

Traditional society regulated itself socially, politically, ethically, morally via myths. The myth unites the antinomies of life: conscious (c) and unconscious (u), historical and present, individual and social.

This process has been broken and one must build one's social and personal 'world' via one's dreams

which reveal the preconscious and unconscious world, and construct a viable worldview from them and the cultural legacy one finds in the real world. The goal is integration with the world and stable loving relations with others based on a meaningful sense of identity.

Whereas traditional society cemented society's values through the myths handed down from generation to generation, our values are a mix of almost random influences from society, family and experience. Our dreams are like a private application of public myths. Our u makes up myths in the form of dreams out of our life experiences as victim, loser, needy, winner, rebel, etc.

In exile, one re-experiences one's myths in solitude (Dante, Machiavelli). We mythologize our early memories and u live by them, confirming them.

The main myths: Oedipus - self-discovery leads to shame, rage and exile, ultimately leading to remorse and responsibility.

Orestes - this goes a step further, as O is finally exonerated by (human) judges for taking responsibility.

Sisyphus - he is aware of his burden at all times. The monotony of work, through a Buddhist-style meditation, gives his life meaning. The past cannot be relived, but can be left behind with each step forward.

Prometheus - must take responsibility for his desire for knowledge. These heroes all take responsibility in the face of despair.

Narcissus - reduces love to the fulfillment of one's emotional requirements, not a relationship of caring, experiencing no passion, leading to loneliness. Our overemphasis on individualism and material fulfillment leads to the neurosis which N represents.

Also the myths of Eros and Thanatos (life and death, love/sex and aggression/illness)

Contemporary myths: Dante's journey through hell, Peer Gynt, Faust.

Dante's 'recovery' has him go forth into life as community, now free to love, saved by his Beatrice. Women are symbolic of community. We all experienced life first in the womb and then in the journey from the womb out into the daylight. We were not born alone but in partnership with our mothers. It is the reunion with a loved one in the sexual function that we participate in the continuity of the race. In this sense we experience the world as we experience love. Thus after our journey through hell and purgatory, life itself is the therapist. The task of Virgil/therapist is to help one get to the point where he can decide whether he wishes to remain victim or venture through purgatory with the hope of achieving some sense of paradise. Freedom is frightening. Only by going through hell does one have any chance of reaching heaven.

Gynt's life is characterized by the contradictory desires to be admired by woman and to be taken care of by the same woman. In his wanderings, he falls into the trap of Narcissus, and loses his sense of self. By trying to be himself, he loses touch with the world and mutual love. He becomes a slave to his desires and has no sense of responsibility. He cannot solve the paradox of freedom through giving oneself. By not establishing a new mutual love, he remains by default tied to his mother. But Solveig waits for him and represents the potential for achieving maturity (a real 'self') in a relationship. [Patients may go through a period of impotence in therapy. The impotence is typically an uncovering of the damaged structure underneath, and gives one a chance to change the faulty myth built up during one's life.] Gynt's despair on his return journey to Norway puts the daimonic in the service not of aggression but of awe and wonder. The fact that he can experience this awe and wonder, this respect for Being, makes it also possible for him to affirm his human ties: A man can never be Himself at sea. He must sink or swim with the rest.

Faust's pact with the devil represents our love of competition and materialism of the patriarchal Industrial Age. No longer 'In the beginning was the Word' but 'In the beginning was the Deed.' Action and perpetual striving.

May points to the formation of a new myth of the other sex, leading to a new significant psychological relationship, in the Gynt and Faust myths. The woman and man find their true selves only when they are fully present to each other, physically psychologically and spiritually. This in light of the theory that the two principles of rationalism and individualism, the myths on which the modern age is founded, are chiefly male, left-brain activities.

Notes on Bettelheim's The Uses of Enchantment

Erikson's life-cycle stages: 1/ basic trust (Cinderella's exp with original good mother firmly implanted in in personality); 2/ autonomy (C accepts unique role and makes best of it); 3/ initiative (C plants twig and makes it grow with personal feelings, tears and prayers); 4/ industry (C's hard labours ie sorting lentils with birds' help); 5/ identity (C escapes from ball and insists that prince accept her in negative identity before she assumes her positive identity. Now truly ready for intimacy with others.

Beauty and Beast - only m aspects of Eros are beastly in Western tradition (where m=spirit, m sexuality repressed) Frog King - Girl disgusted by kissing frog. Anxiety turns to anger and hatred as princess hurls frog against wall. By thus asserting herself and taking risks in doing so, as opposed to weaseling out and simply obeying her father's commands, the princess transcends her anxiety and hatred changes into love. To be able to love, a person first must be able to feel; even if feelings are negative, that is better than not feeling. At first princess is self-centred. She matures into person by feeling for frog (neg and pos). Frog metamorphoses. This appeals to child better than dry sex education, since child sees sex as disgusting initially as long as his sexual longings attached to his parent (incest taboo support). Must detach sexual longings and they are no longer beastly. (also B&Beast) Cupid (Eros) and Psyche - she must not look but does, drops wax on him, wakens him, he abandons. Trying to make c too early backfires.