

THE MYTHS OF OUR LIVES:
A WAY TO PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

A Study Course

By

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...friends should not keep stories to themselves, but have them in common.

Plato, *Critias*

It has always been the prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward, in counteraction to those other constant human fantasies that tend to tie it back.

Joseph Campbell

Making the Program User Friendly

The following study program is designed for use either in *groups* or by *individuals*.

While the program is divided into four parts, each part can be expanded into several sessions or compressed into one session. Participants in the program may determine how long or short a course they want it to be. Not included, but recommended, is a fifth section in which group members meet to share in total the myths they have written. Such a sharing is both personally valuable and provides a useful review to the material covered in the course.

For Use in Groups:

When the program is used for group work, the leader or facilitator should read through the entire course, becoming fully familiar with its contents. Note:

1. Each part has several sections:
 - a. explanatory material to be covered by the facilitator;
 - b. suggestions for group discussions, interspersed throughout explanatory material;
 - c. group exercises;
 - c. individual writing assignments.
2. A large newsprint pad with marking pens is necessary for focusing and summarizing the discussion exercises.
3. For the general group discussions, the facilitator should be prepared in advance to use different methods to ensure that all members of the group participate. For example, if the group is a large one, the facilitator may wish to divide the group into small 2-3 person groups or into pairs for one-to-one exchanges. In smaller groups, circular response may be used along with general discussion.
4. As the facilitator becomes familiar with both the content of the course and the interests of the group, other exercises can be added and some of those suggested may not seem appropriate. Facilitators should feel free to experiment, remembering that the exercises and discussion topics given are only suggestive, and the main aim is to help members of the group discover the myths of *their* lives! Be as creative as possible in the use of the program.
5. Members of the group are encouraged to develop their own myths, and for that purpose a number of exercises are directed toward writing down various items with which to do this. In addition, some questions are asked to aid in this process. The writing exercises are placed within the course and there are blank pages at its end where one's personal myth can be written out in full. Questionnaires can be found in the textbook, *The Hero Within*, by Carol S. Pearson. Facilitators should be completely familiar with the places where there are such writing assignments or questionnaires.

Note: Where all course participants do not have copies of the course, the writing assignments can be photocopied by the leader and given to them. They contain directions. Facilitators should have these pages copied well in advance for distribution to the participants at the appropriate times, as indicated in the course.

For Individual Study:

If you use the course alone for personal study, read through the entire course before undertaking the exercises. Then go back to the first part and take time to think through the exercises and discussion themes that are suggested. Only those exercises that seem most meaningful to you should be taken up, but you will gain more from the course if all the exercises are tried. You may develop your own exercises to aid in exploring your own myths. Use your journal to write out your own answers to the discussion questions.

Absolutely Essential:

1. BASIC TO THE COURSE IS LOG OR JOURNAL WRITING.
Be sure that every individual, before taking up the course, has a notebook with plenty of blank pages, so that a record can be kept of progress through the course.
2. COPIES OF *THE HERO WITHIN* BY CAROL S. PEARSON.
Individuals working alone or several, preferably all, members of a group need to have a copy of this basic reference for the course. (See Bibliography which follows.)

Before You Begin: Bibliography

The basic reference for this series will be:

The Hero Within by Carol S. Pearson; Harper & Row, Publishers 1989

For the study of myth, the works of Joseph Campbell are recommended, particularly the following:

The Hero With a Thousand Faces
The Inner Reaches of Outer Space
An Open Life: Conversations with Michael Toms
The Mythic Image

If these books are looked over in advance and then brought to the sessions as references for your discussions, you will find them invaluable aids in deepening your study.

If time permits, and a group or individual wishes to make a more extensive study of the subject, sessions can be given to viewing the six-part series, *The Power of Myth*, interviews of Joseph Campbell by Bill Moyers.

For Theosophical groups, the *Theosophy and Myth* videos -- interviews of Dr. Stephan A. Hoeller-- would add another dimension to your study.

For information on the concept of archetype, see:

The I and the Not-I by Dr. M. Esther Harding particularly the chapter, "The Archetypal Figures"
The Psychology of Jung by Jolande Jacobi
Essays on a Science of Mythology by Jung and Kerenyi

There are many collections of myths from around the world. If the series is to be extended, it will be useful to read and comment on myths from various traditions -- North American Indian; the classical myths of Egypt, Greece, and Rome; Norse myths; African myths; the myths of China, India, Japan, etc. In line with the explorations suggested in this series, however, when commenting on traditional myths of any culture, relate them to your own lives. Endeavor to see how the heroes or villains may be aspects of your own nature or how the situations may reflect contemporary conditions in your own or others' lives. Always ask: What does this myth say and mean to me? What significance does it have for my life right now? What can I learn from it that will help me become more human?

The range of literature dealing with myth and myth-making has become extremely large. An excellent bibliography is available from the Olcott Library and Research Center [For information on joining the library, please write Olcott Library, P0 Box 270, Wheaton, Illinois, 60189]. There are also a number of fine works available on the subject of personal mythology as well as books on women's myths. A series of works by Dr. Marie-Louise Von Franz discusses myth in Jungian terms. The subject is gaining in popularity and as it does so, new books constantly appear. The important thing, however, and what this series aims to do, is to open the individual to the mythic dimension of life and to help in becoming conscious of the ways in which our individual lives not only reflect great mythic themes but also can be transformed by acknowledging mythic patterns. This process leads to a deeper understanding of ourselves and our connectedness with others and with the cosmos of which we are an intimate part.

...the role of myth will be what it has always been: to render in contemporary terms the mysteries of our own inner life, and the relationship of these mysteries to the cosmic life -- because we are all parts of the cosmos. So myth has to deal with the human system in relation to the mystery of the universe.

--Joseph Campbell in *(An Open Life)*

I. Introduction:

The Nature and Function of Myth

We are all heroes, or heroines, if you prefer. Each one of us is the hero of at least one story: our own! Even if we blame ourselves for some mishap, we seldom cast ourselves in the role of villain when relating a personal incident to friends or family. We may confess that something we did or said was less than perfect or even completely wrong, but in the very confession we acknowledge a kind of heroism (even if just the heroism of being willing to make the confession). It takes a hero to recognize where a wrong turning may have been taken.

Even the act of getting out of bed each morning may be an heroic achievement, for in so arising, we confront the challenge of each unknown day. There may be no dragons lurking on the streets or in the offices where we work, but battling traffic on the freeways bears a marked resemblance to mythic encounters with strange beasts breathing fire. And there is heroism in going to sleep each night, though we may not recognize it as such. Yet who knows what terrors may assail us in dream and nightmare? As Dr. Carl Jung, who gave a psychological significance to the study of myth, has pointed out: "...the daily course of the sun and the regular alternation of day and night must have imprinted themselves on the psyche in the form of an image from primordial times...Every morning a divine hero is born from the sea and mounts the chariot of the sun. In the West a Great Mother awaits him, and he is devoured by her in the evening. In the belly of a dragon he traverses the depths of the midnight sea. After a frightful combat with the serpent of night he is born again in the morning." Cast in mythological terms, this is the ancient story told and retold every day of our lives.

WHAT IS MYTH?

