

Mythology at the Edge of the World. Interview with New Mythologist Willi Paul

By Emily Harris

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- 1. Willi, you founded planetshifter.com magazine contributing many stories on innovation, new mythologies, and sustainability. You have founded several other websites since 2009 sharing your original writings and novel ideas related to the “Permaculture Age”. How is the “Permaculture Age” defined?**

The Permaculture Age started with the moral compass from the sustainability movement, adding a new land design tool kit then quickly aspired to a larger, more inclusive web including the sacred and the new myth. One key change agent here are the [new alchemies](#) as we need transmutations to re-forest our Father’s cultural desiccations.

The Permaculture Age is a time of great risk, a shedding human snake seeking environmental justice, a mega-transition on Earth as a global community. Life after the present [Chaos Era](#) will be the Post-Transition Era. It is in this near future time that I posit and cook my [New Myths](#).

- 2. Tell me about your creative process. Are you, as an innovator, using new alchemies to create change?**

My creative process is a hybrid of iteration, white boarding, and frequent idea pulses or quick insights. I have ideas and new concepts spewed all across my desk top, a sort of e-garden for growing. While I categorize and define alchemy in detail, I see myself as an incubator, wave-forming new visions and questions day after day, then sculpting and launching a few polished gems with the alchemy and purpose of a myth-drenched shaman.

- 3. One of the new alchemies you mention is the digital. Some may see the digital and permaculture (nature) inhabiting two disparate worlds. How are you and your contemporaries integrating the two?**

It would be a catastrophic mistake to separate the digital and soil (alchemic) worlds. I think the best examples of this Nature synergy are the various listservs that underpin our fears and bolster potential solutions. One can also teach permaculture with YouTube videos now. In one hand a shovel and in the other a tablet!

- 4. Tell me more about myth scholar, Joseph Campbell’s hero’s journey. Is this an individual, ego-driven process or could an entire community or tribe collectively experience this rite of passage?**

I am not a Campbell scholar but his ideas are incorporated into [mine](#) in many places. His “hero cycle” is well depicted elsewhere. I do champion a flattened-ego community journey and a “reporting back” or sharing and evaluation. In the Transition Movement, we have a type of alchemy called “localization.” Here local resources are marshaled and neighbors are the farmers, cops and priests. As we build localization structures and processes, we re-discover our connections to the land and to the spirit – and to creative acts that build the new myths.

- 5. What are some of the tools available to individuals who want to participate in writing new myths? Can a new myth be communicated though music, dance, or the visual arts? Is one medium more potent than another?**

People and their hearts, their sweat and fears,... our dreams and experiences. Tools are not just computers and concert halls! There is a difference between the tale and the tool. Any format is possible. Consider the rise of the storyteller! A voice and a stage!

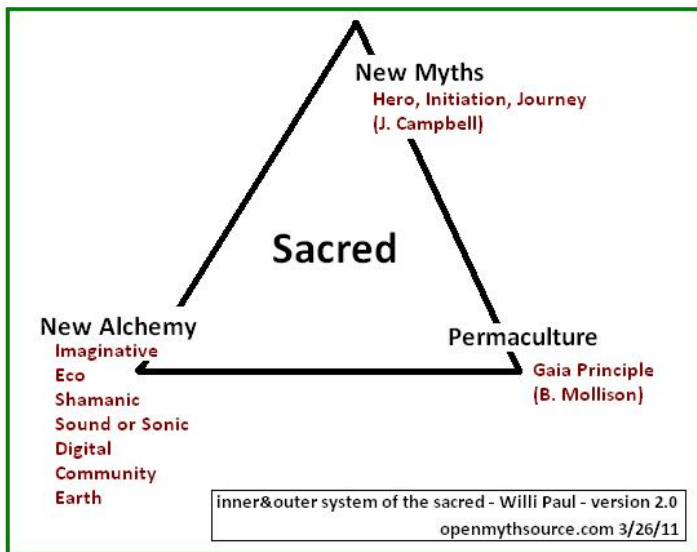
6. What are the symbols or motifs of transition, manufactured or organic, that we humans should be paying attention to?

I must admit that there are many posts in my work about the [new symbols](#). These are necessary new forces and when driven by the alchemies, become change agents for artists and mythologists. For centuries symbols have been considered [special instructions or codes](#) and help build road maps to new adventure and visions for both alchemists and mythologists. As transmutational agents, symbols create attention, “knowledge-starts” and awareness at many levels of our being. The circle of wheat is both a labyrinth (**journey**) and a globally-connected food crop now under heavy pressure from changing weather patterns.

7. Various faiths associate the sacred with religion. Is the inner and outer system of the sacred a departure from what is traditionally deemed sacred? Is it a return to what was initially deemed sacred?

This is difficult to answer. Yes, the model (below) is “yin-yang” in flow and meaning but this came to me in a vision that was almost complete in design. Sacred is not “approved” by many permaculturists for fear that religion will contaminate the science-based movement.

