

Consciousness, Personality & Hero Sequence
The Origin and History of Consciousness
A New Structure for Stories?

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Some of the leading insights into the creation of stories have come from disciplines such as mythology and psychology. Certainly mythologist Joseph Campbell's *Hero With A Thousand Faces* has become a household word for many storytellers in Hollywood. In his book, Campbell defines the sequence of steps the hero of mythology goes through, a sequence that has become incorporated into much modern film structure. Yet a little-known book by Jung student and disciple Erich Neumann called *The Origins and History of Consciousness* (1949) might ultimately prove one of the greatest books ever written for creating stories and perhaps a new structure for films.

Born in Berlin in 1905, Neumann received a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Erlanger-Nuremberg in 1927 and continued to study medicine at the University of Berlin. In 1933 he moved to Tel Aviv and for many years regularly returned to Zurich, Switzerland to give lectures at the C.G. Jung Institute. He also lectured frequently in England, France and the Netherlands, and was a member of the International Association for Analytical Psychology and president of the Israel Association of Analytical Psychologists. He practiced analytical psychology in Tel Aviv from 1934 until his death in 1960.

Neumann contributed to the field of developmental psychology and the psychology of consciousness and creativity. He had a theoretical and philosophical approach to analysis, contrasting with the more clinical concern in England and the United States. His most valuable contribution to psychology was the empirical concept of "centroversion," a synthesis of extra and introversion. However, he is best known for his theory of feminine development, a theory formulated in numerous publications, most notably *The Great Mother* of 1955.

While *The Great Mother* is his best-known work, it is his book *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, written in 1949 and first published in English in 1954. It is this book that holds a treasure chest of material for the creation of stories but so far, it is an untapped treasure chest. The book draws on a full range of world mythology to show that individual consciousness undergoes the same archetypal stages of development as has human consciousness as a whole.

The stages begin and end with the emergence of the ego from the Uroboros, or tail-eating serpent. The Uroboros is primordial condition of self-contained unconsciousness symbolized by the circle of a snake devouring its own tail. Neumann's conclusion, based on study of creation

myths from around the world and his clinical experience, is that as the ego consciousness differentiates itself from uroboric unconsciousness, the ego begins to experience this primordial unconsciousness both as the life-giving origin of its existence and as a threat to its newly won autonomy. This ambivalent experience is often given shape in the form of the Great Mother, who bestows all life and also holds life and death, existence and non-existence, in her all-powerful hands. For true autonomy to occur, the domination of the Great Mother must be shaken off.

The sequence of myth stages in the rise of the ego from the uroboros are projected in the Creation Myth, Hero Myth and Transformation. Throughout the sequence the Hero is the evolving ego consciousness. Neumann observes the myth stages in the evolution of human consciousness are repeated in the psychological development of personality. The sequence of these stages involve what Neumann defines under the categories of Original Sin, Separation of Systems and Balance.

An outline of Neumann's mythological and psychological stages are listed in Table A. Note that the relationship between the myth and psychological sequences. In this sense, the Creation Myth is related to the stage of Original Sin within the individual personality while the Hero Myth is related to the Separation of Systems and the Transformation Myth related to Balance. This comparison between myth and personality sequence might be better visualized in Table B.

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One of the more interesting things about Neumann's myth-personality sequences are their relationship to Joseph Campbell's hero sequence outlined in *Hero With A Thousand Faces*. The twelve-step Campbell sequence is outlined in Table C and juxtaposed against Neumann's sequences for comparison in Table D.

The comparisons offer startling new perspectives and deeper psychological insights into story sequence and symbolism. For example, viewing Table D shows a time relationship between the "Ordinary World" of Campbell's hero finds a relationship to Neumann's Creation Myth of consciousness and Original Sin stage in personality development. Or, consider the "Crossing the Threshold" step in Campbell's hero sequence. We see that it has a relationship to the Hero Myth of consciousness and Separation (from parents) stage of the personality.

A further elaboration of the connections are show in Table E which compares the Neumann and Campbell sequences with traditional story and screenplay structure of Act I (Set-Up), Act II (Confrontation) and Act III (Resolution) in the right column of the table. In this sense, we can say that Act I story Set-Up has a relationship to the hero's "Ordinary World" as well as the Creation Myth and Original Sin. In the same way, we can say that Act II Confrontation has a relationship with Campbell's "Crossing the Threshold" and the Separation stage in personality development and the Hero Myth in the evolution of human consciousness. Finally, we can see that Act III Resolution relates to the Resurrection of Campbell's hero as well as the Balance stage of personality development and the Transformation Myth in human consciousness.

