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# Pathways to the Hero's Journey: A Tribute to Joseph Campbell and the 30th Anniversary of His Death

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Joseph Campbell is the mythographer of the last century who has congenially opened the mythological universe to both scholars and to a wide range of people searching for pathways to enlighten their lives. His elixir of life was to help people “see myth as a reflection of the one sublime adventure of life, and then to breathe new life into it” (Campbell, 2003, p. xiv). The hero's journey is his gift, his “ultimate boon” (Campbell, 2008, p. 29) for the human condition and social world. It represents a universal motif which runs through virtually all kinds of change, transformation, and growth. The main objective of this special issue of the *Journal of Genius and Eminence* is to explore the multi-faceted potential of the hero's journey and perhaps shed new light on it. The introduction gives an overview of Campbell's ultimate boon and a summary of each of the 12 articles that follow. Distinguished scientists and outstanding practitioners have joined this journey in tribute to Campbell and the 30th anniversary of his death. The contributors take us far and wide, exploring different ways to explore Campbell's thoughts, allowing insights into the nuances and subtleties of his mythological world, and striking new ways to illuminate the Campbellian universe.

People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's what we're really seeking. I think that what we're seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive. (Campbell & Moyers, 1991, p. 1)

Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) is one of the most influential and innovative mythographers of the 20th century. His seminal life-time achievement is no doubt his modeling of a single great story, the essence of (all) heroic stories he calls the hero's journey. The basic motif of the journey is to leave one condition and finding the source of life to bring the hero's social world forth into a richer condition. In his foundational work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell (2008) regarded the monomyth as universal across time and space. He was therefore less interested in cultural and regional differences and more in the discovery of the

similarities and the common ground of myths. Although Campbell analysed the elementary ideas of myths worldwide for common ground, he did point out that their expression is specific in the different socio-cultural environments. Myths resonate with local need, but are revered by every people on earth, “appearing everywhere in new combinations, while remaining, like the elements of a kaleidoscope, only a few and always the same” (Campbell, 2007, p. 15). He made this thought even more concrete:

We may therefore think of any myth or rite either as a clue to what may be permanent or universal in human nature (in which case our emphasis will be psychological, or perhaps even metaphysical), or, on the other hand, as a function of the local scene, the landscape, the history, and the sociology of the folk concerned (in which case our approach will be ethnological or historical). (Campbell, 1991, p. 461)

Campbell was deeply influenced by Jung's (1969) conceptualization of the archetype, Rank's (1952) psychological approach to myths, and Zimmer's (1992) mythological Indian studies. Campbell's insights also parallel developments in ritual theory offered by van Gennep (1960)

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and Turner (1969). These support the universal character of the monomyth although they were without purposeful intent. Campbell's ideas were disseminated to a larger, non-academic audience by an interview series with Bill Moyers which was broadcast one year after his death and published as *The Power of Myth* (Campbell & Moyers, 1991). Campbell's influence on popular culture is indisputable, and in fact it was in the movies that Campbell gained his greatest fame (Vogler, 2007). His intellectual influence on film is, for example, readily apparent in the first *Star Wars* film trilogy (Campbell & Moyers, 1991; Campbell, 2004). However, his multi-layered work has not received acknowledgment from the academic community (Rensma, 2009). Even though there is acknowledgment, it is not widespread. As inspired by Campbell, heroism science emerged over the last decade as an interdisciplinary research field, and he is regarded as its founder (Allison & Goethals, 2017).

Now is the time to give Campbell tribute, particularly, in this special issue in honor of the 30th anniversary of Campbell's death. We know that this project can only be a small contribution to panegyricize Campbell's extensive lifework, but we hope that the special issue supports the experience of being alive.

### Transparent to Transcendence

Myth "is the homeland of the inspiration" (Campbell, 2007, p. 183) and belongs to the great treasures of humankind. Myths comprise the elementary thoughts, experiences, and ideas which have inspired and outlived societies and generations. They are the clues to the "spiritual potentialities of the human life" (Campbell & Moyers, 1991, p. 12). To open the treasure chest means to open human existence to the existential questions and topics to

carry the individual through the stages of his life, from birth through maturity through senility to death. The mythology must do so in accord with the social order of his group, the cosmos as understood by his group, and the monstrous mystery (Campbell, 2004, p. 9).

In addition, myths offer a way to lead a life that is in harmony with one's nature; they are pathways to bliss (Campbell, 2004). If people follow their bliss, they have the possibility to live a "mythologically inspired life" (Campbell, 2003, p. 79).

I don't know what being is. And I don't know what consciousness is. But I know what bliss is: that deep sense of being present, of doing what you absolutely must do to be yourself. If you can hang on to that,

you are on the edge of the transcendent already. (Campbell, 2004, p. xxiii)

The specific worldwide myth variations are summarized in mythologies. These are organizations of "symbolic narratives and images that are metaphorical of the possibilities of human experience and fulfillment in a given society at a given time" (Campbell, 2003, p. 160). Mythologies define the potential meanings of a human's experience in respect of the historical events "as well as the psychological impact of this knowledge diffused through sociological structures" (Campbell, 2001, p. 8) on the individual. Therefore,

mythology is not a lie, mythology is poetry, it is metaphorical. It has been well said that mythology is the penultimate truth—penultimate because the ultimate cannot be put into words. It is beyond words, beyond images ... Mythology pitches the mind beyond that rim, to what can be known but not told. So this is the penultimate truth. (Campbell & Moyers, 1991, p. 206)

The concept of being beyond words and beyond images means that myths open the world to the transcendence. "You can call transcendence a hole or the whole, either one" (Campbell, 2004, p. xxiii) as it goes beyond world experience. Campbell (2003) ultimately defined a myth as "a metaphor transparent to transcendence" (p. 51).

