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Moyers: Genesis 1; in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

Joseph Campbell: This is the song of the world from legend of the Pima Indians. In the beginning, there was only darkness everywhere, darkness and water. And the darkness gathered thick in places crowding together, and then separating, crowding, and separating.

Moyers: And the spirit of God [00:01:00] was moving over the face of the waters and God said let there be light.

Joseph Campbell: This is from the Hindu Upanishad. In the beginning there was only the great self reflected in the form of a person reflecting it found nothing about itself then its first word was this am I.

Moyers: Joseph Campbell was [00:02:00] nine years old when his father took him to the American Museum of natural history here in New York City, the totem poles and masks mesmerized him, who made them he wondered and why, what did they mean. The little boy who began to read everything he could about Indians went on to become a foremost teacher and interpreter of mythology. He saw the power of myth infusing life everywhere. He wrote the latest incarnation of Oedipus and the continued romance of beauty on the beast stand this afternoon on the corner of 42<sup>nd</sup> Street in 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue waiting for the light to change.

But by the time of his death in 1987, just a few months before these interviews were aired he had acknowledged that many of the great myth were losing their timeless aura, modern science and technology now filled the intersection where the sole meets society. Yet Joseph Campbell held the conviction that myth could serve the human drive to understand our place in the world and the world's impact on us. He once told his students in Sarah Lawrence College, [00:03:00] if you really want to help this world what will you have to teach is how to live in it. Myths were road maps for that journey.

Over the last two summers of this life and hours of conversations recorded in the library of Lucas Film in California, we talked about how mythology can still awaken a sense of awe, gratitude, and even rapture.

Moyers: Why myths, why should we care about myths, what do they have to do with my life?

Joseph Campbell: Well my first answer would be well go on and live your life it's a good life you don't need this. I don't believe in being interested in subjects because they are said to be important and interesting, I believe in being caught by it somehow or other. But you may find that with a proper introduction this subject will catch you and so what can it do for you when it does catch you. [00:04:00] These bits of information from ancient times, which have to do with the themes that have supported man's life, built civilizations, and formed religions over the millennia have to do with deep inner

problems, inner mysteries, inner thresholds of passage and if you don't know what the guide signs are along way you have to work it out yourself. But once this catches you, there is always such a feeling from one or another of these traditions of information of a deep rich life vivifying sort that you want to give it up.

Moyers: So myths are stories of the search by men and women through the ages for meaning, for significance, to make live signified, to touch the eternal [00:05:00], to understand the mysterious, to find out who we are?

Joseph Campbell: People say that what we are all seeking is a meaning for life; I don't think that's what we are really seeking. I think what we are seeking is an experience of being alive so that the life experiences that we have on the purely physical plane will have resonances within that are those of our own innermost being and reality and so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive, that's what it's all finally about and that's what these clues help us to find within ourselves.

Moyers: Myths are clues?

Joseph Campbell: Myths are clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life.

Moyers: What we are capable of knowing within?

Joseph Campbell: Yes.

Moyers: And experiencing within?

Joseph Campbell: Yes,

Moyers: I liked your ....you change the definition of a myth from the search for meaning to the experience of [00:06:00] a meaning?

Joseph Campbell: The experience.

Moyers: Experience of life.

Joseph Campbell: The experience of life, the mind has to do with meaning, in here what's the meaning of a flower? That Zen story of the sermon of the Buddha when his whole company was gathered and he simply lifted a flower. There was only one man Kashyapa who gave him a sign with his eye that he understood what was said. What's the meaning of the universe? What's the meaning of a flea? It's just there, that's it and your own meaning is that you are there and that we are so engaged in doing things to achieve purposes of outer value that we forget that the inner value the rapture that is associated with being alive is what it's all about. Now we want to think about God, God is a thought, God is a name, [00:07:00] God is an idea, but its reference is to something that transcends all thinking. The ultimate mystery of being is beyond all categories of

thought. My friend Heinrich Zimmer [00:07:11] years ago use to say the best things can't be told, because they transcend thought.

The second best are misunderstood because those are the thoughts that are supposed to refer to that, which can't be thought about, you know, and one gets stuck with the thoughts. The third best are what we talk about, you see. And myth is that field of reference metaphors referring to what is absolutely transcended.

Moyers: What can't be known?

Joseph Campbell: What can't be known?

Moyers: What can't be named?

Joseph Campbell: Yes.

Moyers: Except in our own feeble attempt to cloth it in language.

Joseph Campbell: And the ultimate word in our language for that, which is transcended, is God.

