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Number of Joseph  
Campbells

[03:59:58]

Narrator: [04:00:06] The president in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. But how can you buy or sell the sky? The land, the idea is strange to us. Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every meadow all are holy in the memory and experiences of my people. We are part of the earth and that is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters, [04:00:36] the bear, the deer, the great eagle, these are our brothers. Each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmurs the voice of my father's father. The rivers are our brothers. They carry our canoes and feed our children.

If we sell you our land, remember that the air is precious to us. That the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. [04:01:06] The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also receives his last sigh. This we know, the earth does not belong to man. Man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web he does to himself. Your destiny is a mystery to us. [04:01:36] What will happen when the buffalo are all slaughtered? What will happen when the secret corners of the forest are heavy with the scent of many men and the view of the ripe hills is blotted by talking wires? The end of living and the beginning of survival, when the last red man has vanished with his wilderness and his memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie will these shores and forests still be here. Will there be any spirit of my people left? [04:02:06] We love this earth as a newborn loves his mother's heartbeat. So, if we sell you our land love it as we have loved it. Care of it as we have cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you receive it. Preserve the land for all children and love it as God loves us all.

One thing we know that there is only one God no man be he red man or white man can be apart. We are brothers after all. [04:02:36]

Moyers: [04:03:06] This series on Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth first ran fourteen years ago and quickly became one of the most popular ever on public television. Campbell won an audience of millions with his insights and opinions on mythology. Stories of the spiritual journey, as he points out in his historical Atlas of Mythology the whole earth was once a sacred place to our earliest ancestor. Whether living on the wide plains under the great dome of the open sky [04:03:36] or in a dense forest under a canopy of trees those ancestors saw the sacred in everything around them. Their voices of the Gods spoke from the wind and thunder and the spirit of God flowed in every mountain stream. It was a marvelous geography of the soul the realm of mythic imagination.

As our ancestors turn from hunting to planting the stories they told to interpret the mysteries of life changed. Now the seed, not the animal, became the symbol of life, death, and resurrection [04:04:06]. The plant died, was buried in the soil, and its seed born again. To the spiritual visionaries this image reveals a divine truth as well as the principle of life itself. From death comes life, from sacrifice bliss. Joseph Campbell explored the nature of these places and the relation of the Myth to the landscape. He visited many of the world's sacred places in preparing the first two volumes of his Atlas, one called the way of the animal powers [04:04:36] and the other the way of the seeded earth. But as he often reminded his students at Sarah

Lawrence College, you don't have to go on a pilgrimage to find your own sacred place. Just follow your bliss and nourish the activity of your creative imagination.

Moyers: What does it mean to have a sacred place?

Joseph Campbell: This is a term I like to use now as an absolute necessity for anybody today. You must have a room [04:05:06] or a certain hour a day or so where you do not know what was in the newspapers that morning. You don't know who your friends are. You don't know what you owe to anybody. You don't know what anybody owes to you. But a place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be. This is the place of creative incubation and at first you may find nothing is happening [04:05:36] there but if you have a sacred place and you use it and take advantage of it, something will happen.

Moyers: This place does for you what the plains did for the hunters.

Joseph Campbell: For them the whole thing was a sacred place. You see but most of our actions is economically or socially determined and does not come out of our life. I don't know whether you have had the experience I have had, [04:06:06] but as you get older the claims of the environment upon you are so great that you hardly know where the hell you are. What is it you intended, you are always doing something that is required of you. This minute, that minute, another minute, where is your bliss station you know. Try to find it. Get a phonograph and put on the records the music that you really love. [04:06:36] Even if it is corny music that nobody else respects, I mean that one that you like or the book you want to read. Get it done and have a place in, which to do that. There you get real feeling of life. These people had it for the whole world that they were living in.

Moyers: [04:07:06] We talked about the effect of the spreading plain from mythology, this plain clearly bounded by a circular horizon with that great blue dome of an exalting heaven above, hawks and eagles hovering, the blazing sun passing, the night moon rising, and I can see the effect on people stories of that. But what about the people who lived in the dense foliage of the jungle?

Joseph Campbell: Total transformation of environment and of psychology and everything else. [04:07:36]

Moyers: No horizon?

Joseph Campbell: No horizon.

Moyers: No dome of the sky.