If our lives reflect the great heroic myths, what then is myth? First of all, myth is not fantasy and it is not fiction. It is the truth that is not the fact, for it is essentially the history of the soul (or psyche) though it is not the literal history of the body (or incarnation).

Myth clothes itself in a symbolic language, but then we may say that all language is metaphor. But the imagery of myth is symbolic of powers within us, spiritual and psychological powers, which often take the form of driving impulses, intuitions, and even subtle intimations of "something other" which we cannot identify. So we meet these powers in the great classic myths as figures, both familiar and unfamiliar: heroes, gods, demons, lovely maidens and ugly witches, fairy godmothers and wise hermits, animals that were once human and humans that are really animals. What we may not realize is that the entire cast of characters found in mythology are all within us, aspects of ourselves which we may discover and befriend. The excitement of that discovery can lead us to personal and world transformation, when we permit myth to unlock the doors of our own heroic lives.

We all love to tell stories (consider what happens when you hear a good joke; don't you want to tell it to someone?). Many of the stories we like to tell are about ourselves, either the tragic or the comic events in our lives. In recent years there has been a revival of the ancient art of story-telling, although actually story-telling has never been dead. Think of your childhood. Did you have grandparents who told you stories of their youth, or their parents, or events they witnessed? Or were there older people in the neighborhood, perhaps a widow living alone, who would tell stories that seemed fantastic? Recall other occasions when good stories were exchanged, such as around campfires, at family dinners, or on Hallowe'en when ghost stories abounded.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Pause at this point to go around the group, each member sharing experiences about story-telling in their own early lives.

Next, take a few minutes to list in your journals stories which have been particularly memorable or powerful in your own lives. Share some of these with other group members. What gave them their power? Their memorable quality?

Now myths are a form of story-telling, but the language of myth is the language of mystery. The real function of myth, when properly told, is to awaken an interior memory, not so much of some actual event, but of the underlying mystery of the cosmos. Myth also awakens a sense of who we are, as we shall see. Myth has been used as a teaching device; Plato used many myths in just that way. In fact, all the great religious teachers used stories or myths to illustrate their ideas. The great epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* in India, the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* of Homer, and the *Aeneid* in classical Rome, all are full of stories and myths that resonate deep within us, awakening us to the mystery of ourselves and the universe of which we are so intimate a part. Learning to tell our own stories, the myths of our lives, is one way by which we may come awake to ourselves and recognize all the numerous elements (disguised in myth as gods and goddesses, as demons and dragons, as kings and queens, princes and lovely maidens) that are still within us just waiting to be called into activity.

THE FUNCTIONS OF MYTH

Not only do myths awaken us, but they serve other purposes as well. Various writers have commented on the functions performed by myth in connecting us with the universe and with ourselves. It may be useful here to refer to the list of functions as outlined below by Joseph Campbell.

We may say that, broadly speaking, there are two major aspects of mythology. First is the general, social aspect which deals with the social or collective mind and which we learn in school and church as well as at home in our own cultural or ethnic group. The second aspect concerns one's own

personal development and involves the flowering of one's own psyche, as one ventures outward and discovers one's vocation or unique path.

Underlying these two aspects, are four functions which Campbell has suggested (see particularly his *Creative Mythology*):

[First read through the four functions as enumerated --omitting the exercise sections -- taking time to carefully consider and discuss the meaning and implications of each. Then return to them one at a time and do the group exercises.]

1. The **mystical function**, serving to “reconcile waking consciousness to the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* of this universe.” By means of this dimension, myth speaks to us of the supreme mystery in which we are rooted and about which nothing can be said.

GROUP EXERCISE:

Read together and discuss the meaning of the First Fundamental Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*. (See Appendix I for abbreviated versions of the Three Fundamental Propositions.) Next, journal for yourself the question: are there aspects of my life or my being that I cannot define, that I cannot even express to another, because there are no words to describe those aspects? Discuss these two thoughts.

2. The **cosmological function**, which relates us to the cosmos as experienced and which therefore helps us to explain the mystery. Here we are related to our world view, to our vision of the cosmos.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Read together and discuss the meaning of the Second Fundamental Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*. Consider its relation to the cosmological function described above. In what ways can we experience periodicity, for example?

3. The **sociological function**, which validates and maintains the social order, with its moral and ethical system, in which we live out our lives. Campbell states that it is this function which shapes us to the requirements of our ¹geographically and historically conditioned social group.¹

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Consider how this function may conflict with the cosmological function which relates us to our world view. For example, the theosophical worldview (See Appendix II) is based on the recognition of the unity of all existence, but we live in a culture which may not be in harmony with that concept; how do we reconcile the ethics of the theosophical world view with the ethical standards of the world in which we are living?

Take some time individually to journal instances in your own life when your cosmological and sociological functions may have been in conflict. Add known examples of public figures who have experienced such conflict. Consider possible means of resolution. When the journaling period is over, exchange your thoughts with other group members.

4. The **pedagogical function**, by which myth teaches us how to live a human life. It is by means of this function that myth serves to carry us through the crises of life, aiding us to become self-responsible individuals.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

How is this function related to the Third Fundamental Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*? In what way is it related to the statement of the "Theosophical World View"? Share examples from your own life where myths or stories have given you help in times of crisis.

Summarizing these functions and emphasizing the pedagogical function, Campbell has stated: "The fourth and most vital, most critical function of mythology. . . is to foster the centering and unfolding of the individual in integrity, in accord with (d) himself (the microcosm); (c) his culture (the mesocosm); (b) the universe (macrocosm); and (a) that awesome ultimate mystery which is both beyond and within himself and all things . . ."

[Note: Campbell wrote before the trend toward using inclusive language. He meant to include all people when he used the masculine pronoun.]

OPTIONAL EXERCISES FOR FURTHER GROUP DISCUSSION

In the course of the above exposition on the meaning and function of myth, some suggestions have been made for groups and/or individuals to consider and for discussion of various aspects of the subject, in preparation for writing one's own myth. In addition, if time permits, facilitators may wish to introduce one or more of the following exercises:

1. Ask students to research and report what other writers have said about the functions of mythology, considering especially the ideas proposed by the late Mircea Eliade, one of the leading authorities in religious studies.
2. Ask each member of the group to relate a favorite myth. What does the myth say to you? Identify which of the four functions that myth seems to perform. Do the same with the mythic elements of the stories you listed in the first exercise.

3. Ask each member of the group, "Who are you?" If the group is large, it may be better to have the members pair off, each one asking the other that question in turn. Note how often the reply is a name and how often it is an occupation, or identification with some group ("I am a Christian," "I am a doctor," etc.). Then ask, "With what part of yourself do you identify when you give your name?"
4. If you have done the above exercise, with everyone answering the question "Who are you?", consider then: how do we build bridges with others, when each one answers the question differently? For example, if one individual says: "I am Jane White," and the next one says, "I am a Theosophist," how do we bridge the two very different answers? Consider the idea that the bridge needs to organize two myths, to encompass two mysteries! Discuss ways in which this can be done.

Really creative facilitators will devise other exercises. Be as imaginative as possible. The aim is to gain a feeling for the nature and function of myth, preparatory to writing our own myths.