Moyers: Do you remember [00:08:00] what went through your mind the first time you saw Michael Angelo's creation?

Joseph Campbell: By the time I became aware of that, my notion of divinity was not quite so personal, you know, the idea of God that he is bearded old man of some kind with certain not very pleasant temperament that is I would say a sort of materialistic way of talking about the transcended.

Moyers: There is just the opposite of it found on an island in the harbor of Bombay from around the eighth Century?

Joseph Campbell: This is a wonderful cave. You enter the cave from bright sky, of course moving into the darkness your, eyes are blacked out. But if you just keep walking slowly, gradually the eyes are just and this enormous thing that's about 19 feet high and 19 feet across [00:09:00] the central head is the mask of eternity. This is the mask of God.

Moyers: Mask of eternity.

Joseph Campbell: That is the metaphor through which eternity is to be experienced as radiance.

Moyers: And these are the two figures?

Joseph Campbell: Whenever one moves out of the transcendent, one comes into a field of opposites, these two pairs of opposites come forth as male and female from the two sides, what has eaten of the tree of the knowledge not only of good and evil, but of male and female, of right and wrong, of this and that, and light and dark. Everything in the field of time is dual, the past and future, dead and alive, all this being and nonbeing, is isn't.

Moyers: And what's the significance of them being beside the mask of God the mask of eternity. What is this sculpture saying to us?

Joseph Campbell: The mask represents [00:10:00] the middle and the two represent the two opposites and they always come in pairs and put your mind in the middle, most of us put our minds on the side of the good against what we think of as evil, it was Heracleitus I think who said for God all things are good and right and just, but for man some things are right and others are not. You're in the field of time when you are man and one of the problems of life is to live in the realization of both terms that's to say I know the center and I know that good and evil are simply temporal apparitions.

Moyers: Well are some myths more or less true than others?

Joseph Campbell: They are true in different senses you see. Here is a whole mythology based on the insight the transcends duality, [00:11:00] ours is a mythology that's based on the insight of duality and so our religion tends to be ethical in its accent, sin and atonement, right and wrong – it started with a sin you see. In other words, moving out of the mythological zone, the garden of paradise where there is no time and where men and women don't even know that they are different from each other, there the two just two are for just creatures. And God and man are practically the same he walks in the cool of the evening in the garden where we are. And then they eat the apple the of knowledge, of the pairs of opposites, and man and woman then cover their shame, they are different. God and man they are different, man and nature is against man. I once heard a [0:12:00] wonderful lecture by Deist Suzuki I remember that's wonderful old Zen philosopher who is over here he was in his 90s.

He started a lecture in Switzerland or I heard in Ascona, he stood up with his hands at his sides and he said, God against man, man against God, man against nature, nature against man, nature against God, God against nature, very funny religion.” Now in the other mythologies one puts oneself in accord with the world, if the world is a mixture of good and evil you do not put yourself in accord with it. You identify with the good and you fight against the evil and this is a religious system, which belongs to the near east followings Zarathustra's time it's in the biblical tradition, all the way in Christianity and Islam as well this has been as a not being with nature [0:13:00] and we speak with sort of derogation of the nature religions. You see with that fall in the garden, nature was regarded as corrupt; there is a myth for you that corrupts the whole world for us and every spontaneous act is sinful because nature is corrupt and has to be corrected, must not be yielded to, you get a totally different civilization, a totally different way of living according to your myth as to whether nature has fallen or whether nature is itself a

manifestation of divinity and the spirit being the revelation of the divinity that's inherent in nature.

Moyers: Don't you think that Americans, modern Americans have rejected this idea this Indian idea this ancient idea of nature as revealing the divinity because it would have kept us from achieving dominance over nature?

Joseph Campbell: Yeah, but that's the biblical condemnation of nature that they inherited from their own religion and brought with them. [00:14:00] God is not in nature God is separate from nature and nature is not God and this distinction between God and the world is not to be found in basic Hinduism or Buddhism either. I will never forget the experience I had when I was in Japan. To be in a place that never heard of the fall in the Garden of Eden, to be in a place where I can read and one of the Shinto techs the processes of nature cannot be evil. When every impulse, natural impulse is not to be corrected, but to be sublimated, you know, to be beautified and the glorious interest in the beauty of nature and cooperation with nature [00:15:00] coordination so then some of those gardens you don't know where nature begins and art ends, this to me was a tremendous experience and it's another mythology.

Moyers: Speaking of different mythologies let's just have a little fun here. I took these from your atlas, I'll read from Genesis and then you identify and read from the corresponding making over.