Joseph Campbell: No dome of the sky. A lot of birds up there and heavy vegetation underneath with scorpions and poisonous serpents and the in between distances of trees, trees, trees, no sense of perspective, Colin Turnbull tells us a marvelous story of bringing a pygmy out of the forest. He means this pygmy who had never been out of the jungle [04:08:06] on to a mountain top and

suddenly they come over a hill and there is an extensive plain out there and the poor little fellow was utterly terrified. He had no way of judging perspective and distance. He thought that the animals grazing on the plain out there were so small that they were ants, that they were just across the way and so forth and just totally baffled, he rushes back to the forest. You have a different mythology there. You have a different relationship[04:08:36] to the hunt and everything else. The forest is home. You are home in the forest where you and I would be perhaps ill at ease thinking what is behind that tree and all those kind of things. The, sense of beautiful simple delight in their forest and their deities, the master the forest, the forest master,

Moyers: What impresses me is that these people the hunters and the searchers for the roots and for the berries; they are participating in their landscape. They are part of that world. [04:09:06]

Joseph Campbell: Absolutely.

Moyers: And it, the place becomes sacred to them.

Joseph Campbell: Every feature of it does.

Moyers: We moderns are just stripping the world of its natural revelation of nature.

Joseph Campbell: I know, I know it.

Moyers: I think of that, you remember the wonderful pygmy legend of the little boy who [04:09:36] finds the song of, the bird of the most beautiful song in the forest?

Joseph Campbell: And he brings it home doesn't he and he asks his father to bring food for the bird and the father does not want to feed only a bird and one time the father kills the bird and when he killed the bird he killed his own life and he died.

Moyers: That is it, and the legend says the man killed the bird and with the bird he killed the song, and with the song himself. Isn't that a story about what happens when human beings destroy the environment, destroy their world, destroy nature [04:10:06] and the revelation of nature, and they kill the song.

Joseph Campbell: Destroy their own nature.

Moyers: Human nature too, they kill the song.

Joseph Campbell: They kill the song.

Moyers: And isn't mythology the story of the song?

Joseph Campbell: Mythology is the song. It is the flight of the imagination inspired by the energies of the body and in its life. [04:10:36]

Moyers: What happened as human beings turned from the hunting of animals to the planting of seeds? What happened to the mythic imagination?

Joseph Campbell: Well I'm try to think of it this way an animal as I think I have said before is sort of a total entity and when you kill that animal that animal is dead, but when you cut down a plant new sprouts come up. [04:11:06] Pruning you know, is helpful to a plant. Also in forests where a good deal of origination of myth is to be recognized out of rock comes life. Even in these forests here of the beautiful redwood I was in a wonderful forests right near Mendocino and, there, there are some great, great stumps from enormous trees that were cut down some decades and decades ago[04:11:36] and out of them are coming these bright new little children who are part of the same plant. So there is a sense of death that is not death somehow. That death is required for new fresh life and so on and the individual isn't quite an individual. He is a member of a plant. Jesus uses the term you know He says I am the vine and you are the branches. [04:12:06] That vineyard idea is a totally different one from the separate entity of the animal.

Moyers: And this makes a difference in the story you tell about?

Joseph Campbell: I have a whole feeling about what life is.

Moyers: What stories did this experience of the planter give rise to? Your favorite stories in plant mythology?

Joseph Campbell: Well the cutting up and burial and then growing of the plant world that world of the plant that you eat being already a cut up dead body[04:12:36] is the dominant motif I would say in most of the tales that occur all over the place particularly in the Pacific cultures and in the Americas.

Moyers: Tell me that story of the origin of maize as Longfellow borrowed it from the Chippewas or were they Algonquin?

Joseph Campbell: Well it is an Algonquin story and it is simply of the boy in his vision he sees a young man come to him [04:13:06] with plumes on his head and the green and so forth and the visitant invites the young man to a wrestling match and allows him to win. They win and win and this happens three or four times, but he tells him the last time I come you must kill me and bury me and take care of the place where you have buried me. And the boy then in the last one actually does what he has been told to do[04:13:36] plant the man the visitant and in time comes back and sees the corn growing. It was the boy who had been concerned for his father who was a hunter but old and he was thinking isn't other some other way to get food besides this one and so it came to him out of his intention. It is a lovely story.

Moyers: Some other way of getting food than hunting. But the idea is that this visitor, this figure [04:14:06] in the vision has to die and be buried before the plant can grow from the remains of his body.

Joseph Campbell: That is the main thing. It comes up almost the duplicate of this one throughout Polynesia for instance.

Moyers: Well there is one in Polynesia about the legend of the Maiden Henna. Do you remember that one?