II. Beginning Our Own Stories

In his Editor's Introduction to *The Portable Jung*, Joseph Campbell relates Carl Jung's experience when he first encountered mythological materials. According to Campbell, Jung asked himself, "What is the myth you are living?" and found that he did not know. Jung himself wrote of this experience saying that he had been struck by "what it means to live with a myth and what it means to live without one." Indeed, Jung considered getting to know his own myth as "the task of tasks."

Each of us is living a myth, even when we do not realize it, but we can ask, as Jung did, "What is the myth I am living?" To answer that question, we have to learn to write our own stories. Where do we begin? Fortunately, we do not have to begin at the beginning! It may be better to begin right where we are. We must discover where that is and, to discover that, it will be helpful to identify the archetype we are living out.

WHAT IS AN ARCHETYPE?

Let us begin then by exploring what archetypes are and how they function.

GROUP EXERCISE:

Look up the word "archetype" in a good dictionary. Have a group member research and report on the definition of this term in Platonic philosophy. Review the definitions suggested by the authors listed in the Bibliography. Brainstorm among group members other definitions and concepts related to archetype. Write these out in your journal or on the newsprint pad.

Actually the term "archetype" has multiple meanings. In the Jungian sense, it is a primordial pattern, or the abiding patterns in the human psyche that exert a powerful pull on our lives. In the work which Jung wrote with the mythologist Kerényi (*Essays on a Science of Mythology*), Jung stated, "They (the archetypes) represent or personify certain instinctive premises in the dark, primitive psyche, in the real but invisible roots of consciousness." Dr M. Esther Harding, a student of Jung, suggested that the concept of the archetypes "implies not 'inherited ideas,' but inherited potentialities, i.e., inherited modes of psychic functioning...in other words a 'pattern of behaviour'."

In the Jungian view, archetypes are the primordial images that appear in myths the world over, as well as in ritual, art, music, poetry, literature, and in dreams: the Great Mother, the Wise Old Man, the Hero, the Trickster, to name a few. Jolande Jacobi in *The Psychology of Jung* points out that "Unlike the 'ideas' of Plato, which are images of highest perfection, Jung's conception is bipolar, including the dark side as well as the light." For example, the Great Mother appears sometimes as gentle and nurturing but also as cruel and demanding. This will become apparent as we explore our own myths and the archetypes we are presently living out, either in their positive or their negative aspects.

We will see how these archetypes can be made conscious in our lives as we examine the archetypes that Pearson calls, collectively, “the hero within.” We will become more aware of the ways these archetypal patterns influence our lives and function in us.

Since the archetypes always appear in personified or symbolized pictorial form, each archetype may have many guises or many modes of expression, but fundamentally they are relatively limited in number. Their language is always that of myth and metaphor, but the themes of the archetypal images are the same in all cultures even when the outer expressions may differ greatly.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Pause here to discuss some of the great archetypes and how they are represented in different cultures. For example, the archetype of the Great Mother pre-exists and is superordinate to every manifestation of the “motherly,” whether the kind and gentle mother or the cruel mother. Think of other archetypes. A useful reference for this is Campbell’s *The Mythic Image*.

DISCOVERING OUR OWN ARCHETYPES

As suggested earlier, we can begin to explore the myths of our lives by discovering just where we are now. This is what is meant by not needing to begin at the beginning. We do not need to begin our story, or our myth, with the words, “I was born...” Obviously each one of us was born and came into a new incarnation. But where are we now? We can only begin with where we are, and then we may explore how we got where we are and where we may be going from here.

Carol Pearson in *The Hero Within* has suggested six basic archetypes for the hero’s journey in which we are all engaged. She has named these basic archetypes: (1) the Innocent; (2) the Orphan; (3) the Wanderer; (4) the Warrior; (5) the Martyr and (6) the Magician. For the present, we need not be concerned with the attributes of each of these archetypes, as we will look at them again in the next session. Their names, however, give us a clue to their essential nature, and you might wish to begin thinking of each one’s meaning by simply letting the designation resonate within you. **[Pause here to do this.]**

We are all heroes or heroines, as we have said, and our lives are journeys. However, as Pearson points out, we do not move in a linear fashion from one archetype to the next, but in a circular fashion, returning again and again to one or other of these archetypes. We may experience them in both their positive and their negative aspects, as we move on our journeys. For example, the wanderer archetype may be expressed as a positive search for truth and understanding or as a negative, aimless movement from one set of beliefs to another.

We can identify ourselves in terms of these archetypes by responding to a number of statements and thus determining, by our responses, just where we are right now. Keep in mind, however, that this does not mean that we have mastered any of the archetypes or that we have not yet experienced those we think may lie further along. We are only trying to discover where we are at this moment in our heroic journey.

GROUP EXERCISE:

Members should fill out the questionnaire found on pages 197-200 in *The Hero Within*.

Do not be concerned with how you may "score" in any category. There are no right and wrong answers, only responses that indicate your present attitudes. You may feel the statements need to be modified or altered to reflect your own attitudes more accurately, but that is not the point. What is important is to see if you can discover what archetypes are playing themselves out in your life right now.

After responding to all the statements, see the columns on page 201 that categorize the responses into archetypes. Total your score in each category. Nine or more in each suggests that the archetype is active in your life; fifteen or more suggests that it is very active.

Chart your scores on the grid on page 201. This helps you to see your strengths and weaknesses in terms of the development of each archetype in your life. This will be helpful to you when the group discusses -- next session -- some of the stages in growth toward personal transformation.

HOMEWORK:

Group members should read Pearson's hook before the next session. Alternatively, a chapter of the book may be assigned to each member so that a report on the particular archetype discussed in each chapter can be made. In this way, a brief precis of the positive and negative aspects of each of the archetypes will be available to the group.

OPENERS

As was indicated, we will come back to these six archetypes, but at this point we will begin the process of writing our own myths, the myths of our lives. This is another way to discover the archetypes dominant in our lives right now. Then, when we have experimented a bit with the writing of our myth, we will better understand the meaning of these archetypes of the hero journey on which we are embarked. (If you don't like the word "hero" for your journey, then call it the "transformation journey.")

So, let's begin. First we need a good opener. If nothing else occurs to you, use "Once upon a time, . . ." That sets the stage and even provides us with a mood, a feeling that something will unfold, a mystery that we will come upon. There are other openings from the realm of mythology: "Once upon an orchard . . ." and "Once, in the golden time . . ." or "Long ago and far away . . ." and that delightful one from Irish mythology, "More years ago than you can tell me and twice as many as I can tell you." Remember, you are not going to start with "I was born . . ." but with your present situation, but you will set it in mythological terms which means a "once upon a time" setting.

Find your own opening sentence, and begin.

GROUP EXERCISE:

Turn to Writing Assignment #1 (page 11 of this Study Course) and write out your opening sentence. Make certain all group members are finished before continuing.

BECOMING AN ANIMAL

Now play a little . . . You have an opener, but let's write the story as though each of us are an animal. After all, our lives are really wilderness experiences, for no wilderness is more formidable than that of our individuality. The metaphor of wilderness is particularly apt when we realize that we have to become our own path. (Remember *The Voice of the Silence*? "Thou canst not travel on the Path until thou hast become the Path.") In a wilderness there is no path or track, except for the one we make ourselves. Each of us is a never-before; each incarnation is a never-again. Our lives require an essential solitude in the uncharted terrain of variation. As someone has said, "We stand alone in our own footprints."