Joseph Campbell: Oh, yes.

Moyers: Genesis 1, so God created man in his own image in the image of God he created in male and female, he created them and God bless them and God said to them be fruitful and multiply.

Joseph Campbell: Now this is from a legend of the Bassari people of West Africa: "Unumbotte made a human being. Its name was man. Unumbotte next made an antelope, named antelope. Unumbotte made a snake, named snake. And Unumbotte said to them, [00:16:00] "The earth has not yet been pounded. You must pound the ground smooth where you are sitting. Unumbotte gave them seeds of all kinds, and said, 'go plant these.'

Moyers: And Genesis 1; And God saw everything that he had made and behold it was very good.

Joseph Campbell: And from the Upanishad then he realized I indeed I am this creation for I have poured it forth from myself, in that way he became this creation and verily he who knows this becomes in this creation a creator, that's the clincher there, where, you know, this when you've identified with the creative principle yourself, which is the God power in the world, which means in you it's beautiful.

Moyers: What do you think we are looking when we subscribe to one of these theories of creation one of these stories of creation, what are we looking for?

Joseph Campbell: Well I think what I am looking for is a way of [00:17:00] of experiencing the world in, which we are living that will open to us the transcended that informs it and at the same time is informs ourselves within it that's what people want, that's what to the soul asks for.

Moyers: And you were looking for some accord with the mystery that informs all things that what do you call that vast ground of silence, which we all share?

Joseph Campbell: Yes, but not only to find it, but to find it actually in our environment, in our worlds to recognize it to have some kind of instruction that will enable us to see the divine presence.

Moyers: In the world and in us?

Joseph Campbell: And in India this wonderful, anjali, this greeting, you know, what that means.

Moyers: No.

Joseph Campbell: That's a greeting of prayer isn't it, that's what we use for prayer they great deal with that that's greeting the God that saying to you as you come in these people are aware of the divine presence. When you enter an Indian home as a guest you are a visiting deity [00:18:00] and you feel it by God the way they treat you. It's something in the way of a hospitality that you don't get where you have simply one person and another person's recognition of the identity.

Moyers: But weren't people who told these stories and believe them and acted on them asking far more simple questions, you know, who made the world, how was the world made, why was the world made, aren't these the questions that these creations stories are trying to address?

Joseph Campbell: No, it's through that answer that they see that the creator is present in the whole world. Do you see what I mean, this story that we've just read I see that I am the creation says the God, or when you see the God says he is the creation and then you are a creature when the God is within you and the man you are talking to also and so there is the realization two aspects of the one divinity [00:19:00].

Moyers: Accord again harmony again,

Campbell: Wonderful thing.

Moyers: Let me ask you some questions about these common features in these stories, the significance of the forbidden fruit.

Joseph Campbell: Well, there is a standard folktale motif called the one forbidden thing, remember bluebeard don't open that closet, you know, and then one always does it and in the old testament story a God gives the one forbidden thing and he knows very well now I'm now interpreting God. He knows very well if man starting to eat the forbidden fruit, but it's by doing that the man becomes the initiator of his own life, life really begins with that.

Moyers: I also find in some of these early stories the human tendency to find someone to blame.

Joseph Campbell: Yeah.

Moyers: Let me read Genesis one that I'll ask you to read one from the Vasari legend. Genesis is one and God said have you eaten from the tree, which I commanded you [00:20:00] that you should not eat, and the man said the woman whom you gave to be with me she gave me of the tree and I ate and the Lord, God said to the woman what is this you've done, and the woman said the serpent deceived me and I ate them you talk about buck-passing it starts very early.

Joseph Campbell: That's right.

Moyers: And then there is the Vasari legend.

Joseph Campbell: It's been tough on serpents too, one day snake said we two should eat these fruits, why must we go hungry? Antelope said, but we don't know anything about this fruit then man and his wife took some of the fruit and ate it Unum Bate, came down from the sky and asked "who ate the fruit" they answered we did, Unum Bate asked "who told you that you could eat that fruit" they replied snake did. It's the same story....

Moyers: Poor Snake.

Joseph Campbell: It's a same story.

Moyers: What do you make of this? And in all of these stories the principle actors are pointing to someone else as the initiator of the fall.

Joseph Campbell: [00:21:00] Yeah, but it turns out to be snake. And snake in both of these stories is the symbol of life throwing off the past and continuing to live.

Moyers: Why?

