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The animal envoys of the Unseen Power no longer serve as in primeval times to teach and to guide mankind. Bears, lions, elephants, and gazelles are in cages in our zoos. Man is no longer the newcomer in a world of unexplored plains and forests, and our immediate neighbors are not wild beasts, but other human beings contending for goods and space on a planet that is whirling without end around the fireball of a star. Neither in body nor in mind do we inhabit the world of those hunting races of the Paleolithic millennia to whose lives and life ways we nevertheless owe the very forms of our bodies and structures of our minds. Memories of their animal envoys still must sleep, somehow, within us; for they wake a little and stir when we venture into wilderness. They wake in terror to thunder. And again they wake with a sense of recognition, when we enter any one of those great painted caves. Whatever the inward darkness may have been to which the shamans of those caves descended in their trances, the same must lie within ourselves nightly visited in sleep.

Music [00:01:50] to [00:02:20]

Moyers: When we look at the magnificent cave paintings left by our primal ancestors, we realize how those early tribal hunters were influenced by their natural surrounding and by their feelings of gratitude, religious feelings toward the animals they depended on for food. They told stories about the animals and about a supernatural world to which the animal seemed to go when they die. Then the hunters performed rituals of Atonement to the departed spirits of the animal hoping to coax them back to be sacrificed all over again.

The human imagination that led to myths and rituals fascinated Joseph Campbell. For him mythic stories were not simply entertaining tales to be told for amusement around ancient campfires, they were powerful Gods to the life of the spirit. Campbell’s own odyssey as scholar and teacher led him to pronounce some strong opinions. For example, he wrote that whether we listen with aloof amusement to the mumbo jumbo of some witch doctor of the Congo or read with cultivated rapture translations from sonnets of [Indiscernible] or now and again crack the hard nutshell of an argument of Thomas Aquinas or catch suddenly the shining meaning of a bizarre Eskimo fairy tale, we are hearing echoes of the first story. A lot of people took issue with that with some theologians [00:03:42] protesting most loudly.

In this hour, one of the many I taped with Joseph Campbell during the last two years of his life, we talked about our relationships to the first stories and to the people who told them. Like them, we two try to make sense of immortality and anticipate our body’s destiny with death.

Moyers: What do you think our souls owe to ancient myths?

Joseph Campbell: Well the ancient myths were designed to put their minds, the mental system in accord with this body system, with this inheritance…

Moyers: …To harmony?
Joseph Campbell: …to harmonize, the mind can ramble off in strange ways and want things that the body does not want. And the myths and rites were means to put the mind in accord with the body and the way of life in accord with the way that nature dictates.

Moyers: So in a way these old stories live in us?

Joseph Campbell: They do indeed and the stages of a human development are the same today as they were in the ancient times. And the problem of a child, brought up in a world of discipline of obedience, and of his dependency on others has to be transcended when one comes to maturity, so that you are living now not in dependency, but with self responsible authority and the problem of the transition from childhood to maturity, and then from maturity and full capacity to losing those powers and acquiescing in the natural cause of – I may say the autumn time of life and the passage away. Myths are there to help us go with it, accept nature’s way and not hold to something else.

Moyers: Stories are sort of to me like messages in a bottle from shore someone else has visited first.

Joseph Campbell: Yes and you’re visiting those shores now.

Moyers: And these myths tell me how others have made the passage, and how I can make the passage.

Joseph Campbell: And also what the beauties are of the way. I feel this now moving into my own last year’s, you know, the myths help me to go with it.

Moyers: What kind of myth? Gives me one that has actually helped you?

Joseph Campbell: Well the tradition in India for instance of actually changing your whole way of dress even changing your name as you pass from one stage to another. When I retired from teaching, I knew that I had to create a new life, a new way of life, and I changed my manner of thinking about my life. Just in terms of that notion moving out of the sphere of achievement into the sphere of enjoyment and appreciation and relaxing into the wonder at all.

Moyers: And then there is that final passage through the dark gate?

Joseph Campbell: Well that’s no problem at all, the problem in middle life when the body has reached its climax of power and begins to loose it is to identify yourselves not with the body which is falling away, but with the consciousness of which it is vehicle and when you can do that and this is something I learnt from my myth. What I am? Am I the bulb that carries the light or am I the light of which the bulb is a vehicle and this body is a vehicle of consciousness and if you can identify with the consciousness you can watch this thing go like an old car there goes the fender, there goes this, but that’s expectable
you know and then gradually the whole thing drops off and consciousness rejoins consciousness [00:08:00] and that’s its no longer in this particular environments

Moyers: And the myths the stories have brought this consciousness?