Joseph Campbell: Well all of the legends in the Polynesian area have a maiden named Henna and she is associated with the moon and the death and resurrection of the moon[04:14:36] is dominant theme.

Moyers: Then what happens to her in his legend.

Joseph Campbell: Well the girl who loves to bathe in a certain pool and there is a great eel that is swimming around in the pool and day after day he scrapes across her thigh as she is bathing and then one fine lovely day he turns into a young man and he becomes her lover for[04:15:06] a moment and then goes away and comes back again and back again and then one time when he comes he says just as the Algonquin visit him, now the next time I come to visit you, you must kill me and cut off my head and bury my head and she does so and there grows from the buried head a coconut tree and when you pick a coconut you can see it is just the size of the head and you can see eyes[04:15:36] and things in and little nodule that are simulate the head.

Moyers: So what you have is the same story springing up in cultures unrelated to each other. What does it say?

Joseph Campbell: Well to such an extent that it is stunning and after years and years and years of reading these things I am still overwhelmed at the similarities in cultures that are far, far apart. There are two explanations of this. One explanation is that the human psyche is essentially [04:16:06] the same all over the world. It is the inward aspect of the human body, which is essentially the same all over the world with the same organs, with the same instincts, with the same impulse systems with the same conflicts the same fears. There is also the counter theory of diffusion. Now for instance when agriculture is first developed let's say in the near East or in South East Asia. I mean these are the two big centers of the whole world. Then the art of tilling [04:16:36] the soil goes forth from this area and along with it goes a mythology that has to do with fertilizing the earth and bringing up the plants killing the body, cutting it up by burying it and having the plant come. That myth will go with the agricultural tradition. You won't find it in the hunting culture tradition. So there are historical as well as psychological aspects to this probably.

Moyers: In all of these stories, there is someone dying, a hero dying in order for life to appear again. [04:17:06] What does this say to you?

Joseph Campbell: Let me tell you one story here. This isn't a story, this is a ritual. It is in New Guinea and it is associated with the men's societies in New Guinea and they are horror society because they really enact a myth of death and resurrection and cannibalistic consumption. You have the myth there of the buried body and the life coming out of it. You know this is the basic

myth. Now we are going to enact it. [04:17:36] So here are the sacred fields, the drums going, and chants going, and then pauses and this went on for three or four or five days on and on and on and, rituals are boring but they just wear you out and then you breakthrough in something else. Then comes the great moment, the young boys who are big initiated [04:18:06] into manhood will now have their first sexual experience.

There was a great shed of enormous logs supported by two uprights over here and the young woman comes in ornamented as a deity and she is brought to lie down in this place beneath the great roof. [04:18:36] And the boys then with the drums going and chanting going one after another, they are about six boys have their first permitted or public intercourse with the girl and when the last boy is with her in full embrace the supports are withdrawn the logs drop and the couple are killed. There is the union of male and female again as they were in the beginning before the separation took place, there is the union [04:19:06] of begetting and death again, and they are both the same thing. The little pair are pulled out and roasted and eaten right that evening, enacting the myth in its essential character. You can't beat that.

Moyers: And the truth to rest of it.

Joseph Campbell: That is the sacrifice in the mass. One of the wonderful things in the catholic ritual is going to communion. There you are taught [04:19:36] that this is the body and blood of the Savior and you take it to you and you turn inward and there he is working within you.

Moyers: The truth to, which the ritual point is?

Joseph Campbell: The nature of life itself to be realized in the acts of life. When in the hunting cultures a sacrifice is made it is as it were a gift a bribe as it were to the deity that is [04:20:06] being invited to do something for us or to give us something. When a figure is sacrificed in the planting culture that figure is the God. The person who died was buried and became the food is Christ crucified from whose body the food of the spirit comes. There is a sublimation of what originally was a very solid vegetal image. [04:20:36] He is on the holy root the tree. He is himself the fruit of the tree. Jesus is the fruit of eternal life, which was on the second tree in the Garden of Eden.

When man had eaten of their fruit of the first tree the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil he was said to have been expelled from the garden. He had already expelled himself from the garden. The garden is the place of unity, [04:21:06] non duality, non duality of male and female, non duality of man and God, non duality of good and evil. You eat the duality and you are on the way out. So this tree of non duality is the tree of the exit. Now the tree of coming back to the garden is the tree of immortal life where you know that I and the father are one and the two the same two become one again. This is exactly [04:21:36] the tree under, which the Buddha sits.

Moyers: The tree of wisdom.