So, select an animal, one who lives in the wilderness. Think carefully about the animal you wish to represent you; it may even be a mythological animal (after all, unicorns live in the wilderness). Identify with the animal as much as possible; feel comfortable being the animal you have chosen. You are going to enter into the wilderness of your life as that animal. In all myths, animals represent human qualities or take on human characteristics: they speak and they act, sometimes wisely and sometimes foolishly, just like we do. They get themselves into strange predicaments and, by using their intelligence, get themselves Out of those situations again.

The goal at this stage is not to write our story fully, but only to put down some notes for future use. This can best be done by answering several questions.

GROUP EXERCISE

Turn to Writing Assignment #2 (page 12 of this Study Course). Allow time for each member to answer the questions thoughtfully and completely. When you have written answers to the five points, you will have begun your journey towards personal transformation. You will have discovered a great deal about yourself.

GROUP REVIEW:

Group members may want to complete this session by reviewing general information on archetypes and summarizing reactions and impressions gained through the writing exercises. Do not share information on your animal at this time since that will be done at the beginning of the next session. [Reminder -- Read Pearson's book before continuing.]

Writing Assignment #1

Write below your opening sentence. Leave the rest of the page blank for later additions.

(Later you will wish to transfer this opening sentence to Appendix III, so that you may continue with the entire myth.)

Writing Assignment #2

Write brief responses to the following questions. These answers will be incorporated into your myth as you proceed.

1. What are the characteristics of the animal you have chosen? List as many as you can think of, putting them in two columns:

Positive Characteristics Negative Characteristics

2. Where does the animal live? (Forest, desert, or? Even a circus or a barnyard can be a wilderness area. Wherever your animal is, there is your wilderness.)
3. When is your animal in time? (This will be a mythical time, but it is a time that will reflect your present situation. Locating your animal in time can also mean deciding whether the animal is young, mature, old, etc.)
4. Who are your animal's natural friends and natural enemies? (Don't be afraid to name the natural enemies; every animal has some. Remember that Jesus said, "Love your enemies," but he did not say "Destroy your enemies" or "Deny your enemies". To love them, we must know who they are.)

Natural Friends

Natural Enemies

5. Write down one question the animal is asking right now. It may be a very mundane question ("Where will I get my next meal?" "Where will I sleep tonight?") or it may be a profound question about some deep problem the animal is facing.

(Again remember that these answers will eventually be incorporated into your myth and transferred to Appendix III.)

III. Discovering Patterns

Before proceeding with an examination of what are called stages in growth and exploring in more detail the six archetypes of the heroic journey, take time to share what was discovered in response to the final exercise of the last session.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Have the members of the group name the animals they have chosen and identify the characteristics of the animals. Large groups may be divided into smaller groups for this exercise, and answers to all five questions in Writing Assignment #2 ~may be shared. Group members share only as much information as they feel comfortable in divulging. Sharing need never be forced or insisted upon, but should come from a natural desire to participate openly with the rest of the group.

After everyone who wishes has shared the beginnings of their myths, the group explores these questions: "Did any patterns seem to emerge in the responses?" "Did several select the same animal, for example, and, if so, were the characteristics listed the same?" List the patterns and characteristics on a blackboard or large sheet of paper. Try to see how many different patterns can be identified~

GROUP REFLECTION:

Group members next journal their answers to the question, "What do the characteristics I listed for my animal tell me about myself?" After allowing plenty of time for this reflection, see how much group members wish to share of their personal insights. The more open and trusting the group, the more is likely to be shared and the more the relevance of the selected animal archetype to one's own life will be apparent.

Various patterns may begin to emerge: perhaps all the animals selected were orphans, for example, or the majority of the animals were wanderers, etc. Were any of the animals fierce and warrior-like? Remember that female animals can be fierce when guarding their young, so the warrior archetype is by no means only a male role! Was sacrifice a characteristic of any of the animals? Sacrifice is an attribute of the martyr archetype.

GROUP EXERCISE:

Group members open *The Hero Within* to the chart on pages 20 and 21. Review the patterns and characteristics identified there. Compare and contrast these patterns with those the group has identified as a result of the animal exercise. Discuss.

STAGES IN INDIVIDUAL GROWTH

In most myths of the hero or transformation journey, three distinct stages are identified.

Sometimes, two additional stages are named, one which precedes and one which follows on the traditional three stages, making for a five-fold model of stages in individual growth. Using that five-fold model, we may speak of an initial stage of preparation. This may be compared to the archetype of the Innocent in Pearson's language. We all begin our journey in a state of innocence, as it were, a stage of "non-knowing," but it is a stage of coming awake to all the possibilities of finding and transforming ourselves.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Pause here and review or have the assigned member of the group report on Pearson's concept of the Innocent (pages 20-21). Use a large newsprint sheet to note the attributes of the Innocent as outlined by Pearson (and keep the sheet for future reference). Add any ideas that seem to make this concept more meaningful to you, in terms of your own myth. Ask yourself:

"How innocent was my animal as I began my myth?" "What does 'innocence' really mean?" "What makes us prepare ourselves for the journey, and how do we prepare ourselves?" (For example, look at the characteristics of the animal you have chosen for your myth, and ask which of these comprise the inner resources the animal will need for a journey.)

Pearson proposes that the Innocent is both "pre- and post-heroic." However, for this course, you are being asked to consider the theory that it occupies the central position from which we move out and back as we experience the other archetypes. [Note Diagram I.] It is the archetype of the beginning and also the archetype to which we ultimately return when the Innocent has become transformed into the Adept.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Pause to briefly discuss Diagram I, noting that the arrows indicate movements in and out and through the various archetypes, at different levels or stages, as will become more apparent as the study proceeds.

Does it seem logical to place the Innocent in the center of Diagram I, with the idea that ultimately the Innocent is transformed into the Adept, at a higher level and at a stage beyond that of the Magician? The answer may be tentative at this point, until the study of this section is completed.

JOURNAL OR MYTH WRITING:

Allow time here for group members to write in their journals some of the ideas suggested. Alternatively, members can return to Writing Assignment #1 and, after the opening sentence they have already written, write a paragraph describing their animal preparing for a journey.

Following the stage of preparation, we move out from the archetype of the Innocent to that of the Orphan. This has been called the stage of Severance or Parting. This is a stage when, in one way or another, one phase of our lives ends and we take up another phase. It may be an actual parting, as when we leave home to go to university or to get married or when we move from one city to another or take up a new job. It may be the kind of parting which occurs when we give up old ideas for some new way of thinking, as when we join the Theosophical Society. It may come at different times in our lives, occurring over and over again (remember the arrows in Diagram I). It may involve a death, either an actual death of someone we have loved, or a symbolic death of some part of ourselves. We become orphaned, and feel very much alone in the world. In some cultures, rituals and ceremonies accompany the severance of an individual from childhood, marking entrance into adulthood. Objects, including clothing, may be burned, etc.