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This method of comparing sequences across broad historical and psychological categories might be termed the method of comparative sequence. That is, comparing cultural and natural sequences and finding correspondence between them. We have focused on the relationship between the hero's journey and the evolution of human consciousness and personality development. However, many other sequences might well be considered. For example, the sequence of the Rosarium cycle, the sequence of the seasons, the sequence the life of Christ. All of them have a relationship to the sequence stages in human consciousness and personality development and the journey through them of the ego hero.

One of the challenges for story creation today is to explore the inter-relationships between the sequences and find corresponding symbols or images. In other words, it is important to find non-linear relationships between periods of time in the development of consciousness, personality and the journey of the hero. The problem is that in western culture there is far greater importance placed on linear, causal relationships in time than non-causal, synchronistic relationships.

For example, sequence in modern screenplay structure is defined many different ways. There is the 22-step sequence of John Truby. There is the 8-step sequence approach of USC. There is the 15-step sequence of Blake Snyder in his popular *Save the Cat* method. There is Syd Field's 3-step sequence.

In all of these methods, it is always important to relate the various sequences to the great stages in the development of human consciousness and personality. The challenge is not to focus on the number of steps in the sequence but in their relationship to consciousness and personality development.

There is much to be learned from Neumann's brilliant book. As Carl Jung wrote in the book's Forward, "It begins just where I . . . would start if I were granted a second lease of life." Jung notes that Neumann has "placed the concepts of analytical psychology . . . on a firm evolutionary basis." Yet there is much exploration that still needs to be done into the sequences of the book. Erudite and almost 500 pages long, the book is not a "walk in the park" read and understand.

But the award might well be worth the effort. By focusing on the relationship of sequence suggested by Erich Neumann in *The Origins and History of Consciousness* the dawn of a new type of storyteller might be within reach. Yet within this relatively unknown book, there is the possibility that steps of a sequence will no longer simply define events the hero performs but rather images and symbols he confronts at particular times. These are the symbols and images all mankind has faced in its evolution from unconsciousness to consciousness. They are the symbols each individual faces on his journey through life. They always make for the most powerful story of all. The hidden story behind every other story that will ever be written.

The Origins and History of Consciousness

Erich Neumann

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Table A.
Correspondence Between
Stages of Consciousness, Personality & Story

Consciousness Stages	Personality Stages
Creation Myth	Original Sin
- Uroboros	- Centroversion/Ego Form
- Great Mother	- Ego germ in the original uroboric situation
- Separation of Parents	- Development of ego from uroboros
	- Centroversion in organisms on the uroboric level
	-Centroversion, ego and consciousness
	- Further phases of ego development
Hero Myth	Separation
- Birth	- Centroversion & Differentiation
- Slaying Mother	- Fragmentation of Archetypes
- Slaying Father	- Exhaustion of emotional components
	- Secondary personalization
	- Transformation of pleasure-pain components
	- Formation of authorities within personality
	- Synthetic function of the ego
Transformation Myth	Balance
- The Captive & The Treasure	- Compensation of separated systems (balance)
- Transformation of Osiris	- Schism of the systems (crisis)
	Conversion & Stages of Life
	- Prolongation of childhood and differentiation of consciousness
	- Activation of collective unconsciousness and ego changes in puberty
	- Self-realization of controversion in the second half of life

Table B.