Joseph Campbell: Well I live with these myths and tell me to do this all the time and this is the problem which can be then metaphorically understood as identifying with the Christ in you and the Christ in you doesn’t die, the Christ in you survives death and resurrects or it can be with Shiva. Shivoham – I’m Shiva and this is the great mediation of the yogi’s in the Himalayas and one doesn’t have even to have a metaphorical image like that if one has a mind that is willing to just relax and identify itself with that which moves it.

Moyers: You say that the image of death is the beginning of the mythology? What do you mean? How is that? [00:09:00]

Joseph Campbell: Well, all I can say to that is that the earliest evidence we have of anything like mythological thinking is associated with grave burials.

Moyers: And they suggest what that men, women, soul, life, and then they didn’t see it and they wondered about it?

Joseph Campbell: It must have been, I mean, one [0:09:21] has only to imagine what ones own experience would be. The person was alive and warm before you and talking to, he is now lying there getting cold, beginning to rock, something was there that isn’t there and where is it? Now animals have this experience certainly of their companions dying and so forth, but there is no evidence that they’ve had any further thoughts about it. Also before the time of man to tell man its in his period that the first burials appear that which we have evidence, people would die and they were just thrown away, but here there is a concern.

Moyers: Have you ever visited any of these burial sites?

Joseph Campbell: I’ve been Le Moustier.[00:10:13].

Moyers: Okay.

Joseph Campbell: That was one of the earliest burial caves that were found.

Moyers: And you find there what they buried with the [Indiscernible] [00:10:23]?

Joseph Campbell: Yes, these grave burials with grave gear that is to say weapons and sacrifices round about certainly suggest the idea of the continued life beyond the visible one. First one was discovered personally put down resting as though asleep a young boy with a beautiful hand axe beside him. Now at the same time, we have evidence of shrines devoted to animals that have been killed. The shrine is specifically in the Alps [00:11:00]
in very high caves and they are of cave-bear skulls. And there is one very interesting one with the long bones of the cave-bear, in the cave-bear’s jaw.

Moyers: What does that say to you?

Joseph Campbell: Burials, my friend has died and he survived. The animals that I have killed must also survive; I must make some kind of the atonement relationship to them. The indication is of the notion of a plane of being this behind the visible plane, and which is somehow supportive of the visible one to which we have to relate. I would say that’s the basic theme of all mythology.

Moyers: That there is a world?

Joseph Campbell: That there is a visible plane – invisible plane supporting the visible one, and whether it is thought of as a world or simply as energy that differs from time and place, and place to place.

Moyers: What we don't know [00:12:00] supports what we do know?

Joseph Campbell: That’s right. Well, the basic hunting myth I would say is of a kind of covenant between the animal world and the human world where the animal gives its life willingly, they are regarded generally as willing victims with the understanding that their life which transcends their physical entity will be returned to the soil or to the mother through some ritual of restoration. And the principle rituals for instance and the principle divinities are associated with the main hunting animal [00:13:00]. The animal who is the master animal and sends the flocks to be killed you know the Indians of the American plains, it was the buffalo. You go to the Northwest coast it’s the salmon, the great festivals have to do with the run of salmon coming in. When you go to South Africa, the eland, the big magnificent antelope, is the principal animal for the bush man for example.

Moyers: And the principal animal right is...

Joseph Campbell: Is the one that furnishes the food.

Moyers: So there grew up between human beings and animals a bonding as you say which required one to be consumed by the other.

Joseph Campbell: That is the way life is.

Moyers: Do you think this troubled early man that you thought some…

Joseph Campbell: Absolutely that’s why you have the rites because it did trouble.

Moyers: What kind of rites?

Joseph Campbell: Rituals of appeasement to the animal of thanks to the animal.

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Joseph Campbell: Very interesting aspect here is the identity of the hunter with the animal.

Moyers: I mean after the animal has been shot.

Joseph Campbell: After the animal has been killed, the hunter than has to fulfill certain rites and a kind of participation mystique, a mystic participation with the animals whose death he has brought about and who’s meat is to become his life so that killing is not simply slaughter.

Moyers: Okay.

Joseph Campbell: it a ritual act it is the recognition of your independency and of the voluntarily giving of this food to you by the animal who has giving it, it’s a beautiful thing and it turns life into a mythological experience.

Moyers: The hunt becomes what?

Joseph Campbell: It becomes a ritual, the hunt is ritual.

Moyers: Expressing a hope of resurrection that the animal is food and you need the animal to return…

Joseph Campbell: And sometime they respect for the animal that was killed...

