

## Mythology Is...

Myths are often considered as trivializations, deceptions, or falsehoods. However, mythologies are more correctly understood as **framing metaphors which hold and carry forth the values and beliefs of a culture**. Myths are stories which organize and carry the plots of dramatic life events. And plots are organizations of narratives into significant themes. Plots of life, themes of significance woven into its experience, are both organized and perceived through the lenses of one's value systems. As framing metaphors, myths then not only carry forward a culture's fundamental beliefs, but also juxtapose those beliefs with the dramatic plots of life. **They frame the way events are perceived and experienced, and as a result, frame the significance accorded them**. Myths provide coherence in the face of changing life conditions.

Gene C. Toews <<http://www.headlinemuse.com/Culture/mythnews.htm>>

## Work (and school) as cultural mythology ...

I am all for the abolition of work. I'm also all for the abolition of schools, for schools are nothing more than detention centers that regulate the flow of young competitors into the work place. (Humans have never needed a classroom and bell schedule in order to learn.) Since billions of us are compelled day after day to drag stones up the world devouring pyramid called civilization, we are all in effect held captive by our own cultural mythology. This worldwide mythology is why we all work. It's why a hierarchy structures our daily behavior. Unfortunately, this cultural mythology is virtually undetectable and infects billions of people with a delusion that is fundamental to every society where people work.

FACT: "Pre-historic" peoples lived a life of leisure and security, and still do if they happen to live in a remote place that we haven't yet converted entirely into human food. Although our cultural mythology teaches us that "pre-historic" peoples struggle while constantly fighting for survival, the fact is, any intelligent anthropologist will say they lived a life of leisure and security.

Chazz Carr <<http://www.greenspun.com/com/zpub/notes/black-work.html>>

## News reporting reinforces cultural mythologies ...

I take it that **photographs convey information not about any objective reality, but about the beliefs and ideas particular to the culture in which they operate**. News photographs can be conceptualized as projections, as "involuntary confessions" of their culture's deeper preoccupations. This study shows that both the form and content of the news photographs from the Vietnam War reflect historical and contemporary, fictitious and documentary depictions of war. They **trigger the same cultural myths found in popular movies, novels and picture genres, including classical Western painting ...** They position the capitalist West as the masculine, modern and civilized "Absolute", against which the Vietnamese are contrasted as a feminized, primitive, communist "Other". The press photographs are permeated by a Judeo-Christian iconography. They convey a modern version of the Passion, with the Pietà and the mourning Madonna as recurrent themes. The American soldiers are transformed into Christian martyrs, and the fleeing South Vietnamese population is staged as a timeless vision of the Old Testament Exodus. By referring to the Christian tradition, the photographs give the suffering and killing a higher purpose. .... What my study has

shown in particular is that ... press photographs confirm and reproduce deeply rooted cultural myths and values. It seems appropriate to say that the media - rather than revealing the world - project onto it ideologically colored pictures.

<[http://www.jmk.su.se/jmk\\_sidan/sidor/abstractanden.htm](http://www.jmk.su.se/jmk_sidan/sidor/abstractanden.htm)>

## **The Mean World Syndrome**

People think of television as programs, but television is more than that; television is a mythology— highly organically connected, repeated every day so that the themes that run through all programming and news have the effect of cultivating conceptions of reality ...

Our studies have shown that .... if you are growing up in a home where there is more than three hours of television per day, for all practical purposes you live in a meaner world - and act accordingly - than your next-door neighbour who lives in the same world but watches less television. The programming reinforces the worst fears and apprehensions and paranoia of people.... The third consequence ... is the pervasive sense of insecurity and vulnerability. Our surveys tell us that the more television people watch, the more they are likely to be afraid to go out on the street in their own community, especially at night. They are afraid of strangers and meeting other people. A hallmark of civilisation, which is kindness to strangers, has been lost.

George Gerbner. "Reclaiming our Cultural Mythology."  
<<http://www.context.org/ICLIB/IC38?Gerbner.htm>>, 7 May 2002.

### Some myths perpetuated in mass media texts:

Beauty can be bought -- natural beauty is just good technique.

Old age is a pathetic state to be resisted in every possible way.

Children have no sense of self-preservation - they must be sheltered and street-proofed from an early age.

Crime is pervasive in North American cities and becoming increasingly violent.

The truly destructive crimes are crimes of property and physical violence.

A university degree is necessary for success in life.

Society is disintegrating from a loss of family values.

Law and order are crumbling because the police are incompetent.

The ideal family is the traditional nuclear family: father, mother, two or more children.

The health of the population will improve infinitely as long as medical technology investment is sustained.

Violence is an acceptable way to resolve problems as long as it is only used against criminals.

Environmental protection is fine as long as it does not interfere with the creation of jobs by industry.

The biggest economic problem facing us today is government debt.

New is better than old.

Anyone hearing echoes of *Brave New World* here?