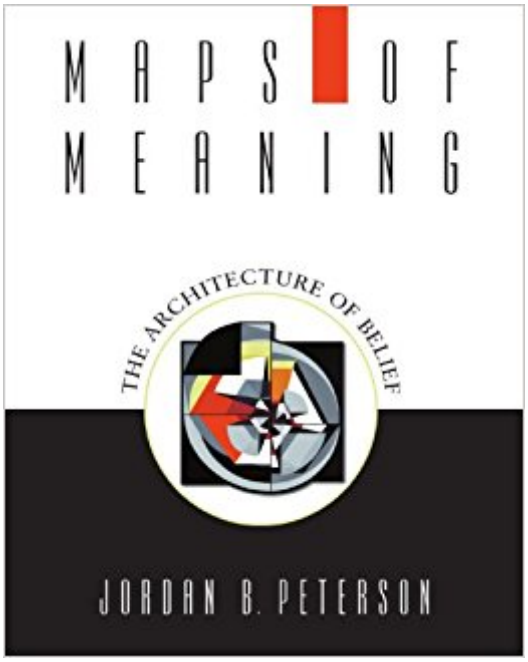
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Maps Of Meaning: The Architecture Of Belief



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Synopsis

Why have people from different cultures and eras formulated myths and stories with similar structures? What does this similarity tell us about the mind, morality, and structure of the world itself? Jordan Peterson offers a provocative new hypothesis that explores the connection between what modern neuropsychology tells us about the brain and what rituals, myths, and religious stories have long narrated. A cutting-edge work that brings together neuropsychology, cognitive science, and Freudian and Jungian approaches to mythology and narrative, Maps of Meaning presents a rich theory that makes the wisdom and meaning of myth accessible to the critical modern mind.

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"The book reflects its author’s profound moral sense and vast erudition in areas ranging from clinical psychology to scripture and a good deal of personal soul-searching and experience...with patients who include prisoners, alcoholics and the mentally ill."-Montreal Gazette "This is not a book to be abstracted and summarized. Rather it should be read at leisure...and employed as a stimulus and reference to expand one’s own maps of meaning. I plan to return to Peterson’s musings and mapping many times over the next few years."-"Am J Psychiatry ..."a brilliant enlargement of our understanding of human motivation...a beautiful work."-Sheldon H. White, Harvard University ..."unique...a brilliant new synthesis of the meaning of mythologies and our human need to relate in story form the deep structure of our experiences."-Keith Oatley, University of Toronto

Why would people in different places and times formulate myths and stories with similar symbols and meanings? Are groups of people with different religious or ideological beliefs doomed to eternal conflict? Are the claims of science and religion truly irreconcilable? What might be done to decrease the individual propensity for group-fostered cruelty? Maps of Meaning addresses these questions with a provocative new hypothesis that explores the connection between what modern neuropsychology tells us about the brain and what rituals, myths and religious stories have long narrated. Peterson's ambitious interdisciplinary odyssey draws insights from the worlds of religion, cognitive science and Jungian approaches to mythology and narrative. Maps of Meaning offers a critical guide to the riches of archaic and modern thought and invaluable insights into human motivation and cognition.

This is one of my favorite books.It is very dense and takes commitment to get through and understand, but it's worth it.Maps of Meaning is the type of book you read a little of then go on a walk to process. Because it is about the fundamental meta-myth which underlies culture you begin to see JPs model everywhere.Reading these other reviews, and the quotes on the back of the book I feel like a lot of people didn't get it. Or maybe they read it like a novel: not pausing when they stopped absorbing the full depth of the words. It's a deep work and connected a lot of the other works I have read in this field.I'd strongly recommend Jordan Peterson's YouTube channel as an accompaniment... or if you decide MoM is a bit too much.Definitely a book I want a hard copy of on my shelf.

Sent it to my brother in Prison. He and the other inmates are spellbound by the contents of the book. Two other inmates have ordered it while my brother finishes it.