Moyers: Right.

Joseph Campbell: That’s the thing that gets me all the time in this hunting ceremonial system.

Moyers: Respect for the animal.

Joseph Campbell: Respect for the animal and more than respect, I mean, that animal becomes a messenger of divine power, you see.

Moyers: And you wind up as the hunter killing the messenger.

Joseph Campbell: Killing the god.

Moyers: What does this do, does it cause guilt? Does it cause

Joseph Campbell: Guilt is one is wiped out by the myth. It is not a personal act, you are performing the work of nature.
Joseph Campbell: For example, in Japan and Hokkaido, northern Japan among the Ainu people who’s principles mountain deity is the bear. When it is killed there is a ceremony of feeding the bear, a feast of its own flesh. As though he were present and he is present, he served his own meat for dinner and there is a conversation between the mountain god, the bear and the people. [00:16:00] They say, if you give us the privilege of entertaining you again, we’ll give you the privilege of another bear sacrifice.

Moyers: If a cave bear were not appeased, the animals wouldn’t appear and these primitives, hunters would starve to death so they began to perceive some kind of power on which they were dependent, greater than their own.

Joseph Campbell: And that’s the power of the animal master. Now, when we sit down to meal, we thank god, our idea of god for having given us this, these people thank the animal.

Moyers: And is this the first evidence we have of an act of worship.

Joseph Campbell: Yes.

Moyers: A power superior to man.

Joseph Campbell: Yeah.

Moyers: And the animal was superior because the animal provided food.

Joseph Campbell: Well, now in contrast to our relationship to animals, so we see animals a lower form of life [00:17:00] and in the Bible were told you and now we are the masters and so far. Early hunting people have that relationship to the animal, the animal is in many way superior. He has powers that the human being doesn’t have.

Moyers: And then certain animals take on a persona, don’t they? The buffalo, the raven and the eagle.

Joseph Campbell: Oh, very strongly. Well, I was up in the north-west coast back in 1932, a wonderful trip and the Indians along the way were still carving Totem Poles, the villagers had new Totem Poles still. And there we saw the ravens and we saw the eagles and we saw the animals that played roles in the midst. And they had the character, the quality of these animal with a very intimate knowledge and friendly, neighborly relationship to these creatures and then they kill some of them, you see.

[Music] [00:18:00]
Joseph Campbell: The animal had something to do with the shaping of myths of those people, just as the buffalo for the Indians of the plains playing enormous role.

Joseph Campbell: They’re the ones that bring the tobacco gift, the gift the mystical pipe and all these time they come from a buffalo.

Joseph Campbell: And when the animal becomes the giver of ritual and so forth, they do as the animal for advice and the animal becomes the model for how to live.

Moyers: Do you remember the story the story of the Buffalo’s wife

Joseph Campbell: That’s the basic legend of they of the Blackford tribe and it’s the origin [0:18:39] legend of their buffaloes dance rituals by which they invoke the cooperation of the animals in the animals in this play of life.

Joseph Campbell: When you realize the size of somebody’s tribal groups to feed them?

Joseph Campbell: [00:19:00] Require a good deal of meat and one way of requiring meat for the winter would be to drives a buffalo herd to stampede it over under rock cliffs.

Joseph Campbell: Well this story is of Blackford tribe long-long ago and they couldn’t get their buffalo to go over the cliff the buffalo would approach to cliff and turn this side. So, they would look so, they going to have meat for that winter. Well the daughter of one of the house is standing up early in the morning to draw the water for the families looked up and there right above there cliff where the buffalo and she said oh if you only come over I would marry one of you and to her surprise they all began coming over. That was surprise number one.

Joseph Campbell: Surprise number two is when one of the old buffalos the shaman of the herd comes and says alright girly off we go [00:20:00] “oh no” she says “oh yes” he said you made your promise we have kept our side of the bargain, look at all my relatives here dead off we go.

Joseph Campbell: Well, the family gets up in the morning and they look around and where is Minniehaha [00:20:14], well the father, you know, how Indians are, he looked around and he says she has run after the buffalo, he could see by the foot steps. So he says, oh I am coming at her back, so puts on his walking moccasins, bow and arrow [00:20:30] and so forth and goes out over the plains, he has gone quite a distance when he feels to sit down or rest and he comes to a place that’s called a buffalo wallow where the buffalo like to come and roll around, get the lies off and roll around in the mud.

Joseph Campbell: So, he sits down there and he is thinking what he should do now, when along come a Magpie and that’s a beautiful flashing bird and one of the clever birds that the Shamanic qualities.