Joseph Campbell: The tree of immortal life of the knowledge of immortal life. And the Buddha under his tree and Christ hanging on his tree are the same image. They are the same image. The one who had died to the flesh and been reborn in the spirit, this is an essential experience of any mystical realization. You die to your flesh and are born to your spirit. You identify yourself with the consciousness and life of, which your body is but the vehicle. You die to the vehicle and become an identified in your consciousness[04:22:06] with that of, which the vehicle is the carrier. Do you understand me?

Moyers: Hmm.

Joseph Campbell: And that is the God. So that what you get in the vegetation traditions, is this notion of identity behind the surface display of duality. Identity behind it all, all of these are the manifestations of the one. The one radius shines [04:22:36] through all things. The function of art in a ways is to reveal through the object here is the radiance and that is what you get when you see the beautiful organization of a fortunately composed work of art and you just say ah ha. Somehow it speaks to the order in your own life. This is the realization through art of the very thing that the religions are concerned to render.

Moyers: That death is life and life is death and the two are in accord. [04:23:06]

Joseph Campbell: You have to have a balance between death and life. They are two aspects of the same thing, which is being, becoming.

Moyers: That is in all of these stories.

Joseph Campbell: All of them. I don't know one where death is rejected.

Moyers: This idea of sacrifice is so foreign to our world today.

Joseph Campbell: Well the whole idea of being sacrificed is not what we think at all. [04:23:36]

Moyers: No?

Joseph Campbell: Just consider, I think the great model of sacrifice is the Mayan Indian Ballgame. You know they had a kind of a basketball game where there was a loop where up in the stadium wall and the idea was to get this big heavy ball through that. I don't know how they did it with their shoulders or heads or something else, and the captain of the winning team was sacrificed on the field [04:24:06] by the captain of the losing team. His head was cut off. Going to your sacrifice as the winning stroke of your life is the essence of the early sacrificial idea. There is a wonderful story that I found in the Jesuit relations. You know the Jesuits here in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as missionaries up in Canada and Northern New York state so forth, of a young Algonquin boy[04:24:36] who had just been captured by the Huron or Jesuits or it is the other way round I have forgotten and he was being brought to be tortured to death. There were North East Indians that was engaged in a systematic torture, which would go on for a long time and the



ordeal was to be sustained with a smile without flinching and that was it. That was real manhood.

But the boy is brought to this as though he is being brought to his wedding. He is singing and the people with him are treating him as though they were his hosts and he was [04:25:06] the honored guest and he played the game with them knowing where he was going. And the priest describing the thing, are absolutely bewildered by the situation and they say the mockery of this kind of hospitality for people who are then going to become the bruits. No those people were the priests and this was the sacrifice of the altar and that boy was Jesus. You know by analogy and the priest everyday [04:25:36] is celebrating mass, which is an imitation or repetition actually of the sacrifice of the cross. This is what this priest was witnessing. But then you have it also in the Acts of John.

Jesus, before going to be crucified, did Jesus dance Jesus' that is one of the most beautiful passages in the Christian tradition. In the Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John Gospels it simply mentions that we sang a hymn and Jesus went forth. Well here you have the whole hymn described in a ring. Jesus is in the center [04:26:06] saying join hands and we will sing and we will dance and he says I am this I am that, I am so forth, so forth, Amen, Amen. Oh, my God it is grand and then he walks out to be crucified. When you go to your death that way as a God, you are going to your eternal life. What is sad about that? Let us make it great. And they do.

Moyers: The God of death is the Lord of the Dance.

Joseph Campbell: The God of death is the Lord of sex [04:26:36] at the same time.

Moyers: What do you mean?

Joseph Campbell: It is a marvelous thing. One after another you can see these Gods Ghede. The death God of the Haitian voodoo is also the sex God. Wotan had one eye covered and the other uncovered and at the same time was the Lord of life. Osiris the Lord of death and the Lord of the generation of life it is the basic theme [04:27:06] that, which dies is born. You have to have death in order to have life. Now this is the origin thought really of the head hunt in South East Asia and particularly in the Indonesian zone. The head hunter right up to now has been a sacred act. It is a sacred killing. Unless there is death there cannot be birth. And a young man before he can be permitted to marry and become a father much have gone forth and had his kill. [04:27:36]

Moyers: What does that say to you?

Joseph Campbell: Well that every generation has to die in order that the next generation should come. As soon as you beget or give birth to a child you are the dead one, the child is the new life and you are simply the protector of that new life.

Moyers: Your time is come and you and you know it.