Joseph Campbell: The power of life, because the snake sheds its skin just as the moon sheds its shadow, the snake in most cultures is positive even the most poisonous snake in India the Cobra is the sacred animal and the serpent the Naga the serpent king Naga raja is the next thing to the Buddha. Because the serpent represents the power of life in the



field of time to throw of death and the Buddha represents the power of life in the field of eternity to be eternally alive.

Now I saw a fantastic thing of a Burmese priestess a snake priestess who had to bring rain to her people by calling a King Cobra from [00:22:00] his den and kissing him three times on the nose. There was the Cobra the giver of life, the giver of rain, which is of life also divine positive not negative figure.

Moyers: The Christian stories turn it around because the serpent was the seducer.

Joseph Campbell: Well, what that amounts to is a refusal to affirm life. Life is evil in this field. Every natural impulse is sinful unless you've been baptized or circumcised in this tradition that we've inherited for heaven sakes.

Moyers: By having been the Temptor women have paid a great price because in mythology some of this mythology they are the ones who led to the downfall.

Joseph Campbell: Of course they did, I mean they represent life. Man doesn't enter life except by a woman [00:23:00] and so it is woman who brings us into the world of polarities and pair of opposites and suffering and all, but I think it's a really childish attitude to say no to life with all its pain, you know, to say this is something that should not have been, Schopenhauer in one of his marvelous chapters I think it's in, *The World as Will and Idea* says, "Life is something that should not have been. It is in its very essence and character a terrible thing to consider, this business of living by killing and eating, I mean it's in sin in terms of all ethical judgments all the time.

Moyers: As ZORBA [00:23:44] says, you know, trouble, life is trouble?

Joseph Campbell: That's it.

Moyers: Only death is no trouble.

Joseph Campbell: And when people saying to me, you know, do you have optimism about the world, you know, how terrible it is I said yes, just say it's great just the way it is [00:24:00].

Moyers: But doesn't that lead to a rather passive attitude in the face of evil, in the face of world.

Joseph Campbell: We've participate in it. Whatever you do is evil for somebody.

Moyers: But explain that for the audience I mean you say yes to that, which you...?

Joseph Campbell: Well, when I was in India, there was a man whose name was Sri Krishna Menon and his mystical name was Atmananda and he was in Trivandrum and I went to Trivandrum and I had the wonderful privilege of sitting face to face with him as I

am sitting here with you. And the first thing he said to me is do you have a question, and because the teacher there always answers questions he doesn't tell you what anything, he answers and I said yes, I have a question. I said since in Hindu thinking all the universe is divine, is a manifestation of divinity itself [00:25:00] how could we say no to anything in the world, how could we say no to brutality, to stupidity, to vulgarity, to thoughtlessness and he said for you and me we must say yes. Well I learned from my friends who were students of his that that happened to have been the first question he asked his guru and we had a wonderful talk for about an hour there on this theme of the affirmation of the world and it confirmed me in a feeling I have had that who are we to judge and seems to me that this is one of the great teachings of Jesus.

Moyers: Well I see now what you mean in one respective, in some classic Christian doctrine the world is to be despised, life is to be redeemed and the hereafter it is heaven where our rewards come [0:26:00] if you affirm that would you deplore as you say, you are affirming the world, which is our eternity of the moment.

Joseph Campbell: That's what I would say eternity isn't some later time, eternity isn't a long time, eternity had nothing to do with time, eternity is that dimension of here and now, which thinking in time cuts out.

Moyers: This is it. This is my.

Joseph Campbell: This is it. If you don't get it here you won't get it anywhere and the experience of eternity right here and now is the function of life.

There is a wonderful formula that the Buddhists have for the bodhisattva; the bodhisattva, the one whose being (sattva) is illumination (bodhi), who realizes his identity with eternity and at the same time his participation in time, and the attitude is not to withdraw from the world when you realize how horrible it is, but to realize that this horror is simply the foreground of a wonder [00:27:00] and come back and participate in it. All life is sorrowful is the first Buddhist saying and it is, it wouldn't be life if there were not temporality involved, which is sorrow loss, loss, loss.

Moyers: That's a pessimistic note.

Joseph Campbell: Well, I mean you can't say yes to it and say it's great this way and this is the way God intended it.

Moyers: You don't really believe that?

Joseph Campbell: But this is the way it is. And I don't believe anybody intended it, but this is the way it is and Joyce's wonderful line you know, "History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake." And the way to awake from it is not to be afraid and to recognize as I did in my conversation with that Hindu Guru or teacher that I told you of, that all of this as it is, is as it has to be and it is a manifestation of the [00:28:00] eternal

presence in the world. The end of things always is painful; pain is part of there being a world at all.