[00:21:00] Moyers: Magical qualities.
Joseph Campbell: Magical and the man says to him, Oh beautiful bird my daughter ran away with a buffalo. Have you seen, will you hunt around, see if you can find her out on the plain somewhere? And the magpie says, well there is a lovely girl with the buffalo right now, over there, just a bit away. Well there said the man will you go tell her, daddy is here, her father is here at the buffalo wallow? Magpie flies over and the girl that’s there among the buffalo. They're all asleep, I don’t know what she is doing knitting or something of this kind and the magpie comes over close to her and he says, your father is over at the wallow waiting for you. Oh, she says, this is very terrible. This is dangerous I mean these buffalo they will kill us. You tell him to wait, I'll be over. I'll try to work this out. So her buffalo husband is behind her and he wakes up and takes off a horn, he says go [00:22:00] to the wallow and get me a drink. So she takes the horn and goes over and there is her father. He grabs her by the arm and says come, but she says, no, no, no this is real danger. The whole herd they will be right after us. I have to work this thing out. Now, let me just go back. So she gets the water and goes back and he "Fe, fi, fo, fum, I smell the blood of an Indian you know that sort of thing and she says no, nothing of the kind. He says, yes indeed. So he gives a buffalo bellow and they all get up they all do a slow buffalo dance with the tails raised and they go over and they trample that poor man to death so that he disappears entirely. He is just all broken up to pieces all gone. The girl is crying and her buffalo husband says, so you’re crying. This is my daddy. He said yeah, but what about us? There are children, wives, parents, and [00:23:00] you crying about your daddy. Well, apparently he was a kind of sympathetic, compassionate buffalo and he said, well I’ll tell you, if you can bring your daddy back to life again I will let you go. So she turns to the magpie and says see peck around a little bit and see if you can find a bit of daddy and the magpie does so and he comes up finally with a vertebra just one little bone and the little girl says that's plenty and put this down on the ground and she puts a blanket over and she sings a revivifying song, a magical song with great power and presently yes, there is a man under the blanket. She looks. Daddy all right, but he is not breathing yet. A few more stanzas of whatever the song was and he stands up and the buffalo are amazed and they say why don't you do this for us? [00:24:00] We'll teach you now our buffalo dance and when you will have killed our families, you do this dance and sing this song and we will all be back to life again. That’s the basic idea that through the ritual that dimension which transcends temporality and out of which life comes and back into which it goes.

Moyers: And it goes back to this whole idea of death burial and resurrection not only for human beings.

Joseph Campbell: But for the animals too.

Moyers: So the story of the buffalos, while it was told to confirm the reverence…

Joseph Campbell: That’s it.

Moyers: What happened when the white man came and slaughtered this animal of reverence?
Joseph Campbell: That was a sacramental violation, in the 80s when the buffalo hunt was undertaken…

Moyers: In 1880s, a few years ago…

Joseph Campbell: And Buffalo Bill and so forth, when I was a boy whenever we went for sleigh rise we had buffalo rub, buffalo, buffalo, buffalo robes all over the place. This was the sacred animal of Indian. These hunters go out with repeating rifles and then shoot down the whole herd and leave it there and take the skin to sell and the bodies left to rot. This is a sacrilege and it really is a sacrilege.

Moyers: It turned the buffalo from a thou…

Joseph Campbell: To an "it."

Moyers: The Indians addressed the buffalo as a “thou”.

Joseph Campbell: As a “thou”.

Moyers: An object of reverence.

Joseph Campbell: The Indians addressed all of life as a "thou" and the trees, stones, everything else. You can address anything as a "thou," and you can feel the change in your psychologies s you do it. The ego that sees a "thou" is not the same ego that sees an "it" your whole psychology changes when you address things as a “it”.

Moyers: Whether it’s a war?

Joseph Campbell: And when you go to war with the people the problem of the newspapers is to turn those people into “its” so that they are not “thou’s”.

Moyers: That was a incredible moment in the evolution of American society when the buffalo was slaughtered that was the final exclamation point behind the destruction of the Indian civilization because you were destroying…

Joseph Campbell: Can you imagine what this experience must have been for a people within 10 years to lose their environment, to lose their food supply, to lose the object or the central object of the rituals life.

Moyers: So it is in your belief that it was in this period of hunting man and woman, the time of hunting of man that human beings began to sense stirring of the mythic imagination, the wonder of things that they didn’t know.