Joseph Campbell: Yes and that is why there is this deep psychological association of begetting and dying.

Moyers: Isn't there some relationship[04:28:06] between what you are saying and this fact that a father will give his life for his son and a mother would give her life for her child?

Joseph Campbell: There is a wonderful paper. I don't know whether you knew that I would have loved to have talked to this poet. There is a wonderful paper by Schopenhauer who is one of my three favorite, favorite philosophers called the foundation of morality. There he asks exactly the question that you have asked. How is it that a human being can so participate in the peril or pain[04:28:36] of another that without thought spontaneously he sacrifices his own life to the other? How can this happen. What we normally think of as the first law of nature namely self preservation is suddenly dissolved and there is a breakthrough. In Hawaii some four or five years ago there was an extraordinary adventure that represents this problem.

There is a place there called the Pali [04:29:06] where the winds from the North the Trade Winds from the North come breaking through a great ridge of rocks and of mountain and they come through with a great blast of wind. The people like to go up there to get their hair blown around and so forth or to commit suicide you know like jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge. Well a police car was on its way up the early little road that used to go up there and they saw just beyond the railing that keeps cars from rolling over, a young man actually[04:29:36] clearly about to jump and prepare himself to jump.

The police car stopped. The policeman on the right jumps out to grab the boy and grabs him just as he jumped and was himself being pulled over and would have gone over if the second cop hadn't got around grabbed and pulled the two of them back. There was a long description of this it was a marvelous thing in the newspapers at that time and the policeman was asked why didn't you let go? [04:30:06] I mean you would have lost your life and you see what happened to that man, this is what is known as one pointed meditation. Everything else in his life dropped off. His duty to his family, his duty to his job, his duty to his own career, all of his wishes and hopes for life just disappeared and he was about to go and his answer was I couldn't let go.

I am almost quoting word for word, "If I had let that young man[04:30:36] go I could not have lived another day of my life." How come? Schopenhauer's answer is this is the breakthrough of a metaphysical realization that you and the other are one and that the separateness is only an effect of the temporal forms of sensibility of time and space and a true reality[04:31:06] is in that unity with all life. It is a, metaphysical truth that becomes spontaneously realized because it is the real truth of your life. Now you might say that the hero is the one who has given his physical life you might say to some order of realization of that truth. It may appear that I am one with my tribe or I am one with people of a certain kind, or I am one with life. This is not a concept. This is a realization. [04:31:36] You see what I mean?

Moyers: No explain it.

Joseph Campbell: The concept of love your neighbor and all are to put you in tune with that fact, but whether you love you neighbor or not being the thing that grabs you and you do this thing. You don't even know who it is. That policeman did not know who that young man was. Schopenhauer says in small ways you can see this happening everyday all the time. [04:32:06] This is the theme that can be seen moving life in the world, people doing nice things for each other.

Moyers: What do you think has happened to this mythic idea of the hero in our culture today?

Joseph Campbell: It comes up in an experience. It think I remember during the Vietnam war seeing on the television the young men in helicopters going to out to rescue one of their companions a great risk to themselves. [04:32:36] They did not have to rescue that young man. It is the same thing working. It puts them in touch with the experiences of being alive. Going to the office everyday you don't get that experience but suddenly you are ripped into being alive and life is pain and life is suffering and life is horror but by God you are alive and it is spectacular and this is the case of being alive rescuing that young man.

Moyers: But I also know a man who said once [04:33:06] after years of standing on the platform of the subway I die a little bit down there every day but I know I am doing so for my family. There are small acts of heroism that occur without regard to the nobility or the notoriety that attract for it.

Joseph Campbell: That's right.

Moyers: And the mother does it by the isolation she endures on behalf of the family.

Joseph Campbell: Motherhood is a sacrifice. On our verandah in Hawaii there are little birds that come[04:33:36] that Jean likes to feed and each year they have been one or two mothers, mother birds and if you have ever seen a mother bird plagued by her progeny for food that the mother should regurgitate their meal to them, and there are two of them or five of them in one case flopping all over this poor little mother they bigger than she in some cases you just think well this is the symbol of motherhood. This giving of your substance[04:34:06] and everything to this progeny, this should be it in a marriage. A marriage is a relationship. When you make a sacrifice in marriage you are not sacrificing to the other you are sacrificing to the relationship and this is symbolized for example in the Chinese image of the tai chi, the tao, you know with the dark and the light interacting, it is a well known sign, that is the relationship of the Yan and Yin; male and female; [04:34:36] , which is what the marriage is and that is what you are. You are no longer this you are the relationship and so marriage is not a love affair it is an ordeal.