This book is tough to understand in places. The author reports that he over edited it and that he was working out his ideas as he wrote. It is more than worth the trouble. It, and other work the author has done, has changed my life. And I am old and have seen a lot. Just read it.

First of all, this book is freely available on the author's website and you should by no means pay for it (unless you really want a hard copy). Secondly, a clear outline of the major themes in this book (by Peterson himself) can be found at the following link: http://www.cogsci.ecs.soton.ac.uk/cgi/psyc/newpsy?10.077. To be honest, I highly recommend the link as an alternative to reading this book unless you are dead-set on plowing through 500+ pages

of very small text.This book outlines a grand theory which attempts to connect psychology, mythology, sociology and philosophy in a large interdisciplinary framework. The basic claim is that the spirit of humanity has developed gradually over history in (roughly) the following manner: human brain structures determine behavior, which lead to self-awareness and the gradual emergence of social roles. This brings us to the appearance of dramatic narrative and myth, followed by the development of Law, culminating in the modern era of rationality and science. Each phase serves as a precursor for the next, not in a linear evolution-type manner but more of a "finding new tools in the toolbox" which can give us new perspectives on previous modes of thought. (For example, Peterson presents the example of Jesus's message as one which priviliges individual conscience over Mosaic law.) In summary, the basic template of human behavior is a dynamic tension between Order and Chaos, with the Individual situated in between them and mediating to prevent both stagnation and apocalypse. This template can supposedly be found in every culture's narrative mythlogy.As far as the writing of the book goes, it is fairly decent. Most of the book is written at a fairly high technical level which takes some effort to get through. This sort of technical verbiage is necessary for the point he makes, but the exposition is flawed in a particular way: Peterson spends an incredible amount of time repeating relatively simple points over and over in increasingly dense and complicated language while at the same time dropping hints of more nuanced ideas and alternative perspectives that, while interesting, remain largely underdeveloped. Additionally, I am not sure if the neuropsychology presented early in the book is still accurate: this book was written in 1999, and we all know how quickly science develops in certain areas.More seriously, I think the basic problem with this book is that it just doesn't fit into the academic canon in a sensible way. Let me explain: I really agree with most of what Peterson says. He cites thinkers such as Jung, Nietzsche, Campbell and Solzhenitsyn to support his claims, and I agree that their words do support what he's saying. But these figures are part of a larger dialogue in areas such as philosophy, psychology and sociology: for example, Jung was responding to Freud and in turn had his own critics; Nietzsche, of course, has an incredibly prominent place in philosophy and has had countless books, articles and dialogues written in response to his own ideas. Philosophy and more broadly all of the humanities have spent millenia dealing with issues such as the meaning of truth, the nature of being, and why humans behave the way they do; needless to say, there is a huge body of work devoted to fleshing out these core ideas.Peterson doesn't seem to engage with any of this history of thought in a particularly compelling way. He has a large systematic framework which "feels right" but at the same time is divorced from broader discussion. For example, the order-chaos axis which forms such a crucial part of most of this work is certainly an idea which demands more thought and

discussion. But these discussions are already happening in fields such as comparative mythology, literature and sociology. In order to find a more nuanced, thoughtful perspective, we have to leave Maps of Meaning behind and grapple seriously with the academic tradition.And here, I think, is the fatal flaw in Maps of Meaning: it's just Hegel! We already have in the Phenomenology of Spirit a work which seeks to give a "philosophy of history" similar to what Peterson is trying to do here: that text also gives a theoretical framework which seeks to integrate epistemology, ontology and theology in a systematic way. I feel it would be an understatement to say that all philosophy done today is still grappling with Hegel's ideas: the past 250-odd years has basically been just been one large engagement with his legacy, and his figure still looms large over the entirety of the humanities. So in some sense, Peterson has engaged in a project similar to the Phenomenology but with more of a STEM/hard-sciences approach, which is valuable in its own right (modulo my reservations above as to how fully we should accept his claims in the sections on neuropsychology). On the other hand, if the ideas in MOM "feel right" and you are interested in learning more, why not just read Hegel?If this book gets scientists to grapple more seriously with subjects such as philosophy, psychoanalysis and theology, then Dr. Peterson has done his job well. On the other hand, this book doesn't have much to offer to those who dwell primarily in the humanities: while this book "wraps up" a lot of thoughts in a nice way, the more serious engagements with these ideas -- and more importantly, the ideas we should have about "the way forward" -- are to be found in the broader academic discourse.