Joseph Campbell: There is this [00:27:00] burst of magnificent art and all the evidence you need of a mythic imagination in full career.
Moyers: You visited some of the great painted caves you looked?

Joseph Campbell: Oh! Yes.

Moyers: Tell me what you remember when first you looked upon those underground caves?

Joseph Campbell: When you don't want to leave. Here you come into an enormous chamber, like a great cathedral with these animals painted and they painted with the life like the lives of a ink on silk in a Japanese painting and what you realize. The darkness is inconceivable. We were there with electric lights, but in a couple of instances the concierges the man who is showing us through turned off the lights, and you were never in darker darkness in your life. It was like a, I don't know, just a complete knockout you don't know where you are, whether you are looking north, south, east, or west. All orientation is gone and you are in a darkness that never saw the sun. Then they turn the lights on again, you see these gloriously painted animals a bull that will be twenty feet long and painted so that it haunches will be represented by a swelling in the rock. They take account of the whole thing. It’s incredible.

Moyers: Do you ever looked at these primitive art objects and think not of the art, but of the man or woman standing their painting or creating, I find that’s where I speculate?

Joseph Campbell: This is what hits you when you go into those caves I can tell you that. What was in their mind when they were doing that and that's not an easy thing to do and how did they get up there and how did they see anything and what kind of light that they have real flashing torches saw flickering things in order to get something of that grace and perfection. and with respect to the problem of the beauty, is this beauty intended or is it something that is the natural expression of a beautiful spirit? You know what I mean, when you hear a bird sing, the beauty of the bird song is this intentional in what sense is it intentional, but is it expression of the bird, the beauty of the bird's spirit, you might almost say and I think that way very often about this art. To what degree was the intention of the artist what we would call aesthetic or to what degree expressive and to what degree something that they simply had learned to do that way it’s a difficult point. When a spider makes a beautiful web, the beauty comes out of the spider's nature. It's instinctive beauty and how much of the beauty of our own lives is of the beauty of being alive and how much of it is conscious intentional that’s a big question.

Moyers: You call them temple caves

Joseph Campbell: Yeah.

Moyers: Why temple?

Joseph Campbell: A temple with images and stain glass windows, cathedrals are a landscape of the soul. You move into a world of spiritual images, that’s what this is.
When Jean and I, my wife and I drove down from Paris to this part of the France, we stopped off at Chartres cathedral. There is the cathedral. When you walk into the cathedral is that the mother womb of your spiritual life, mother church. All the forms around are significant of spiritual values and the imagery is in anthropomorphic form. God and Jesus and the saints and all in human form.

Moyers: In human form. [00:31:00]

Joseph Campbell: Then we went down to Lascaux, the images were in animal form. The form is secondary the message is what’s important…

Moyers: The message of the cave?

Joseph Campbell: The message of the cave is of a relationship of time to eternal powers that is somehow to be experienced in that place. I could tell you when you were down in those caves, it’s a strange transformation of consciousness you have, you feel this is the womb, this is the place from which life comes and that world up there in the sun with all those that’s a secondary world, this is primary I mean this overcomes you.

Moyers: You had that feeling anyway?

Joseph Campbell: I had it every time. Now what were these caves used for? The speculations that are most common of scholars interested in this is that they have to do with the initiation of boys [00:32:00] into the hunt. You go in there its dangerous, it’s very dangerous, it’s completely dark, it’s cold and dank, you are banging your head on projections all the time and it was a place of fear and the boys were to overcome all that and go into the womb of the earth and the shamans or whoever it was that would be helping you through would not be making it easy.

Moyers: And then there was a release once you got into that vast torch lit chamber down there. What was the tribe, what was the tradition trying to say to the boy?

Joseph Campbell: That is the womb land from which all the animals come and the rituals down there have to do with generation of a situation that will be propitious for the hunt and the boys were to learn not only to hunt, but how to respect the animals and what rituals to perform and [00:33:00] how in their own lives no longer to be little boys, but to be men because those hunts were very, very dangerous, hunts believe me and these are the original men’s rite sanctuaries where the boys became no longer their mothers’ sons but their fathers’ sons.

Moyers: Don’t you wonder what affect this had on a boy?