Moyers: And what is the ordeal?

Joseph Campbell: The ordeal is the sacrifice of ego to the relationship of a two-ness, which now become a one.

Bill Moyers: One not only biologically but spiritually, primarily spiritually.

Moyers: Primarily spiritually, but the necessary function of marriage in order to create [04:35:06] our own images and perpetuate ourselves in children, but that is not the primary one as you say... [00:35:17]

Joseph Campbell: No that is the really just the elementary aspect of marriage. The two completely different stages of marriage, the first is the youthful marriage following the wonderful impulse you know that nature has given us in the interplay of the sexes biologically and then the reproduction of children. [04:35:36] But there comes a time when the child graduates from the family and the family is left. I have been amazed at the number of my friends who have been in their 40s or 50s go apart who have had a perfectly decent life together with the child but they interpreted their union in terms of relationship through the child. They did not interpret it in terms of their own personal relationships to each other.

Moyers: Utterly incompatible [04:36:06] with the idea of doing one's own thing, or...?

Joseph Campbell: It is not one's own thing you see. It is in a sense one's own thing but the one isn't just you, it is the two together and that is a purely mythological image of the sacrifice of the visual, visible, entity for a transcendent unit. Cracking eggs to make an omelet. [04:36:36] You know and by marrying the right person we reconstruct the image of the encountered God; and that is what marriage is.

Moyers: The right person, how does one choose the right person?

Joseph Campbell: Your heart tells you, it ought to.

Moyers: You are in being.

Joseph Campbell: That is the mystery.

Moyers: You recognize your other self.

Joseph Campbell: Well I don't know, but there is a flash that comes and then something in you knows that this is the one.

Moyers: What has mythology told you about death? What do you think about death? [04:37:06]

Joseph Campbell: Well the way if one can identify with the consciousness of, which the body is a vehicle, and really achieve an identification with the consciousness of which the body is a vehicle, not knowing what it is, undifferentiated consciousness, one can let the body go. I like what I heard of Woody Allen you know I am not afraid to die I just don't want to be there when it happens. [04:37:36] You can have disengaged yourself from the body and not be there you might say.

Moyers: And yet you know from myth and nature that the body dies. It perishes, it rots we are back to the beginning of the...?

Joseph Campbell: And so you expect it. Growing old, I mean you know what is happening, the body is rotting, it's dying, it's losing its energy, there is more mass than energy here and the identification then with the life, which in a plant[04:38:06] survives, pruning, cutting, and even eating. The plant is right back there again. It is you might say a biological image that is metaphorical of this spiritual mystery.

Moyers: There is that wonderful report of the Indians riding into the rain of bullets from Custer's men and they are saying it's a good day to die.

Joseph Campbell: A great day to die. [04:38:36] They're not hanging on. That is the message of the myth. You as you know yourself are not the final term of your being and you must die to that one way or another. Giving of yourself to something or in being annihilated actually physically to return you might say or to recognize. Life is always on the edge of death,[04:39:06] always and once you lack fear and have their courage of life, that is the principle initiation of all of the heroic stories.

Moyers: What is a central story? Do you have a story that is central like this?

Joseph Campbell: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Arthur's court is in session and there rides into the court on a great big green horse a giant knight[04:39:36] and the knight says I have challenge, I have an adventure. I challenge anyone here to come down here and take this great big axe and cut my head off and then one year from today meet me at the green chapel and he tells them roughly where the green chapel is and I will cut his head off. And the only knight who had the courage to accept this curious invitation was Gawain and the knight gets off his horse, stretches out his neck, Gawain comes down with his axe and there is the head and then knight stands up picks up[04:40:06] the head gets on the horse and rides off says I will see you in a year. Well, that year everybody was very generous to Gawain// and he rides off for the year.

As the day approaches he finds himself before a little hunter's cabin and he thinks he'll ask advise here as where the green chapel is and tells him I have to got to be there in three days. Then the hunter greets him and Gawain tells his story and the hunter says well is it a green chapel-- It is just down the way here. It is about a couple of hundred yards and why don't you just spend the next three days[04:40:36] with us and we will entertain you and then you can go to this adventure. All right, very well. So the hunter says I have got to go out for the day on the hunt and he says you spend the night us and then in the morning[04:41:06] I will go forth and in the evening I will come back and I will give everything I will have got during the day to you and you give to me what you would have got during the day.

