) they participate in that to which they point, 3) they open up dimensions of reality external to ourselves which are otherwise inaccessible, 4) they open up commensurate dimensions of our internal reality equally inaccessible, 5) they cannot be intentionally produced and 6) they grow and die corresponding to their ability or inability to give expression to and mediate to a human community the reality to which they point. Pg 41-43

I believe that's where the myth of Psyche and Eros comes into play. The psyche needs symbols of desire toward which to gravitate. In my story I used the idea of "Divine Princess" to exemplify the idea of a strong attractive principle from a male perspective. Unfortunately, that seems to be the weakness of the metaphor—I could not think of a non-gender oriented object of desire that would hold any power for me.

In my story, the challenge of desire is to be grounded in the cold realities of life—so that being consumed by desire isn't obsessive or delusional. Much as in the myth, Psyche needs to be grounded in the tough nature of reality in order to eventually claim full relationship with the object of desire-Eros. In my story, the process is similar to Psyche surrendering to Aphrodite in order to ultimately claim the prize. I must face the dragon as Psyche had to face the vengeful goddess. Whether using existing myths or stories such as mine, finding symbols or archetypes which can function to represent, orient, transform and communicate has become increasingly important. But the point in all this is not to invent good stories, but to aid in personal transformation.

One area that I have found to be somewhat fascinating in this regard to personal mythology and transformation is the area of Neuro Linguistic programming. Based ultimately on the work of the general semanticist, Alfred Korsbyski, a number of researchers have worked to develop a system of belief and behavior modifications which can be applied in a variety of settings. Utilizing some of the techniques developed by Dilts and others, I think I have finally been able to develop a personal mythology that has allowed me better control my diet and exercise habits.

NLP is concerned with such things as capability, behaviors and beliefs. The model I developed deals with behaviors, motivations and beliefs. I think the model I have developed is sufficiently flexible to deal with minor differences in nomenclature and emphasis—underlying aspects are very similar. Based upon the story of The Golden Harness, I think one can see that the model is sufficient to underlie a fairly comprehensive mythic system.

As I contemplate the challenges that confront me in my ongoing battle to deal with the ramifications of my heart disease, I find myself dealing with issues of chaos as described by Van Eenwyk:

> Chaos theory is certainly paradoxical. As a scientific explanation of the relationship between energy and matter, it more accurately describes reality. Is it also the latest in a series of mythological motifs by which humankind has attempted to understand itself in relation to its environment? Is chaos theory simply one more way station on the continuing route by which we try to make sense out of the myths we generate to explain ourselves and our world? Pg. 168

He goes on to say:

> In the quest to control our lives, perhaps we lose track of an essential truth about our nature. In our increasingly rationalistic outlook on life, chaos theory reminds us of ho illusory control really is. Pg 169

So in dealing with the mysteries of life and death, whether we utilize the mythologies of the past, such as the Christian mythos, or more contemporary ones such as chaos theory we can explain, discover meaning, and perhaps stimulate our thinking, but will not necessarily master the concerns which our mythologies help us confront. That perhaps, is the ultimate point of mythology and personal transformation.

APPENDIX

THE QUEST FOR THE GOLDEN HARNESS
By
Charles Andersen

Let me tell you about my three wonderful dogs, they're enormous black Labrador Retrievers, weighing about 95 pounds apiece. These are a special breed of dog called "Wit Hounds." They normally are of good humor, except under certain circumstances which I will explain later. They're wonderful companions and we romp the meadows together joyfully exploring, discovering and playing. However, they are picky eaters and won't share one another's food. I feed them scraps—scraps of my beliefs and experiences. Cosmo eats bits of belief about the world, Otto feasts on beliefs and experiences about myself and Xeno feeds exclusively on my beliefs and experiences about other people. If I feed them platitudes they get very hungry and want "real" meat, so I must be careful to feed them properly. They have voracious appetites and are extremely loyal.

As I said before, they're not always good natured. There are times when one of them gets moody and the other two have to protect me so that I don't get attacked. Sometimes when they're playing with each other the play turns pretty vicious and I think they may be trying to kill each other. The biggest trouble is that I can never get all three of them to go along with me in an orderly manner. So while we have great times together—I can't say that I'm really their master. There are things I want to do and places I want to go and things I wish to accomplish but I'm always having to deal with one or another of them misbehaving.

I spoke with a mentor friend of mine who told me about a special harness I can use to control them, a golden harness. In order to accomplish the things I would like, I must go on a quest for that special yoke, that Golden Harness. That brings us to my special problem.

Beyond the fields and forests where I dwell are two enormous hills, upon which sit two ancient castles. One of the castles is nearly in ruins and the other is seemingly new and festive. In the newer one, imprisoned somewhere deep within those ancient walls, is a very special "divine princess" who has become the object of my desire. However, the only way to free her is with a special key that is kept in the other ruined castle. Within those decaying castle walls lurks an enormous fire breathing dragon (Phobos by name) that dwells in the dungeon of the castle, guarding that key as well as an enormous hoard of gold. Most of the time the dragon Phobos just sleeps, partially because he doesn't want to deal with my dogs. You see they keep him bottled up there most of the time. However, any time the dragon wishes, he can rush by my guard dogs and fly about the country pillaging and destroying the entire psychic landscape. Fortunately, my dogs are diligent in their duty so that Phobos (fear) rarely escapes.

The dilemma is this. In order to get the key to free the divine princess, I must drink a special elixir that is kept in the festive castle. However, unless the "elixir of desire" is mitigated by a bit of the dragon's gold it is toxic to me, as are our most intense desires unless they are mitigated by our fears. If I drink the elixir, I don't have to fear the dragon's breath or size—I'm impervious to it's devilish ways. But it will not share it's gold with anyone and will reek revenge if even the smallest particle is stolen. So before I can drink the elixir I must snatch some of the gold, poor it in the cup, drink the then tonic mixture, return to the dragon's lair, secure the key, return to the princess and free her. However, in order to do all that I need my dogs to work together with me, which is where the golden harness comes in.

With the golden harness, my wit hounds, who have feasted on my experiences and beliefs, can assist me in the arduous task which lay ahead. If I don't get control of them however, they will stand between me (protecting me from both fear and desire). If I go anywhere near either of those two castles all three turn on me and chase me away. It's very frustrating, so I've got to deal with them before I can make any progress toward solving my dilemma.

So, that's why I've come to Pacifica, to learn how to make the golden harness needed to control and guide my "Wit Hounds". For in the mythic fires we encounter here at Pacifica I hope to find, forge and fashion the golden harness that will enable me to complete my quest. I figure each class is loaded with insights and information that will provide another golden strand and hopefully my personal mythology will develop sufficiently to harness my beliefs in order to achieve my ultimate quest.