Joseph Campbell: Well, you can go through it today actually and the cultures that are still having the initiations with the young boys. They give them an idea what a terrifying idea whether the youngster has to survive makes the manner.
Moyers: What would happen to me as a child if I would – to one of these rite as far as you can…

Joseph Campbell: Well we know what they do in Australia. When a boy gets to be, you know, a little bit ungovernable one fine day the men come in [00:34:00] and they get accept for stripes of white down that have been stuck on their bodies and stripes with their men’s blood they use their own blood for glue, glue in his hand and they are swinging the bull-roarers which are the voice of the spirits and they come as spirits. The boy will try to take to refuge with his mother. She will pretend to try to protect him. The men just take him away. A mother is no good from then on, you see. He is no longer a little boy. He is in the men’s group and then they put him really through an ordeal. These are the rites circumcision, subincision and…

Moyers: The whole purpose is to…

Joseph Campbell: Turn him into a member of the tribe.

Moyers: And a hunter?

Joseph Campbell: And a hunter.

Moyers: Because that was the way of life.

Joseph Campbell: Yeah. But most important is to live according to the needs and values of that tribe. He is initiated in [00:35:00] short period of time into the whole culture context of his people.

Moyers: So myth relates directly to ceremony and tribal ritual and the absence of myth can mean the end of ritual?

Joseph Campbell: A ritual is the enactment of a myth. By participating in a ritual, you are participating in a myth.

Moyers: And what is it mean you think to young boys today that you absent these myths…

Joseph Campbell: Well, the confirmation ritual is the counterpart today of these rites. As a little catholic boy, you choose your confirmed name, the name you are going to be confirmed by and you go up. But instead of having a scarifying you knock your teeth out and all, they -- the bishop gives you a smile and a slap on the cheek. It has been reduced to that [00:36:00]. Nothing has happened to you. The Jewish counterpart is the bar mitzvah and whether it works actually to effect a psychological transformation, I suppose it will depend on the individual case. There was no problem in those old days. The boy came out with a different body and he’d gone through something.
Moyers: What about the female, I mean it -- most of the figures in the temple caves are male was this…

Joseph Campbell: Yeah.

Moyers: Was this a kind of secret society for males…?

Joseph Campbell: It wasn't a secret society. It was that the boys had to go through it. Now which the – we don’t exactly what happens with the female in this period, because we -- there are a little evidence to tell us. In primary cultures today, the girl becomes a woman with her first menstruation. It happens to her. I mean nature does it to her and so she has undergone the transformation and what is her initiation? Typically it is to sit in a little hut for a certain number of days and realize what she is.

Moyers: How does she do that?

Joseph Campbell: She sits there. She is now a woman. And what is a woman? A woman is a vehicle of life and life has overtaken her. She is a vehicle now of life. Woman is what it’s all about, the giving of birth and the giving of nourishment. She is identical with the earth goddess in her powers and she has got to realize that about herself. The boy does not have a happening of that kind. He has to be turned into a man and voluntarily become a servant of something greater than himself. The woman becomes the vehicle of nature. The man becomes the vehicle of the society, the social order and the social purpose.

Moyers: And so what happens when a society no longer embraces powerful mythology?

Joseph Campbell: [00:38:00] What we've got on our hands. As I said, if you want to find what it means not to have – to have a society without any rituals, read the New York Times.

Moyers: And you'd find?

Joseph Campbell: Well the news of the day, young people – the young people who don’t know how to behave in a civilized society half the I imagine 50% of the crime is by young people in their 20s and early 30s that just behave like barbarians.

Moyers: Society has provided them no rituals by which they become members…

Joseph Campbell: There’s been a reduction, reduction, reduction of ritual, even in the Roman Catholic Church my God. They've translated the Mass out of the ritual language into a language that has a lot of domestic associations. So that I mean every time now that I read the [00:39:00] Latin of the Mass or something like that, I get that pitch again, that it supposed to give a language that throws you out of the field of your domesticity. The altar was turned so that the priest's back is to you and with him you addressed
yourself outward like that. Now they've turned the altar around it looks like Julia Child giving a demonstration and the all homey and cozy.

Moyers: And they play guitar.

Joseph Campbell: And they play a guitar. Listen they’ve forgotten what the function of a ritual is, is to pitch you out not to wrap you back in where you have been all the time.

Moyers: So ritual that once conveyed an inner reality is now merely form. And that's true in the rituals of society and the personal rituals of marriage and religion?

Joseph Campbell: Well, with respect to ritual it must be kept alive and so much of our ritual is dead [00:40:00]. It's extremely interesting to read of the primitive, elementary cultures how that the folk tales, the myths, they’re transforming all the time in terms of the circumstances of those people. People move from an area where, let's say, the vegetation is the main support, out into the plains. Most of our Plains Indians in the period of the horse-riding Indians had originally been of the Mississippian in culture along the Mississippi in settled dwelling towns and agriculturally based villages. And then they receive the horse from the Spaniards and it makes it possible then to venture out into the plains and handle the great hunt of the buffalo herds you see and the mythology [00:41:00] transforms from vegetation to buffalo and you can see the structure of the earlier vegetation mythologies under the mythologies of the Dakota Indians and the Pawnee Indians and the Kiowa and so forth.