In the morning the hunter rides off and Gawain is in bed and in comes the hunter's gorgeous beautiful wife. And she tickles Gawain's chin and invites him to love. Well he is an Arthurian knight, a knight of Arthur's court and to betray his host is the last thing[04:41:36] that a knight can submit to, so he resists this woman and she is very, very aggressive and he is very, very stern

in his position and finally she says well let me give you a kiss and so she gives him one big smack and that's that. In the evening the hunter comes back with a great haul of game and throws it on the floor and Gawain gives him a kiss and they laugh and that is that.

[04:42:06] Second morning a similar event the wife comes in and Gawain gets two kisses. And the hunter comes back with about half as much game and he get two kisses and they laugh and that is that. The third morning the wife comes in. Now he is a man about to meet his death, he is about to have his head chopped off, beautiful woman, this last moment, the possibility of this wonderful fulfillment and again he resists. [04:42:36] She gives him three kisses and her garter and she says this will protect you against any danger.

The hunter comes home with just one silly smelly fox throw that on the ground and he gets three kisses but no garter. So comes the time now to go and have your head chopped off. Do you see what the tests are of the knight here? One is sex you know lust; and the other is courage. [04:43:06] So he approaches the green chapel with a green knight whom he is about to encounter and he hears the knife whetting this great axe. swish, swish, swish He comes to it and the knight is there certainly the great big green fellow and he greets him and says "okay put your neck out there on this block and I will chop your head off" and he lifts the axe and he says no stretch out a little more, he does this three times and then the axe [04:43:36] comes down and just cut his neck a little bit. The green knight says that is for the garter. Well this is the origin of the Knights of the garter. Here is a knight who really transcended two great temptations; the fear of death and lust for sex and the joys of life.

Moyers: And the moral?

Joseph Campbell: The moral is, that the realization [04:44:06] of your bliss, your true being comes when you have put aside the, what might be called, passing moment with its terror and with its temptations and its statement of requirements of life that you should live this way.

Moyers: What is that story about, I forget where it comes from, about the camel, and then the lion, [04:44:36] and along the way you lose the burden of youth?

Joseph Campbell: The three transformations of the spirit?

Moyers: Yes

Joseph Campbell: That's nature that is the prologue to Thus Spake Zarathustra.

Moyers: Tell me that story.

Joseph Campbell: When you are child, when you are young and a young person you are a camel. A camel gets down on its knees and says put a load on me. This is obedience, this is receiving the instruction and information that the society knows [04:45:06] you must have in order to live a competent life. When the camel is well loaded, he gets up on his feet, struggles to his feet and runs out into the desert where he becomes transformed into a lion. The heavier the load the more

powerful the lion, the function of the lion is to kill a dragon and the name of the dragon is Thou Shalt and on every scale of the dragon there is a Thou Shalt imprinted. [04:45:36] Some of it comes from 2000 years to 4000 years ago. Some of it comes from yesterday morning's newspaper headline. When the dragon is killed the lion is transformed into a child.

An innocent child living out of its own dynamic and Nietzsche uses the term, ein aus sich rollendes Rad, a wheel rolling out of its own center. [04:46:06] That is what you become. That is the mature individual. The Thou Shalt is a civilizing force. It turns a human animal into a civilized human being. But then the one who is thrown off the Thou Shalt is still a civilized human you see he has been humanized you might say by the Thou Shalt system so his performance now as a child is not simply child like at all. [04:46:36] He has assimilated the culture and thrown it off as a Thou Shalt, but this is the way in any art work. You go to work and study an art. You study the techniques, you study all the rules and the rules are put upon you by a teacher. There comes a time of using the rules, not being used by them do you understand what I am saying?

Moyers: Yes.

Joseph Campbell: So one way is to follow. I always tell my students follow your bliss.

Moyers: Follow your bliss?

Joseph Campbell: Your bliss[04:47:06] where the deep sense of being informed and then going where your body and soul want to go. When you have that feeling then stay with it and don't let anyone throw you off. Have you read Sinclair Lewis' Babbitt?

Moyers: Not in a long time.

Joseph Campbell: Do you remember the last line? I have never done a thing I wanted to in all my life.

Moyers: Quite an admit.