Campbell's Hero Sequence

- **The Ordinary World.** The hero, uneasy, uncomfortable or unaware, is introduced sympathetically so the audience can identify with the situation or dilemma. The hero is shown against a background of environment, heredity, and personal history. Some kind of polarity in the hero's life is pulling in different directions and causing stress.
- **The Call to Adventure.** Something shakes up the situation, either from external pressures or from something rising up from deep within, so the hero must face the beginnings of change.
- **Refusal of the Call.** The hero feels the fear of the unknown and tries to turn away from the adventure, however briefly. Alternately, another character may express the uncertainty and danger ahead.
- **Meeting With The Mentor.** The hero comes across a seasoned traveler of the worlds who gives him or her training, equipment, or advice that will help on the journey. Or the hero reaches within to a source of courage and wisdom.
- **Crossing the Threshold.** The hero commits to leaving the Ordinary World and entering a new region or condition with unfamiliar rules and values.
- **Tests, Allies and Enemies.** The hero is tested and sorts out allegiances in the Special World.
- **Approach.** The hero and newfound allies prepare for the major challenge in the Special world.
- **The Ordeal.** Near the middle of the story, the hero enters a central space in the Special World and confronts death or faces his or her greatest fear. Out of the moment of death comes a new life.
- **The Reward.** The hero takes possession of the treasure won by facing death. There may be celebration, but there is also danger of losing the treasure again.
- **The Road Back.** About three-fourths of the way through the story, the hero is driven to complete the adventure, leaving the Special World to be sure the treasure is brought home. Often a chase scene signals the urgency and danger of the mission.
- **The Resurrection.** At the climax, the hero is severely tested once more on the threshold of home. He or she is purified by a last sacrifice, another moment of death and rebirth, but on a higher and more complete level. By the hero's action, the polarities that were in conflict at the beginning are finally resolved.
- **Return With the Elixir.** The hero returns home or continues the journey, bearing some element of the treasure that has the power to transform the world as the hero has been transformed.

Table C

Correspondence Between
Stages of Consciousness, Personality & Campbell's Hero

Consciousness Stages	Personality Stages	Campbell Hero
Creation Myth	Original Sin	Ordinary World
- Uroboros	- Centroversion/Ego Form	- Call to Adventure
- Great Mother	- Ego germ in the original uroboric situation	- Refusal of the Call
- Separation of Parents	- Development of ego from uroboros	- Meeting With the Mentor
	- Centroversion in organisms on the uroboric level	
	-Centroversion, ego and consciousness	
	- Further phases of ego development	
Hero Myth	Separation	Crossing Threshold
- Birth	- Centroversion & Differentiation	- Test, Allies, Enemies
- Slaying Mother	- Fragmentation of Archetypes	- Approach
- Slaying Father	- Exhaustion of emotional components	- Ordeal
	- Secondary personalization	- Reward
	- Transformation of pleasure-pain components	- The Road Back
	- Formation of authorities within personality	
	- Synthetic function of the ego	
Transformation Myth	Balance	Resurrection
- The Captive & The Treasure	- Compensation of separated systems (balance)	- Return With the Elixir
- Transformation of Osiris	- Schism of the systems (crisis)	
	Conversion & Stages of Life	
	- Prolongation of childhood and differentiation of consciousness	
	- Activation of collective unconsciousness and ego changes in puberty	
	- Self-realization of controversion in the second half of life	

Table D.

Correspondence Between
Stages of Consciousness, Personality, Campbell's Hero & Story Structure

Consciousness Stages	Personality Stages	Campbell Hero	Story Structure
Creation Myth	Original Sin	Ordinary World	Act I (Set-Up)
- Uroboros	- Centroversion/Ego Form	- Call to Adventure	
- Great Mother	- Ego germ in the original uroboric situation	- Refusal of the Call	
- Separation of Parents	- Development of ego from uroboros	- Meeting With the Mentor	
	- Centroversion in organisms on the uroboric level		
	-Centroversion, ego and consciousness		
	- Further phases of ego development		
Hero Myth	Separation	Crossing Threshold	Act II (Confrontation)
- Birth	- Centroversion & Differentiation	- Test, Allies, Enemies	
- Slaying Mother	- Fragmentation of Archetypes	- Approach	
- Slaying Father	- Exhaustion of emotional components	- Ordeal	
	- Secondary personalization	- Reward	
	- Transformation of pleasure-pain components	- The Road Back	
	- Formation of authorities within personality		
	- Synthetic function of the ego		
Transformation Myth	Balance	Resurrection	Act III (Resolution)
- The Captive & The Treasure	- Compensation of separated systems (balance)	- Return With the Elixir	
- Transformation of Osiris	- Schism of the systems (crisis)		
	Conversion & Stages of Life		
	- Prolongation of childhood and differentiation of consciousness		
	- Activation of collective unconsciousness and ego changes in puberty		
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Table E.