JOURNAL WRITING:

Pause now for group members to journal their individual answers to the questions: "Remember the time you first felt yourself to be an adult?" "Was there a severance or parting involved at that time?" "What did you experience?" After sufficient time, ask members to share some aspect of their journal writing. Allow for discussion.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Next, have the group or the assigned group member summarize Pearson's description of the Orphan archetype. (Refer to the diagram on pages 20-21.) Note her suggestion that progress is not linear but cyclical, so that we return again and again to this archetype, but always at new levels or with new understanding. Summarize the attributes of this archetype on a large newsprint sheet. Again members can add to the ideas put forth by Pearson.

OPTIONAL GROUP DISCUSSION:

Ask group members to identify times in their lives when they felt "orphaned"? Exchange descriptions of the feeling and discuss what was really gained out of the experience. Was the experience of being an Orphan always painful, or were some of the partings that led to that experience happy and joyous?

The third stage has been given several designations, and comprises the major part of the journey. Sometimes this stage has been called the Threshold stage and sometimes the Crossroads. It is the crucial stage (remember the word "crucial" implies there is a cross, or crossroads) where one must make choices as to the direction one will take. (Did any of your animals ask the question, in Writing Assignment #2, "What direction shall I take?" Such a question is a "crossroad" question.)

From the stage of Orphan, one becomes the Wanderer, the seeker. It may be suggested that the cultural hero of our time is the seeker, the one who is looking for something even though the object of the search may not be known. All seekers come to thresholds, which are places where choices have to be made between the old which is no longer adequate and the new which is not yet fully known. (The word "threshold" comes from "threshing-hold," which was the place where the wheat was separated from the chaff. Wanderers often find themselves being "threshed"; it is often a

process of discovering just what has to be given up if we are going to find ourselves.)

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Pause here to review Pearson's comments about the Wanderer archetype, again referring to pages 20-21 of Pearson's book. Add further ideas on the Wanderer that emerge from group discussion. Write them on a third newsprint page and post it next to those of the Innocent and the Orphan.

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION OR JOURNAL WRITING:

Consider individually and then share as a group your responses to the following questions. Think of times in your life when you were a Wanderer. What did it feel like? What qualities do you feel you developed as a result of your wandering?

Did you feel you were a wanderer when you discovered Theosophy? Should we cease being wanderers just because we have found Theosophy and feel it is the doorway to truth?

MYTH WRITING:

On the top half of Writing Assignment #3 (page 24), return to the writing of your own myth and think about ways to have your animal enter the stage of the Wanderer. What characteristics of the animal will become resources for the wandering? Group members may wish only to make notes for a paragraph that will take the animal from the stage of Preparation to that of Parting (Orphan) to becoming the Wanderer, or they may wish to write out this section of their myth in full.

As one continues to make choices, during crucial periods in life, Wanderers may become Warriors and even move into the Martyr archetype. These three archetypes seem to describe the Crossroads or Threshold stage, for they all contain choices which must be made and they all embody the discovery and establishment of our own identity. They also demand the recognition that some sacrifice must be made if the journey is to be continued. But sacrifice, which characterizes the Martyr archetype, may be both positive and negative, may contribute to our growth or may stultify it.

GROUP EXERCISE:

Pause now to review Pearson's discussion of the Warrior and Martyr archetypes, again referring to the diagram on pages 20-21 of *The Hero Within* and adding any further ideas the group may have. [Again use newsprint sheets to summarize information on each archetype.] Practice having group members characterize these stages of development in their own words.

Turn to your resource books and look for references to these two archetypes in religious and symbolic myths through the ages. Is there another word for "warrior," or does this one express the exact meaning for that archetype?

MYTH WRITING:

Think again of the animal you have selected to represent you. Which characteristics seem to indicate the Warrior and which ones are akin to the Martyr? What additional resources does your animal need to develop to become either the Warrior or the Martyr? Return to Writing Assignment #3 and make notes on these qualities of your mythic journey.

Recall the questions your animal asked in Writing Assignment #2. This will give you a clue as to where your animal is in terms of the archetypes. Perhaps your animal is now wanting to ask another question. This would indicate a return to the Innocent since innocents always ask questions. Or your animal may be saying "I really don't know...." That, too, is a return, so you may want to put arrows in the new copy of Diagram I, which becomes Diagram II on page 19. In fact, as you continue writing your myth, you may find that your animal is asking a lot of questions, becoming the Innocent again and again. Take time to work with Diagram II. You may even wish to put in your own arrows indicating the movement of your animal through the different archetypes. Note how often you return to the center (the Innocent) and how much time (remember this is mythical time) is given to moving around the various parts of the circle.

MYTH WRITING

Take time, at this point, to write down some additional developments in your myth in the space below Diagram II. Pay attention to the comments in the preceding paragraph and observe the archetypal nature of your myth as it unfolds. You might want to literally trace out your animal's mythic journey on Diagram II, noting the Crossroads points and the returns to the Innocent.

The fourth and fifth stages in individual growth are sometimes united into one stage. They involve return and implementation or commitment. Return always indicates a transformation, for there is never a return to exactly the same place. The journey itself has produced a change if it has been a genuine journey. And the transformation involves also a commitment to life, so that one uses (or implements) one's discoveries in ways that result in a new mode of living. This is the movement from the Martyr archetype to the Magician archetype, in Pearson's terms.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Pause to review what Pearson says about the Magician archetype, again summarizing points on the newsprint pad. Remember that the word "magician" derives from "magus" or wise, and also has the connotation of one who can perform magic or transformative effects. Group members should add to Pearson's view information from their own reading and experience.

Take a moment for group discussion of the question, "In what ways can our animals become magicians?"

It is suggested that, at this final stage, the Innocent is transformed into the Adept. For the Adept is innocent, not in the sense of not knowing about the world or having no experience of the world, but

in the sense of an utter purity of motive (remember the word 'innocent' literally means to be non-harming). This may be a stage far beyond us at the present, but as we are writing the myths of our lives, we can project ourselves not only into the mythical past, but into the mythical future for in myth there is only the sacred time of the present. So each of us needs to ask ourselves: "What will my animal be like in that mythical future which is really the eternal present?" "Will my animal be not only the Magician, but the Adept?"

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Discuss what is needed for the progression or realization outlined above. What distinguishes the Adept from the Magician? What qualities will our animals need to develop to make this progression and how will they acquire these qualities? (Note your answers for Assignment #4.) what will this transformation mean in terms of what the animal can do in the world?

HOMEWORK:

Before the next group meeting members need to review this chapter and make notes on the further development of their myths. Develop your myth in terms of the above stages of growth and the archetypes suggested for each stage.

LEARNING TO RECOGNIZE WHO AND WHERE WE ARE

Now that we have reviewed the stages of growth and the archetypes associated with each stage, we need to discover just where we feel most comfortable right now. At what stage or with which archetype are we at home? The following reflective exercise may help in making that discovery. Remember that your answers are for you alone, so be as honest as possible in your exploratory process.

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Take a few minutes to reflect on these questions and make notes in your journal of your answers: (It may be easier if you ask your animal these questions, of course, but you may prefer to ask them directly of yourself.)

Am I a wanderer, and if so, what am I really seeking?

Am I an orphan, and if so, who can help me?

Am I a warrior, and if so, what fears do I have?

Am I a martyr, and if so, am I sacrificing too much of myself?