Joseph Campbell: That is the man who never followed his bliss. Well I heard that line I was living in Brownsville when I was teaching at Sarah Lawrence before[04:47:36] I was married I used to be eating out in the restaurants of the town for my lunch and dinners and Thursday night was the maid's night off in Brownsville so that all the families were out in the restaurants. And one fine evening I was in my favorite restaurant there, it was a Greek restaurant and at a table were sitting a father, a mother, and a scrawny little boy about twelve years old. The father says to the boy, [04:48:06] drink your tomato juice and the boy says "I don't want to" and the father with a louder voice says "Drink your tomato juice" and the mother says "don't make him do what he does not want to do". Father looks at her and he says "he can't go through life doing what he wants to do. If he does only what he wants to do he will be dead. [04:48:36] Look at me. I have never done a thing I wanted to in all my life." I said my God Babbitt incarnate and that is the man who never followed his bliss. Well you may have a success in life but then just

think of it. What kind of life was it. What good is it. You have never done a thing you wanted to in all your life.

Moyers: What happens when you follow your bliss?

Joseph Campbell: You turn to bliss. [04:49:06] Bliss should be it I marriage. I mean that is the sense of the marriage ceremony. In the middle ages a favorite image that occurs with many, many context is the wheel of fortune. There is the hub of the wheel and there is the revolving rim of the wheel and if you are attached to the rim of the wheel that is a fortune you will be either above going down at the bottom or coming up. [04:49:36] But if you are at the hub you are in the same place all the time. That is the sense of the marriage vow. You know I take you in health or sickness, in wealth or poverty, but I take you and you are my bliss not the wealth that you might bring me, nor the social prestige but you.

That is following you bliss. I came to this idea of bliss because in Sanskrit, which is the great spiritual language [04:50:06] of the world and they know all about it and have known about it for a long time, the transcendent. There are three terms that bring you to the brink. You might say the jumping off place to the ocean and the three terms are Saat, Chit, Ananda. Saat the word means being; Chit mean full consciousness; and Ananda means rapture. [04:50:36] So I thought I don't know whether my consciousness is full consciousness or not. I don't know whether my being is my proper being or not but I do know where my rapture is. So let me hang on to rapture and that will bring me both being and full consciousness and it works.

Moyers: What was your rapture?

Joseph Campbell: Well started with Indians and then it went on to more and more mythological matters, and then the realm of the arts, music, [04:51:06] and when I met Jean then the dance came in, and this is it. Just stay with that.

Moyers: And one does not have to be a poet to do this. Carpenters do it.

Joseph Campbell: A poet is just simply one who has made a profession and a lifestyle of being in touch with that. Most people have to be concerned with other things, they get themselves [04:51:36] involved in economic and other activities, or they are drafted into war that isn't the one you're interested in. How to hold to this umbilical you might say. In those circumstances that a technique each one has to work out for himself somehow. But most people living in that realm of what might be called an occasional concerns, they all have the capacity [04:52:06] that is waiting to be awakened to move to his other place.

I know, I have seen it happening, students, wonderful way of teaching we have at Sarah Lawrence where I taught for 38 years, I'd have individual conference with everyone of my students at least once a fortnight for half an hour or so. There you are talking on about the things that students ought to be reading and suddenly you hit on something [04:52:36] that student really responds to. You can see the eyes open, the complexion changes, a life possibility has



opened there and all you can say to yourself is I hope this child hangs on to that. They may or may not, but when they do they found a life right there in the room with you.

Moyers: How would you advise somebody to tap that spring of eternal life and joy that is right there.

Joseph Campbell: Well we are having experiences all the time, which may on occasion[04:53:06] render some sense of this. A little intuition of where your joy is grab it. No one can tell you what it is going to be. You have got to learn to recognize your own depths.

Moyers: Do you ever have this sense when you are following your bliss as I have at the moment of being helped by hidden hands?

Joseph Campbell: All the time. It is miraculous. I even have a superstition that has grown on me as a result [04:53:36] of invisible hands coming all the time. Namely that if you do follow your bliss you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while waiting for you. And the life that you ought to be living is the one you're living somehow. Well, you can see it you begin to deal with people who are in the field of your bliss. And they open doors to you. I say follow your bliss and don't be afraid and doors will open where you didn't know they were going to be[04:54:06] .

Moyers: Do you ever have the sympathy for the man who has no invisible means of support?

Joseph Campbell: Who has no invisible means of support. Yes he is the one that evokes compassion. You know that poor chap and to see him stumbling around when there is water of immortal life right there, it is really evokes one's pity.

Moyers: Right there? Right there? You believe that? The waters of eternal life?

Joseph Campbell: Yes right there. [04:54:36]

Moyers: Where?

Joseph Campbell: Wherever you are. If you are following your bliss. You are having that joy. That refreshment that life all the time.

[04:59:28]