Moyers: But if one accepted that isn't the ultimate conclusion to say well I won't try to form any laws or fight any battles or...?

Joseph Campbell: I didn't say that.

Moyers: Isn't the logical couldn't one draw that though the philosophy of nihilism?

Joseph Campbell: Well that's not the necessary thing to draw, you could say I will participate in this row and I will join the army and I will go to war.

Moyers: I'll do the best I can okay.

Joseph Campbell: I will participate in the game, it's a wonderful, wonderful opera except that it hurts and that wonderful Irish saying, you know, is this a private fight or can anybody get into it, this is the way life is and the hero is the one who come can participate in it decently in the way of nature [00:29:00] not in the way of personal rankor revenge or anything or the kind. Let me tell you one story here, of a Samurai Warrior, a Japanese Warrior who had the duty to avenge the murder of his overlord. And he actually after sometime found and cornered the man who had murdered his overlord and he was about to deal with him with his Samurai sword when this man in the corner in a passion of terror spat in his face and that Samurai sheathed the sword and walked away, why did he do that.

Moyers: Why?

Joseph Campbell: Because he was made angry and if he had killed that man then it would have been a personal act or another kind of act that's not what he had come to do.

Moyers: Let me tell you what happens to me when I read these stories no matter the culture their origin. I feel first this sense of wonder [0:30:00] at the spectacle of the human imagination simply grouping to try to understand this existence. Does that ever happen to you?

Joseph Campbell: I tell you mythology I think of as the homeland of the muses the inspirers of art the inspirers of poetry and to see life as poem and yourself participating in a poem is what the myth does for you.

Moyers: What do you mean a poem?

Joseph Campbell: I mean a vocabulary in the form not of words, but of acts and adventures, which is with connotative, which connotes something transcendent of the action here and, which yet forms the whole thing so you always feel in accord with the universal being.

Moyers: Well the interesting thing to me is that far from undermining my faith your work in mythology has [00:31:00] liberated my faith from the cultural prisons to, which it had been sentenced.

Joseph Campbell: It liberated my own I know it is going to do it with everybody who really gets the message. Every mythology every religion is true in this sense it is true as metaphorical of the human and cosmic mystery, but when it gets stuck to the metaphor then you are in trouble.

Moyers: The metaphor being?

Joseph Campbell: Well Jesus ascended to heaven the story is he ascended bodily to heaven, the story is that his mother still alive asleep ascended to heaven so this is metaphorical of something you don't have to throw it away all you have to find is what it is saying.

Moyers: What do you think it is saying?

Joseph Campbell: What it is saying is he didn't go out there he went in here, which is where you must go to and ascend to heaven through the inward space to that source from, which you and all life came that's the sense of that.

Moyers: But aren't you undermining [00:32:00] one of the great cardinal doctrines of the traditional classic Christian faith the death the burial and the resurrection of Jesus prefiguring our own and overcoming the body with higher physical truth.

Joseph Campbell: Well that would be what I would call mistaken reading of the symbol that's reading it in terms of Prose instead of in terms of poetry that's reading a metaphor in terms of the denotation instead of in terms of connotation do you understand that it is purely literary problem.

Moyers: The poetry gets to the unseen reality.

Joseph Campbell: That, which is beyond even the concept of reality is that, which transcends all thought it is putting you there all time and in some way giving you a line to connect with that mystery, which you are and the myths [00:33:00] do it by gosh they do it. Now according to the normal way of thinking about the Christian religion we cannot identify with Jesus we have to imitate Jesus, but to say I am God as Jesus said is for us blasphemy however in the Thomas Gospel Jesus says "he who drinks from my mouth will become as I am and I shall be he". Wow! that's Buddhism we are all manifestations of Buddha consciousness only don't know it and the Buddha the word means the one who waked up, or to wake, woke up to the fact that he was Buddha consciousness and we are all to do that to wake up to our Jesus within us this is blasphemy in the normal way of thinking in Christianity, but it is very essence of narcissism and of the Thomas Gospel [0:34:00].

Moyers: And heaven that desired goal of most people is within us?

Joseph Campbell: Heaven and hell are within us and all the Gods are within us this is the great realization of Upanishads of India already in the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C. all the Gods all heavens all the worlds are within us they are magnified dreams and what dreams are, are manifestations in image form of the energies of the body and conflict with each other and that's all myth is. Myth is a manifestation in symbolic imagines metaphorical images of the energies within us moved by the organs of the body in conflict with each other this organ wants this, this organ wants this the brain is one of the organs.