You may even think of other questions you want to ask yourself or your animal. It will help to look again at Pearson's Diagram on pages 20-21. The important thing at this point is to see if you can recognize just who and where you are. Give yourself time, either before going to bed or first thing in the morning, to write a little in your journal in response to these questions.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION:

Discuss the following questions with the group. If the group is large, divide into smaller groups of 3 or 4. Take time before the discussion for each person to think and make notes on the questions. Give each person time to report individually before beginning the full group discussion.

- **Does the animal you selected still seem appropriate to represent you?**
- **What further traits or characteristics have you discovered that you did not list in Writing Assignment #2?**
- **Why did your animal ask the question it did?**
- **Does that question reveal anything about the archetype being lived**

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Now take a few minutes to personally reflect and journal on the following: (again, this need not be discussed with the group or with anyone else)

What have I now discovered about myself that I did not know when I began with this series? In what ways is my own identity clearer? (Make a mental note to look at these answers a year from now, and see what has happened!)

SETTING GOALS

Now that we have examined, even briefly, the major stages in individual growth and the archetypes that seem to accompany each stage, it is time to determine where we want to go. Pearson has suggested some words that characterize each of the archetypes: trust for the Orphan, clarity for the Wanderer, power for the Warrior, etc. Compare these words with those Pearson has used to identify the goal for each of the archetypal stages on pages 20-21 of her book.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Do you feel the words Pearson has selected adequately express each of the archetypes? Are there other words you want to use?

WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

Now look at Writing Assignment #4 on page 25 of the Study Course. Take time to fill out the form. Remember the animal is YOU (Did you decide to change animals? If you did, that is a radical transformation!) Be sure your animal completes the final sentence in the assignment.

It may seem that we have now finished, since we have set ourselves the goals we wish to achieve. However, our myths are not really finished until we consider how we may set about changing our lives in order to realize our goals. So there are some further "chapters" to be written in our myths, and these will emerge from our work in Part IV.

OPTIONAL EXERCISES:

Pearson has included in her book, *The Hero Within*, a number of useful and practical exercises intended to help individuals gain a better understanding of and access to the archetypes that lie within us. Many of these are designed for writing and others are designed for discussion with one or two other people.

For groups using this course, take time to become familiar with these exercises so that, if time permits, and the group wishes to expand this section of the course, selected exercises can be used.

When time does not permit the use of any of these exercises during the sessions, individuals are encouraged to take up the journal writing portion of Pearson's suggestions as part of their ongoing exploration. This will also help to establish the habit of journaling.

Writing Assignment #3

Consider the ways in which your animal will enter the stage of the Wanderer. What characteristics of your animal are resources for such wandering? Make notes on this part of your animal's journey or write the section out in full.

What characteristics in your animal indicate the Warrior? The Martyr? Make notes on resources your animal needs to develop to function fully in either of these archetypes. Make notes on episodes in the myth which will relate to these archetypes.

Writing Assignment #4

List below the characteristics you want your animal to develop.

What additional resources will your animal need in order to develop those characteristics? Be as specific as possible.

Now ask your animal to complete the following sentence...

THE STRONGEST MOTIVE IN MY LIFE IS TO BE...

IV. Creating Rituals

Myth, symbol and ritual are all closely related and are all expressions of archetypal realities that may or may not be conscious within us. In fact, as we become familiar with the myths of our lives, we may find that we have been performing many rituals quite unconsciously. Sometimes people who are very much opposed to ritual and ceremony, or who think these are outmoded by contemporary scientific and rational ways of acting, discover they have been performing rituals all their lives and in fact have even been quite unconsciously governed by them. Just as in the preceding sessions we have become aware of the myths of our lives and discovered what archetypes of the heroic journey we are living out, we may now explore whether we can find new ways to live in the world, and even how we can activate the archetypes that we would like to experience on our hero journey.

First, we need to define what is meant by ritual. The word "rite," from which ritual comes, actually means "to go." The Jungian psychologist Dr. Erich Neumann has said that the process of becoming whole (in Jungian terms, the "individuation process") brings the experience "that the rite and the one who completes the rite are one and the same; or, to formulate a paradox: the one who goes is the way which is going itself." This may remind you of the statement in *The Voice of the Silence* to which we referred in the first session: "Thou canst not travel on that Path until thou hast become the Path itself."

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Take time to discuss what ritual, rite and ceremony mean to each member of the group. How does each react when hearing these words?

Discuss what participants think the following statement by Dr. Erich Neumann may mean: The ritual is the upward movement of the archetypal world toward mankind which is taken up by man and answered in his act." If this statement does not seem to mean much now, move ahead with the text and return to the quote later in the session.

Joseph Campbell once said at a seminar, "A ritual is the enactment of a myth in overt or stylized forms. By participating in the ritual, you participate in the myth as well and activate its resonance in yourself." Just as we may discover our own myths -- the myths of our lives -- so we may discover our own rituals and use them creatively as part of our personal transformation process. Since it has been proposed that the origin of ritual lies in the instinctive behavior of animals, we can use the animals we have selected for our myths to develop rituals. We complete our myth in creating rituals that represent our modes of action in the world.

GROUP EXERCISE:

Using a blackboard or a large newsprint pad and marking pen, ask the group to brainstorm some of the instinctive behaviors of animals that may be called ritualistic. (eg., courting ceremonies of birds, circular dances of monkeys.) Make and discuss as complete a list as possible.

Some psychologists, Dr. Neumann for one, think these behaviors possess a symbolical rather than a practical character. Discuss this idea. Of the examples you have listed, which could be symbolic? What might they symbolize?

Group members then take a few moments to reflect on the particular behaviors of the animals they have chosen.

FINDING NEW WAYS TO LIVE IN THE WORLD

Before we proceed to create new rituals for ourselves as new ways to live in the world, we need to become conscious of the ways in which we are already acting. Remember that the final stage in the growth process, as outlined in the last session, is a return and implementation. If contact with any of the archetypes has transformed us, or led us along the path of transformation, then we return to the world of action in a new way. Yet to be really new, we must acknowledge how we acted before. This may be another one of those paradoxes which always confront us in the spiritual life!

The basic principle which underlies ritual and ceremony is *order*, a fundamental principle of the theosophical worldview.

REFLECTION AND GROUP DISCUSSION:

Take a moment to look at your life. Make brief notes in your journal. What actions do you perform every day that give a certain sense of order to your life? Do you always get up at the same time, or have the same items for breakfast every morning? Do you meditate or exercise at a regular time? Or following a set pattern? Do you have regular meetings you attend? Certain behaviors you follow to relax? Certain television programs that you watch regularly or newspapers that you read daily?

What purpose do these "rituals serve in your life? Discuss your thoughts and ideas with the large group or in pairs or trios.

Even if we scoff at the over-elaborate rituals of church and state or dislike the idea of Masonic ceremonies, we will discover that our lives are actually quite filled with devices that give them pattern and significance. The housewife who washes dishes in a predetermined order becomes a priestess at the kitchen sink; the businessman who performs the intricate ritual of steering a car through the morning rush-hour traffic is a hierophant at the wheel; the child breathless with excitement in the midst of competitive sport is the infant Dionysius playing with the Platonic solids and recapitulating the "sport of the gods" in creating a universe. So we may think we have laid aside the magical rites of a less sophisticated age, but in reality we have only substituted new patterns for old ones, or, more accurately, transformed the old patterns into new and sometimes unrecognizable glyphs. True ritual is the re-creation (which is recreation or play, as we will suggest later), through symbol, of the drama of the original creative act, and in this we are all participants at the holy altar of everyday physical existence.