Moyers: You are saying that the environment shapes the story?

Joseph Campbell: They respond to it, you see. But we have a tradition that comes from the first millennium B.C. somewhere else and we are handling that it has not turned over and assimilated the qualities of our culture and the new things that are possible and the new vision of the universe it must be kept alive. The only people who can keep it alive are artists…

Moyers: Artists?

Joseph Campbell: Of one kind or another. That the artist is -- his function is the mythologization of the environment and the world.

Moyers: Artist being the poet, the musician, the…

Joseph Campbell: Exactly.

Moyers: The writer.

Joseph Campbell: [00:42:00] Yes. I think we’ve had a couple of greats in the recent times, I think if James Joyce is as such a revealer of the mysteries of growing up and becoming a human being and for me he and Thomas Mann were my principal gurus you
might say as I was trying to shape my own life. I think in the visual arts there were two men whose work seemed to me to handled mythological themes in the marvelous way, one was Paul Klee and the other Picasso. These two men really knew what they were doing all the way I think and have a great versatility in their revelations.

Moyers: You mean artists are the mythmakers of our day?

Joseph Campbell: The mythmakers in earlier days were the counterparts of our artists.

Moyers: They do the paintings on the walls…

Joseph Campbell: Yeah.

Moyers: …they perform the rituals?

Joseph Campbell: There's an old romantic idea in German, das Volk dichtet, which I say that the poetry of the traditional cultures and the ideas come out of the folk they do not. They come out of an elite experience, the experience of people particularly gifted, whose ears are opened to the song of the universe and they speak to the folk, and there is our answer from the folk, which is then received there is an interaction. But the first impulse comes from above not from below in the shaping of a folk tradition.

Moyers: So who would have been in these early elementary cultures, as you call them, the equivalent of the poets today?

Joseph Campbell: The shaman. The shaman is the person who has in his late childhood early youth could be male or female had a -- an overwhelming psychological experience that turns them totally inward. The whole unconscious has opened up and they have fallen into it. And its been described many many times and it occurs all the way from Siberia right through the Americas down to Tierra del Fuego. It’s a kind of schizophrenic crack-up the shaman experience.

Moyers: What kind of experience?

Joseph Campbell: Dying and resurrecting, you know, being on the brink of death and coming back. You actually experience the death. Experience, people who have very deep dreams, dream is a great source of the spirit. And then people who in the woods have had mystical encounters.

Moyers: Let me try to be specific about that the shaman becomes some person in a society who has drawn by experience from the normal world into the world of the gifted?

Joseph Campbell: That’s right.

Moyers: Most of us think of shaman as a magician but they play a much more important role in simply being a ---?
Joseph Campbell: they are playing a role that the priesthood who plays in our society.

Moyers: These are the first [00:44:52] priests?

Joseph Campbell: There’s a major differences as I say between the Sherman and a priest. A priest is a [00:45:00] functionary of social sort the society worships certainties dieties in the certain way and the priest becomes ordained as the functionary to carry on that ritual and the diety to whom he is devoted is the diety that was there before he came along. The Shaman’s powers are symbolized in familiars, dieties of his own personal experience and his authority comes out of the psychological experience not a social ordination do you understand what I mean?

Moyers: And the one who had this psychological experience this tramatric experience this ecstasy would become the interpreter for others of things not seen.

Joseph Campbell: He would become the interpreters of a heritage of mythological life you might say, yes.

Moyers: And ecstasy was a part of very often in the Shermanic..

Joseph Campbell: It is ecstasy.

Moyers: The trance dance for example in the Bushman [00:46:00] society?

Joseph Campbell: Now there is a fantastic example or something, the Bushman groups, the whole life is one of great, great tension. The male and female sexes are what we say in a disciplined way separate. The man have certain field of concerns their weapons their poisons, the hunt all that and the woman have the certain field of concern bringing up the children, the nourishing of the children so forth and so on. Only in the dance, they two come together and they come together this way the woman sits in a circle or a group and they then become center around which the man dance and they control the dance and what goes on with the man through their own singing and beating up the thighs.

Moyers: What the significant of that, if the woman is controlling the dance?