Much is a future dream (a tool) here. Note that I include Gaia on one axis. What is the principle or hypothesis of Gaia? Stated simply, [the idea](#) is that we may have discovered a living being bigger, more ancient, and more complex than anything from our wildest dreams. That being, called Gaia, is the Earth.

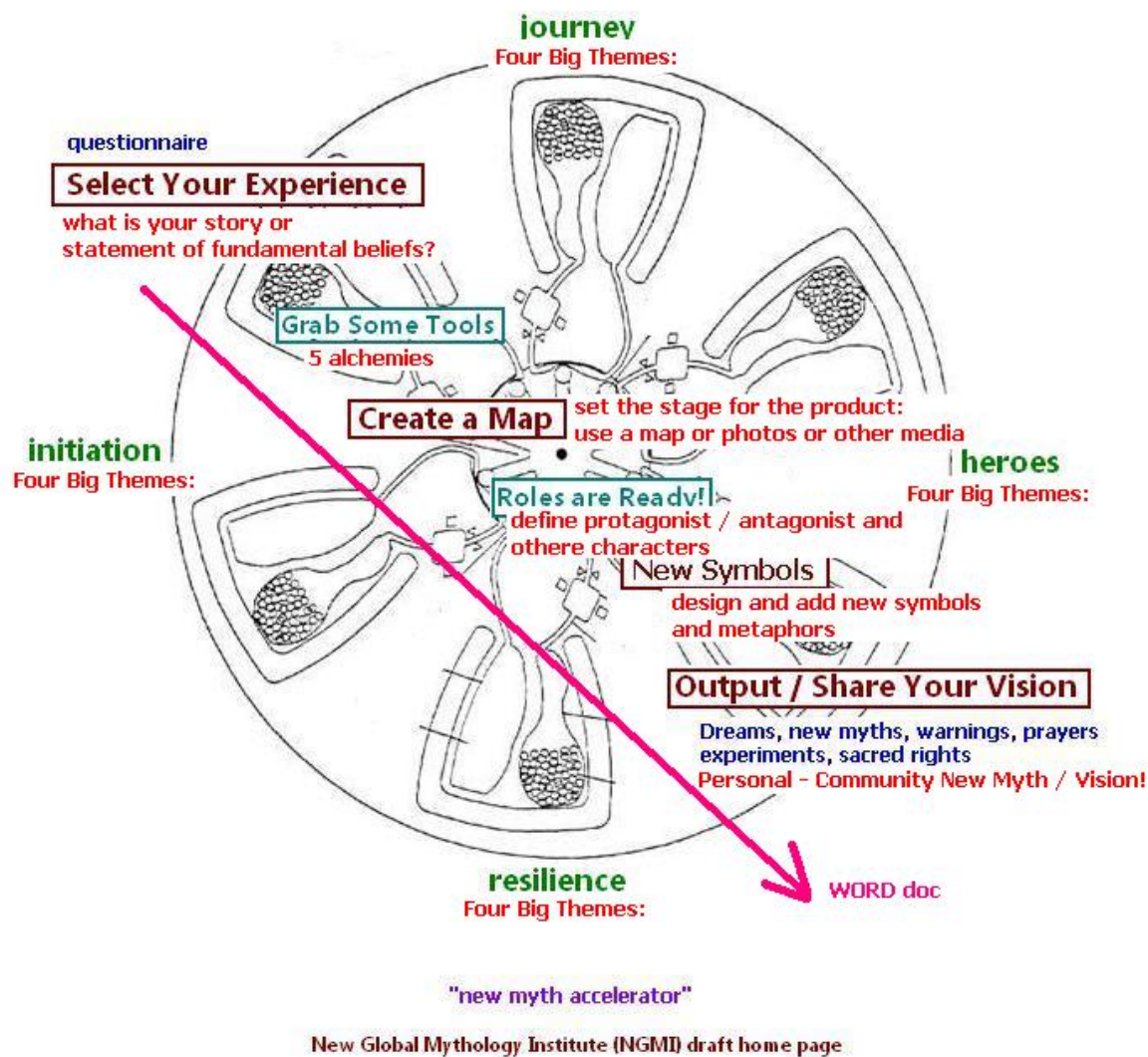


8. What is your personal relationship with music, art, and myth?

[Music](#) is an everyday alchemy that propels me into alternative visions and creative troughs. I make art to stay human. Myth is my master.

9. You are launching the New Global Mythology Institute (NGMI) in 2013. What can you share about your progress and vision?

We are co-developing a virtual and a land-based NGMI to reach and collaborate on the new mythologies with folks on a global scale. One of the components is called the New Myth Accelerator. Here is a draft:



10. Is there a message you'd like to share with those new to permaculture?

Yes. Respect the history, ethics and movie stars but challenge how the systems that could benefit from wider integration. Find some land and practice it with all your soul. There is sacredness in permaculture if you want it. It is working wonders here.