Moyers: So when we dream are we fishing in some vast ocean of mythology [00:35:00] that we...?

Joseph Campbell: It goes down and down and down and you can get all mixed up with complexes, you know, things like that, but your are standing on the lord of the Abyss really. There's a Polynesian saying that frequently comes to my mind standing on a whale fishing for minnows we are standing on a whale the ground being is the ground of our being and the outward turn we see all these little problems here, but inward we are the source of them all. That's the big mystical teaching.

Moyers: You have seen what has happened to primitive societies that are unsettled by white man's civilization they go to pieces they disintegrate they succumb to vice and disease isn't that the same thing that's been happening to us since our myth began to disappear?

Joseph Campbell: Absolutely it is.

Moyers: Isn't that why conservative religious folk today are calling for a return to the old time religion?

Joseph Campbell: That's right.

Moyers: I understand that yearning in my youth I had fixed stars [00:36:00] they comforted me with their permanence they gave me a known horizon they told me that this is a loving kind and just father out there looking down on me ready to receive me thinking of my concerns all the time now science medicine has made house cleaning of belief and I wonder what happens to children who don't have that fixed star that known horizon those myths to sustain them.

Joseph Campbell: All they have to do is read the newspaper I mean it is a mess, but what the myth has to provide I mean just on this immediate level of life instruction the pedagogical aspect of myth it has to give a life models and the models have to be appropriate to the possibilities of the time in, which you are living and our time has changed and it is changed and changed and it continues to change so fast that what was proper 50 years ago is not proper today. So the virtues of the past are the vices of today

[00:37:00] and many of what were thought to be the vices of the past are the necessities of today and the moral order has to catch up with the moral necessities of actual life in time here and now and that's what it is not doing and that's why it is ridiculous to go back to the old time religion. A friend of mine composed a song based on the old time religion give me the old time religion give me let us worship Zarathustra just the way we used to on the Zarathustra Booster he is good enough for me.

Let us worship Aphrodite she is beautiful, but flighty she doesn't wear a nightgown, but she is good enough for me and when you go back to the old time religion you are doing something like that it belongs to another age another people and another set of human values another universe so the old period the old testament no one had any ideas the world was a little three layer cake and the world consisted of something [00:38:00] few hundred miles around the near eastern centers there no one ever heard of the Aztec, you know, or if the Chinese even and so those whole peoples were not considered even as part of the problem to be dealt with the world changes then the religion has to be transformed.

Moyers: But it seems to me that is what we are in fact doing here.

Joseph Campbell: That is in fact what we better do, but my notion of what the real horror today is what you see in Beirut where you have the three great western religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam and because three of them have three different names for the same biblical God they can't get on together, they are stuck with their metaphor and don't realize it's reference.

Moyers: So each needs a new myth?

Joseph Campbell: Each need its own myth all the way, love thy enemy, you know, open up, don't judge.

Moyers: Given what, you know, about human beings is it conceivable to you that there is a port of wisdom beyond the conflicts of truth and illusion by, which our lives can be put back together again? [00:39:00]

Joseph Campbell: Sure.

Moyers: That we could develop new models.

Joseph Campbell: It is in the religions all religions are true for their time if you can find what the truth is and separate it from the temporal inflection, just bring your same old religion into a new set of metaphors and you have got it.

Moyers: Do you see some new metaphors emerging in the modern medium for the old universal truth that you have talked about the old story?

Joseph Campbell: Well I think that the *Star Wars* is a valid mythological prospective and the problem of is that the machine and the state is a machine, is the machine going to crush humanity or serve humanity and humanity comes not from the machine, but from the heart. [00:40:00]

Darth Vader: Luke, help me take this mask off?

Luke: But you will die.

Joseph Campbell: I think it was in the return of Jedi when Skywalker unmasks his father the father had been playing one of these machine roles a state role he was the uniform, you know, and the removal of that mask was the undeveloped man there it is kind of a worm, but being executive of system one that is not developing one's humanity. I think that George Lucas really, really did a beautiful thing there.

Moyers: The idea of machine is the idea that we want the world to be made in our image and what we think the world ought to be?

Joseph Campbell: Well the first time anybody made a tool I mean taking a stone and chipping it so that you can handle it this is the beginning of a machine, it is turning outer nature into your service, but then there comes a time when it begins to dictate to you I am having a bit of this trouble with my computer [00:41:00].

Moyers: Your computer.