It's not an exaggeration to say that this book significantly changed the way I view the world. Actually, it wasn't just the book; like many others, I also follow Dr. Peterson's University of Toronto lectures that he generously posts for free on Youtube.So, I'm going to take a stab at briefly reducing some of the overarching themes found in the book for someone thinking about picking it up. Although, don't expect the book to be reduced; it's quite technical in parts.The world can and should be viewed as a place made up of experiences or tools, rather that objects, which is how we've been trained to do as post-enlightenment human beings. That's the primary difference between a person in 2017 CE and a person in 2017 BCE. It's not intelligence; it's a matter of viewpoint.Thus, if you asked an ancient Sumerian to describe a coffee cup, he'd probably say something like: "It looks like a nice place to store my liquid." If you asked a man today, he might say: "Well it's a small object made out of glass with a handle on it."Maybe you're thinking so what. What difference does that difference in mindset make? Actually I think it's central to Peterson's views. A modern atheist, for example, may say, "look there's a coffee cup; I can see it; I can touch it; I can break it; therefore it's

real! I can’t see God and I can’t touch God, therefore there is no God." Peterson argues that of course modern people often come to that conclusion. We’ve been trained to think differently than the people who wrote the Bible, for example.But they didn’t see the world as a place that was made out of objects. They were interested in handing down collective wisdom and experiences to the next generation. Stories like Genesis, for example, which find earlier versions of itself being told by Zoroastrianists, may have been handed down via the oral tradition for tens of thousands of years before that. Our ancestors were handing down a psychologically correct blueprint for how to live. Why is it psychologically correct? Well, look around you. Is there evil in the world? He cites the logic of Solzhenitsyn and Jung to answer that question with an emphatic yes!For example, Jung said "...inasmuch as I become conscious of my shadow I also remember that I am a human being like any other."The shadow Jung refers to represents the capability of man to do malevolence. Jung is telling us that if we understand our capacity to do evil, we have a real shot at harnessing our capacity to do good.So there’s good and there’s evil, neither of which can be quantified or measured by science. But if we live in a scientific world and there is no way to measure or quantify evil, then does that mean nothing is good and thus nothing is evil?This leads me back to Peterson’s idea that mythology found in the collective unconscious and handed down via religious stories is psychologically correct and since it has formed the basis for our civilization for two millennia now, pulling the rug of Judeo-Christian ideas out from underneath our feet has been/will be disastrous for our future.It’s very difficult to reduce the concepts into something reasonably small, because there’s so much more, and I butchered half of what I did write. But at least this may give you an idea of what to expect in the book. Big thanks to Peterson for putting his lecture videos up on Youtube. I recommend watching those as a companion to the book.Also, there is a brand new abridged version of the book available through PDF, released for free today, and it’s only about 15,000 words. That’s about the equivalent to a 75 page paperback book. For a lot of people, that’s going to be much preferable to his 500+ page unabridged version.

This book was difficult to read my goodness! but it was well worth the googling for definitions, the watching of his youtube videos for clarification, and the internal discussions it inspired. He breaks down what it was that the writers and believes of ancient texts were doing to that point that i’m inspired to follow his format and examine a few african spiritual beliefs. But overall this was a very inspriational book hidden in a very academic writing style. I appreciated this challenge

Difficult read, very advanced content and abstract thought.

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