Think about the following. Can you devise a number of ways in which you will determine to change your normal patterns each day? You may decide, for example, to go without lunch for an entire week or not to use your credit card for any purchases this month. Or you may decide to leave the breakfast dishes and wash them at the same time as you do the luncheon dishes. If you are accustomed to leaving things lying around the house, you might determine to put everything in order before you go to bed each night. Decide on changes that are quite simple and part of your regular daily routine. Then ask yourself: "What effect do I think these changes will make in my life?"

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

Now look again at your notes on your daily routines. Reflect. Instead of doing things the same way each day, what simple changes do you think it would be valuable to make? How can you remind yourself to make them? In your imagination follow yourself through these new ways of acting and note if you feel disturbed when your ordinary routine is interrupted in some way. It is particularly valuable to write in your journal the change you have decided on and then, after a week or so, to review the results. Have you remembered? What were your feelings about the change? In keeping with this course, have you touched the power of a new and different archetype?

GROUP DISCUSSION:

After this individual reflection the group can brainstorm and discuss the question: "How do we establish new patterns?" Group members may also wish to share some of their own ideas on changing.

MYTH WRITING:

Now return to your myth. Turn to Writing Assignment #5 on page 35. Using the actions of the animals you have selected, add an episode in which your animal acts in a totally unexpected and spontaneous way. A new pattern has emerged. Be sure the animal likes the new pattern or action, and then decide how your animal will act to establish the new pattern as part of its regular behavior.

Dr. Neumann has said: "The truth, the reality of the individual ritual, is vouched for in that -- in contrast to the collective outer ritual -- it emerges spontaneously, and only spontaneously." The group might wish to conclude this section of the course by discussing the relevance of this quote to changing patterns of behavior.

THE ADVENTURE OF RELATIONSHIPS

Now it is time to remember that our animals had some natural friends and also some natural enemies. That means that in the myths of our lives, there are many kinds of relationships, and each of these involves others who are also discovering their own archetypes and who are at different stages in their growth. Can Warriors be friends with Wanderers, and can Orphans have any kind of relationship at all? If we have followed our myths so far, we know that all the archetypes are at work within us at some time or another, at some level or another. This should help in understanding our relationships

with those who are working on an archetype which is, for the moment, not particularly active in us. Such relationships may call for the creation of new rituals, or new patterns of acting, so that a new order is revealed.

MYTH WRITING:

Turn to writing assignments #6 and #7. Take the time to think through these two assignments carefully.

In Assignment #6 (page 36), you are creating the episode in which your animal makes the connection with a "friend" (who can take the form of husband, wife, child, parent, or simply a good companion). What will be the dialogue and the interaction between the two? Will there be disagreements, or only "sweetness and light"? Pay special attention to the nature of the bonds which are created.

In Assignment #7 (page 37), you are going to establish a relationship with a natural enemy, or with someone your animal just does not like. Yet you are going to create a relationship in which neither your animal nor its natural enemy suffers! Is this possible? As Pearson points out, at some stage we must change the pattern from the "hero/villain/victim plot" to "hero/hero/hero" for both parties. As she points out, in writing about the Warrior archetype: "The task of the hero . . . is to bridge, *not to slay or convert.*" How are you going to build the bridge? Create a ritual in which both can participate meaningfully! (If you need help in creating such a ritual, ask other group members, family or friends for the benefit of their experience.)

ACTIVATING THE ARCHETYPES

When we discussed the discovery of our own archetype, or the archetype which we seem to feel most comfortable with at the present time, we probably felt that there were aspects of the other archetypes that we would really like to develop. How do we activate those archetypes? Again ritual may help us, simply because ritual is an ordering process and we are now developing a new order in our lives. This is what personal transformation means.

Remember that, in many rituals, masks are worn. Whether we know it or not, we are all wearing masks, which we call our personalities (from *persona*, which means "to sound through," referring to the masks worn by actors in Greek and Roman theater). To activate a new or different archetype, we only need to change our masks. (Some simple practical suggestions: if you are a woman, trying wearing another style dress; if you are a man, and accustomed to wearing coat and tie each day, try wearing a sport shirt to work.)

GROUP EXERCISE:

As a group identify some of the simple "rituals" which have arisen in your usual mode of study during this course. Invite your senses of humor to help you in this process. (e.g., Who speaks first? Do you always sit in the same chairs? What mannerisms have you identified among yourselves that are symbols of your various *personas*?) Now create a simple ritual in which members take a part different from their usual one. Act it out for

a few minutes. Then ask members to report on any differences in feeling they experienced as they put on a different *persona*.

[Individuals working through this course alone need to identify some ritual elements in their daily lives and then create a ritual in which they take parts which are totally different from their usual ways of acting. For example, if you feel uncomfortable moving about, you will be the dancer in your ritual. If you do not like to appear before others, you cast yourself as the one who introduces the ritual. Again, try out the new roles and see what difference it makes in feelings.]

After you have finished the above exercise review again the paragraphs on activating the archetypes. Share relevant reading group members may have done on this process. Come to as deep an understanding as possible of what it means to "activate the archetype." Then, as a group, read through the following suggestions on ways to move beyond the limitations of an archetype you are currently living out. Select one of the suggestions to try out in the coming week.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Read, discuss, and add to the list of possible ways of breaking out of a particular archetypal limitation.

- 1. If you have felt that you are now living out the Orphan archetype, resolve to speak to someone you meet, but do not know, today. (For example, speak to the person next to you in the checkout line at the supermarket or to someone standing beside you at a bus stop.)**
- 2. If you feel like the Martyr, take a long walk remembering to hold your head high, stride out purposefully, and breathe deeply. (You will be surprised at the change in inner feeling that occurs when you walk in this way.)**
- 3. If you feel like the Warrior, try taking a meandering walk through a park, pausing frequently to look at the flowers. You might even try hugging a tree.**
- 4. If you think you are the Wanderer, make out a shopping list and do not go home until you have obtained every item on the list.**
- 5. If you are convinced that you are already the skilled Magician, ask someone to help you with a difficult task or ask a question of a friend, admitting that you really do not know the answer.**

Whichever of the above exercises you decide to try, ask yourself: Did I discover a new pattern? If so, how did it feel? Did the exercise help me to clarify my understanding of the archetype I think is now my way? Did I find that I had a greater understanding of other archetypes? Journal your work with this exercise. If the group schedules more sessions, come prepared to share some of your learning as a result of the above experience.

RE-CREATION AND RECREATION

Note that these two words -- re-creation and recreation -- are spelled just the same except for the hyphen. Have you considered that to create anything is really play? There is a Hindu myth that the entire creation of the universe is *lila*, a play or the sport of the gods. The manifested system may be thought of as a playing field, on which we are all engaged in keeping the ball in motion. Sometimes existence is compared to a checkerboard; we are both the pieces and the movers of the checkers, experiencing the dark and light squares as tragedies and joys.

General Abner Doubleday is said to have been the originator of our American game of baseball. General Doubleday was an early member of the Theosophical Society, and became its vice-president; in fact, when the founders left New York for India, General Doubleday was named "President pro tem" by Col. Olcott.