Joseph Campbell: I just brought one couple of months ago and I can't help thinking of it as having a personality there because it talks back and it behaves in a whimsical way and all of that so I am personifying that machine to me that machine is almost alive I could mythologies that darn thing.

Moyers: There was a wonderful story about, I think President Eisenhower when the computer was first being built do you remember that story?

Joseph Campbell: Eisenhower went into a room full of computers and he puts a question to these machines is there a God? And they all start up and all those lights flashing and wheels turning and things like that and after about ten minutes of that kind of thing a voice comes forth and the voice says now there is. [00:42:00] Well I brought this wonderful machine IBM machine and it is there and I am rather an authority on God's so identified the God and it seems to me an old testament God with a lot of rules and no mercy.

Moyers: It is unforgiving.

Joseph Campbell: Catch you picking up sticks on Saturday and you are out that's all.

Moyers: But isn't it possible to develop toward the computer the computer you are wrestling with at this very moment isn't it possible to develop the same kind of attitude of the Pawnee Chieftain who said that in the legends of his people all things speak of Tirawa [00:42:44] all things speak of God it wasn't the special privileged revelation God is everywhere in his works including the computer.

Joseph Campbell: Well indeed so I mean the miracle what happens on that screen, you know, with have you ever looked inside one of those things? [00:43:00]

Moyers: No.

Joseph Campbell: You can't believe it it's a whole hierarchy of angels all on slots and those little tubes those are miracles those are miracles they are.

Moyers: One can feel sense awe.

Joseph Campbell: Well I have had a revelation for my computer about mythology though you buy a certain software and there is a whole set of signals that lead to the achievement to your aim, you know, and once you've set it for let us say DW3 enter, if you begin fooling around with signals that belong to another system they just won't work that's all you have a system there a code determined code that requires you to use certain terms now similarly in mythology each religion is a kind of software that has its own set of signals and will work, it will work, but suppose you have chosen this one now if a person is really involved in a religion and really building [00:44:00] his life on it he better stay with the software that he has got, but a chap like myself who likes to play with various software.

Moyers: Across the wire.

Joseph Campbell: I can run around, but I probably will never have an experience comparable to that of a saint.

Moyers: But do you think that the machine is inventing new myths for us or that we with the machine are inventing new myths is the machine becoming...?

Joseph Campbell: No the myth has [Overlapping conversation]

Moyers: Patron diety... [00:44:27].

Joseph Campbell: Incorporated machine just as the old myths incorporated the tools that people used the forms of the tools and so forth are associated with power systems that are involved in the culture we have not a mythology that incorporates these, the new powers are being so to say surprisingly announced to us by what the machines can do, we can't have a mythology for a long, long time to come. Things are changing too fast the environment in, which we are living is changing too fast for it become mythologized you must realize [00:45:00]...



Moyers: How do you live without myths then?

Joseph Campbell: Well we are doing it. The individual has to find the aspect of myth that has to do with the conduct of his life there are number of services that myths serve the basic one is opening the world to the dimension of mystery if you lose that you don't have a mythology, to realize the mystery that underlies all forms, but then there comes the cosmological aspect of myth seeing that mystery is manifests through all things so the universe becomes at it were a holy picture you are always addressed to the transcended mystery through them. Then there is another function and that's the sociological one of validating and maintaining a certain society that is the side of the thing that has taken over in our world.

Moyers: What do you mean? [00:46:00]

Joseph Campbell: Ethical laws, the laws of life in the society all of Yahweh's pages and pages and pages of what kind of cloths to wear how to behave to each other and all that you see in terms of the values of this particular society, but then there is a fourth function of myth and this is the one that I think today everyone must try to relate to and that's pedagogical function how to live a human lifetime under any circumstances myth can tell you that and there is a wonderful story in one of the Upanishads, the Brahmavaivarta [00:46:33] Upanishad of Indra, this God who is the counterpart really of Yahweh, he is the God patron of a certain people and of historical life and time with all kinds of rules for people to live by and that sort of thing and there was a time when a great monster named Vritra had closed all the waters of the earth and so there was the drought a terrible drought and the world was in [00:47:00] very bad condition.

Well it took this God Indra quite a while to realize that he had a box of thunderbolts there and all he had to do is drop the thunderbolt on Vritra and blow him up and when he did that of course he blew Vritra up and the waters flowed and the world was refreshed and he said what a great boy am I so thinking what a great boy am I, he goes up to the cosmic mountain, which is the central mountain of the world and so he decided he would build a new world up there a new city and particularly his palace was going to be a palace worthy as such as he. So he calls Vishwakarma the main carpenter of the Gods and gives him the assignment to build this palace so Vishwakarma goes to work and in very quick order he gets the palace into pretty good condition and the Indra comes, but every time Indra arrived he had bigger ideas about how big and grandiose the palace should be.