Joseph Campbell: Well the woman is life from the man is the servant of life and during the course of this [00:47:00]circling, circling it’s a very tense style of moment the man have. Suddenly that one of them will pass out. He is in trance now, and this is the description of the experience, when people sing I dance, I enter their earth, I go in their place like a place where people drink water. I travel a long way very far when I emerged I am already climbing. I am climbing threads I am climb one and leave it. Then I climb another one then I leave it, and climb another. When you arrive at God’s place you make yourself small. You come in small to God’s place. You do what you have to do there then you return to where everyone is. You come and come and come and finally you, enter your body again. All the people who are stayed behind and waiting for you they
fear you. You enter, enter the earth [00:48:00] and you return to enter the skin of your body and you say that is the sound of your return of your body then you begin to sing. The untum-masters are there around. They take hold of your head and blow about the sides of your face. This is how you manage to be alive again. Friends, if they don’t do that to you, you die. You just die and are dead. Friends, this is what it does, this untum that I do, this untum here that I dance. This is an actual experience of transit from the earth to through the realm of mythological images, to God, or to the seat of power.

Moyers: It becomes something of the other mind of us.

Joseph Campbell: It is exactly the other mind. And the way God is imaged, [00:49:00] god is transcended and finally of anything like a name of God. As the Hindu’s say beyond names and forms, beyond DAMARUPAN, beyond names and forms no tongue has soiled it, no word has reached it.

Moyers: But Joe can Westerners grasp this kind of mystical trends theological experience. It does transcend the theology at least theology behind. I mean if you are locked to the image of God in a culture where science determines your perceptions of reality. How can you experience this ultimate ground that the shaman’s talk about it.

Joseph Campbell: The best example I know in our literature is that beautiful book by John Neihardt called *Black Elk Speaks*.

Moyers: Black Elk was…

Joseph Campbell: Black Elk was the young Sioux or Dakota that you also call a boy around nine years old before the [0:50:00] American cavalry had encountered the Sioux, and they are -- were the great people of the plains. And this boy became sick, his psychologically sick. His family telling the typical shaman story. The child begins to tremble and is immobilized. And the family is terribly concerned about it, and they send for a shaman who had the experience in his own youth, to come as a psychoanalyst you might say and pull the youngster out of it. But instead of relieving him of the deities, he is adapting him to the deities and the deities to himself; you might say it's a different problem from that of psychoanalysis. Where are you know I think this Nietzsche who said, "Be careful lest in casting out your devils you cast out the best thing that's in you?" Here, the deities who have been encountered or the powers, let's call them are retained – [00:51:00] the connection is retained its not broken. And these men then become the spiritual advisers and gift-givers of their people. Well, what happened with this young boy he was brought nine years old was he had a vision and the vision is described and it's a vision prophetic of the terrible future with his tribe was to have but it also spoke of the possible positive aspects of him. It was a vision of what he called the hoop of his nation realizing that it was one of many hoops which is something that we haven’t all learned well enough yet. And the cooperation of all the hoops of all the nations in grand processions and so forth. But more than that, it was an experience of himself as going through the realms of spiritual [00:52:00] imagery that were of his culture and assimilating their import. It comes to one great statement, which for me is a key
statement the understanding of myth and symbols. He says, I saw myself on the central mountain of the world, the highest place, and I had a vision because I was seeing in the sacred manner of the world. And the sacred central mountain was Harney Peak in South Dakota. And then he says, but the central mountain is everywhere. That is a real mythological realization.

Moyers: What?

Joseph Campbell: It distinguishes between the local cult image, Harney Peak, and its connotation the center of the world. The center of the world is the [00:53:00] hub of universe axis mundi; you know the central pole star around which all revolve. The central point of the world is a point where stillness and movement are together. Movement is time, stillness is eternity realizing the relationship of the temporal moment to the eternal, not moment, but forever is the sense of life. Realizing how this moment in your life is actually a moment of eternity, and the experience of the eternal aspect of what you're doing in the temporal experience is the mythological experience and he had it. So is the central mountain of the world Jerusalem, Rome, Benares, Lhasa, Mexico City. Mexico City, Jerusalem is symbolic of a spiritual [00:54:00] principle of the central of the world.

Moyers: So this Middle Indian was saying, there is a shining point where all lines intersect.

Joseph Campbell: That’s exactly what he said.

Moyers: He was saying God has no circumference?

Joseph Campbell: God is an intelligible sphere, that to say a sphere known to the mind, not to the centers, whose center is everywhere and circumference no where. And the center, Bill, is right where you're sitting. And the other one is right where I'm sitting. And each of us is a manifestation of that mystery.

Music [00:54:45]

[00:57:04]

[Audio Ends]