

Mythology Reborn

Some figures wait several hundred years to reach legendary status. A few embrace it during their lifetimes, well before a century passes-- men like Joseph Campbell, whose name alone evokes the magic of which legends and myths are made. March 26, 2004 marks one hundred years since the birth of a man who elevated the concept of myths from primitive tales to primary forces worthy of serious study.

Professor Campbell believed that myths are not products of the human fantasy, but primary forces governing the human mind, as well as events in human society and in nature. And that mythologies not only explain the psychological, social, and spiritual realities of humankind--they also inform and form entire civilizations' worldviews.

In 1987, Joseph Campbell died after authoring numerous books on mythology. The following year, millions of hearts resounded with Campbell's ideas when they viewed the PBS broadcast of *Joseph Campbell and The Power of Myth* with Bill Moyers. Newsweek magazine wrote that "Campbell has become one of the rarest of intellectuals in American life: a serious thinker who has been embraced by the popular culture."

Campbell often emphasized the importance of understanding the myth(s) driving modern society. Today, not only scholars delve into the mysteries of myth. Physicists, economists, psychiatrists, business executives, religious leaders, authors, and an ever growing number of the general population, are looking into myths to understand the forces that underlie modern society-- its ability to strengthen and demolish economies, to begin and end wars, and to support and destroy the environment.

Mr. Campbell also inspired many to discover a new myth. "We need myths that will identify the individual not with a local group but with the planet ...The task is only to know what is, and then to act in relation to the brotherhood of all these things."

In honor of Mr. Campbell's centennial year, many of his close associates, such as Dr. Stanislav Grof, Dr. Jean Houston, and Chungliang Al Huang, will gather at the "Mythic Imagination & Modern Society: The Re-Enchantment of the World" conference in Palm Springs, CA, June 13-18. During this celebration, eighty renowned presenters--scientists, psychiatrists, authors, economists, artists, spiritual leaders and more--will share their insights into the forces underlying the current global condition--and facilitate the emergence of a new planetary myth. See www.itaconferences.org. Call (415) 475-6115 for a brochure.