So finally Vishwakarma said my God he says we are both immortal and there is no end to his desires [00:48:00] I am caught for life so he decided to go to Brahma known as the creator and complain. Well know Brahma sits on a lotus this is the symbol of divine energy and divine grace and the lotus grows from the navel of Vishnu who is the sleeping God whose dream is the universe so here is Brahma on his lotus and Vishwakarma comes to the edge of the great lotus pond of the universe and down he tells his story. Brahma says you go home he said I will fix this up so next morning at the gate of the palace that's being built there appears a beautiful blue black boy with a lot of children around him just

in admiration of his beauty so in comes the boy and Indra on his thrown is the king God he says [00:49:00] young man welcome and what brings you to my palace.

Well says the boy with the voice like thunder rolling on the horizon, I have been told that you are building such a palace as no Indra before you ever built and they said I have surveyed the grounds and looked things over, it seems this is quite true, no Indra before you as ever built such a palace. Well Indra says Indra's before me young man, what are you talking about? The boy says Indra's before you, he says, I have seen them come and go, come and go, he said just think, Vishnu sleeps in the cosmic ocean, the lotus of the universe grows from his navel, on there sits Brahma the creator [00:50:00] Brahma opens his eyes and world comes into being, governed by an Indra closes his eyes, the world goes out of being, opens his eyes the world comes into being, closes his eyes and the life of a Brahma is 432,000 years and he dies the lotus goes back, another lotus, another Brahma.

Then think of the galaxies beyond galaxies in infinite space, each a lotus with the Brahma sitting on it opening his eyes, closing his eyes with Indra's, there may be wise men in your court who would volunteer to count the drops of water in the oceans of the world or the grains of sand on the beaches, but no one would count those Brahmas, let alone those Indra's and while he is talking there comes in parade across the floor of the palace [00:51:00] an army of ants in perfect range and the boy laughs when he sees them and Indra's hair goes up in these things, he says to the boy why do you laugh and the boy says don't ask unless you are willing to be hurt and Indra says, 'I ask teach,' the boys says, former Indra's all; through many lifetimes they rise from the lowest conditions spiritually to highest illumination and then they drop their thunderbolt in Vritra and they think what a good boy am I and down they go again.

And then Indra sits there on the thrown and he is in complete disillusion, completely shocked and he thinks, Oh! Lets quit the building of this palace, he calls Vishwakarma and says, [0:52:00] you are dismissed you don't have – so Vishwakarma had got his intention, he is dismissed from the job and there is no more house building going on and Indra decides I am going to out to be a yogi and just meditate on the lotus feet of Vishnu, but he has a beautiful queen named Indrani and when Indrani hears this, she goes to the priest, the Chaplin of the Gods and she says now he is got this idea in his head, he is going out to become a yogi, well says the Brahmin come in with me darling and we will sit down and I will fix this up.

So he talks to Indra, they come in, they sit down before the king's thrown, and he tells him now I wrote a book for you some years ago on the art of politics, you are in the position of the king, you are in the position of the king of Gods, you are manifestation of the mystery of Brahma in the field of time, this is a high privilege [00:53:00] appreciate it, honor it, and deal with life as though you were what you really are and with this set of instructions, Indra gives up his idea of going out becoming an yogi and finds that in life he can represent the eternal in the way of a symbol you might say of the Brahman and the ultimate truth, so each of us is in a way the Indra of his own life and you can make a choice either to go out and in the forest and meditate and throw it all off or stay in the

world and in the life either of your job, which is the kingly job of the politics and achievement and as well in the love life with your wife and family you are realizing the truth, now this is a very nice myth that seems to me.

Moyers: Do we ever know the truth? Do we ever find it?

Joseph Campbell: Well each person can have his own depth experience [00:54:00] and some conviction of being in touch with his own satyananda, his own being true consciousness and true bliss, but the religious people tell us we really won't experience until we go to heaven, you know, till you die, I believe in having as much as you can if this experience while you are alive.

Moyers: My bliss is now.

Joseph Campbell: I think in heaven you will be having such marvelous time looking at God that you won't get your own experience at all that is not the place to have it; here is the place to have the experience.

Moyers: Here and now.

Joseph Campbell: Here and now.

[00:56:28]

[Audio Ends]