GROUP EXERCISE:

Can you identify any theosophical principles in the game of baseball? List these on the board. Discuss.

SMALL GROUP WORK:

Working individually or in pairs or trios, devise a game that may be played by the entire group, using as many of the theosophical principles as possible. The game should be both recreation (fun, play) and re-creation (the recreation of a universe). Depending on your time constraints, exchange games with another pair and try out each other's game, pick one for the whole group to try, or experiment with playing them all.

Many thinkers today are suggesting that we are co-creators of the universal process and that we create our own worlds. Can we, through becoming familiar with our own myths, the myths of our lives, discover that creation is really recreation, play, fun and therefore joyous? So far in this session, we have discovered that we can change the patterns of our lives and we can even try on different masks (activating all the archetypal patterns), if we determine to do so. This is the heart of transformation. And the wonderful discovery is that when we transform ourselves, the entire world is transformed.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

Discuss what it means to be co-creators and how we create our own worlds. Someone familiar with the works of Teilhard de Chardin or the views of some contemporary scientists, such as Fritjof Capra, may wish to comment on the ideas expressed by those individuals which point to the idea of "co-creation."

Remember that at the end of Part III it was pointed out that our myths are never finished. Just as we have added some episodes during the course of considering rituals, which are ways of acting in the world, so there will be many more episodes to be added as we go through our incarnations. Some of those episodes will be happy ones and some will be sad, but let's now add a playful one.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

Turn to Writing Assignment #8 (page 37) and write an episode for your myth in which your animal is playing and just having fun. Before you begin to write, ask yourself: Is my animal alone in its play? Or are there companions? Are these companions only my animal's natural friends? Can building bridges to natural enemies ever seem like play?

We have now concluded the formal part of a study course on *The Myths of Our Lives*, and it may be well to summarize the direction we have taken. Go back to Writing Assignment #1 (page 11) and see if your opening sentence still says just what you wish it to say as an opener for your myth. Ask yourself: Has my understanding of myth changed since I began this course? In the light of any new understanding of the function of myth, do you want to change your opening sentence?

Then turn to Writing Assignment #2 (page 12), and review your answers. Are there any new ideas you want to add? What new insights have you gained from understanding the archetypes and your own strongest archetypal pattern?

Continue to review all the writing assignments, asking yourself whether you have gained any new insights as you have progressed through the course. If you are meeting in a group, you may wish to share some of these insights, particularly how later sections of the course may have provided deeper or broader understandings of the subjects dealt with in the early sections.

After such a review, either individually or in the group, take the time now to write out your myth as completely as possible in the space provided in Appendix III on page 41. If desired, groups could even schedule another session (perhaps an informal gathering or a potluck dinner) when members could share their myths with one another and show how the various sections in the course have helped them in organizing the writing of their myths.

Remember, though, your myth is not finished, because your life is still continuing. You may want to imagine an ending, but do not be too definite. You may even want to experiment with alternative endings, asking yourself "What is this (or that) happens to me?" So, find a concluding sentence for your myth, one that indicates there will be other chapters. Some concluding sentences are: "And so another night fell on my animal..." "There was a long sunset, and my animal decided to follow the sun over the horizon." "So my animal curled up in his/her favorite tree, to sleep until a new dawning broke across the forest."

If this course has been at all meaningful to you, and you have enjoyed it, then continue to journal and resolve to add to your myth on a regular basis. Above all, enjoy your myth: it is your life! Just play with it . . .

This is not the end of the course . . . it is the beginning, because you will go on writing it . . .

Writing Assignment #5

Write an episode in which your animal acts in a totally unexpected and spontaneous way. See if a new pattern emerges, and be sure the animal likes the new pattern. How will your animal act to establish the new pattern in its behavior?

Writing Assignment #6

Create an episode in which your animal meets a friend (husband, wife, child, parent, or good companion). What will be the dialogue and the interaction between the two? Will there be any disagreements or only "sweetness and light"?

Writing Assignment #7

Create an episode in which your animal meets a natural enemy or someone just not liked. In this episode, build a bridge of understanding. Create a pattern (ritual) in which both your animal and the enemy or unliked one can participate.

Writing Assignment #8

Create an episode in which your animal is playing. Is your animal alone in play? Which companions are present? Are only your animal's natural friends involved?

Appendix I
Extracts of the Three Fundamental Propositions of
The Secret Doctrine by H.P. Blavatsky

PROPOSITION NUMBER ONE:

The *Secret Doctrine* states an Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable PRINCIPLE on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude. It is beyond the range and reach of thought -- in the words of the *Mandukya Upanishad*, unthinkable and unspeakable." It is . . . devoid of all attributes and is essentially without any relation to manifested, finite Being.

PROPOSITION NUMBER TWO:

The second assertion. . . is the absolute universality of that law of periodicity, of flux and reflux, ebb and flow, which physical science has observed and recorded in all departments of nature. An alternation such as that of Day and Night, Life and Death, Sleeping and Waking, is a fact so common, so perfectly universal and without exception, that it is easy to comprehend that in it we see one of the absolutely fundamental laws of the universe.

PROPOSITION NUMBER THREE:

The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul, the latter being itself an aspect of the Unknown Root; and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul -- a spark of the former -- through the Cycle of Incarnation (or "Necessity") in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law, during the whole term. In other words, no purely spiritual Buddhi (divine Soul) can have an independent (conscious) existence before the spark which issued from the pure Essence of the Universal Sixth principle -- or the OVER-SOUL -- has (a) passed through every elemental form of the phenomenal world of that Manvantara, and (b) acquired individuality, first by natural impulse, and then by self-induced and selfdevised efforts (checked by its Karma), thus ascending through all the degrees of intelligence, from the lowest to the highest Manas, from mineral and plant, up to the holiest archangel (Dhyani-Buddha).

Appendix II The Theosophical World View

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, while reserving for each member full freedom to interpret those teachings known as theosophy, is dedicated to preserving and realizing the ageless wisdom, which embodies both a worldview and a vision of human self-transformation.

This tradition is founded upon certain fundamental propositions:

The universe and all that exists within it are one interrelated and interdependent whole.

Every existent being -- from atom to galaxy -- is rooted in the same universal, life-creating Reality. This Reality is all-pervasive, but it can never be summed up in its parts, since it transcends all its expressions. It reveals itself in the purposeful, ordered, and meaningful processes of nature as well as in the deepest recesses of the mind and spirit.

Recognition of the unique value of every living being expresses itself in reverence for life, compassion for all, sympathy with the need of all individuals to find truth for themselves, and respect for all religious traditions. The ways in which these ideals become realities in individual life are both the privileged choice and the responsible act of every human being.

Central to the concerns of theosophy is the desire to promote understanding and brotherhood among people of all races, nationalities, philosophies, and religions. Therefore, all people, whatever their race, creed, sex, caste, or color, are invited to participate equally in the life and work of the Society. The Theosophical Society imposes no dogmas, but points toward the source of unity beyond all differences. Devotion to truth, love for all living beings, and commitment to a life of active altruism are the marks of the true theosophist.

Appendix III
THE MYTH OF YOUR LIFE

Review all your writing assignments. Gather your ideas together and write out "The Myth of Your Life." Be sure to date it.