How do we find this thing in ourselves, that which truly moves us? Well, as I've said, mythologies are basically the same everywhere. Consequently, mythic images do not refer primarily to historical events. They come from the psyche and talk to the psyche: their primary reference is to the psyche—to the spirit, as we call it—and not to a historical event. (Campbell, 2004, p. 92)

Myths are expressions of the human imagination (Le Grice, 2013, p. 153) shaped by elementary ideas (Bastian, 1884) or archetypes which are imprinted in the psyche as the collective unconscious (Jung, 1969). Archetypes are the motivating forces and references for the myths. They are precisely those "that have inspired, throughout the annals of human culture, the basic images of ritual, mythology, and vision" (Campbell, 2008, p. 14). Archetypes are universal to all humankind.

Myths serve three functions (Campbell & Moyers, 1991; Campbell, 2001). The first is the mystical and cosmological function which allows a connection between human beings and the universe and shows this connection in such a way that mystery comes through. The second is the sociological

and moral function that supports and validates a certain order in a society. This function leads to the mythological variation from place to place. The third is a psychological and pedagogical function that relates to how to live a human life through all the various stages from birth to death.

What differentiates a myth from a story? The main difference is that stories are told but myths are experienced. Myths always include the momentum of real presence which means that they are enacted, often in rites or rituals.

A ritual is nothing but the dramatic, visual, active manifestation or representation of a myth. By participating in the rite, you are engaged in the myth, and the myth works on you—provided, of course, that you are caught by the image. (Campbell, 2004, p. 97)

If enacted in rites, myths fulfill their function and help human beings to experience themselves, the social order as well as the universe in a mystical way.

Even if mythologies vary in place and time, Campbell (2008) worked out in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* that there is only one mythology in the world. This basic mythology “has been infected in various cultures in terms of their historical and social circumstances and needs and particular local ethic systems, but it’s one mythology” (Campbell, 2003, p. 150). Campbell marked his finding as the monomyth. This is a term first mentioned in James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (Campbell & Robinson, 2005). He put it straight in the following:

Whether presented in the vast, almost oceanic images of the Orient, in the vigorous narratives of the Greeks, or in the majestic legends of the Bible, the adventure of the hero normally follows the pattern of the nuclear unit above described: a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return. (Campbell, 2008, p. 28)

The monomyth means that all myths emerge out of a common creative imagination: It is the narrative in the human search for the ultimate spiritual meaning in life that parallels all legends of heroes “who must travel to an unknown world and do battle with the powers of darkness in order to return with the gift of knowledge” (Campbell, 2001, p. 103). This ultimate spiritual meaning in life is shared by all human beings; therefore, we would like to amplify *the hero with a thousand faces* by a thousand heroes with one spirit.

### A Passage to the Hero’s Journey

Campbell’s comparative observations lead to the development of the hero’s journey, which is the insightful illustration and holistic metaphor for the monomyth. The hero’s journey describes the stages of the transformation that heroes share. It is a narrative pattern that can appear physically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. The narrative pattern is at the same time simplistic and yet rich in its interpretations. This can be seen in the different applications of the hero’s journey.

Over the past thirty years, Campbell’s hero’s journey has been introduced into various academic and professional areas and domains. Vogler (2007) used it for narrative analysis and composition of films and plays. The hero’s journey was developed further to a gestalt therapeutic workshop concept by Rebillot (1993) and a broader psychological approach for personal renewal which focuses on the hero as a universal transformative archetype by Pearson (1991). The hero’s journey is used as a metaphor in learning and education (Brown & Moffett, 1999; Goldstein, 2005; Randles, 2012) as well as law (Robbins, 2006). It serves as a conceptual springboard for the development of computer games (Buchanan-Oliver & Seo, 2012), tourism (Robledo & Batle, 2015), and finds its way into esotericism (Banzhaf, 2000).

Campbell developed the hero’s journey as a parable for the transformation of human beings (Banzhaf, 2000) which leads through great movements of departure, initiation, and return. Following Allison and Goethals (2017), the description of the hero’s journey “points to three distinct transformations: A transformation of setting, a transformation of self, and a transformation of society ... Without a change in setting, the hero cannot change herself, and without a change in herself, the hero cannot change the world” (p. 381).

The hero’s journey actually contains 17 interconnected stages. They mirror three main phases: departure, initiation, and return. The hero is introduced in the ordinary world where he or she receives the call to adventure. The individual is at first reluctant (refusal of the call). Next, a mentor (supernatural aid) encourages the hero to depart. Then, the crossing of the first threshold enables the hero to enter the special and unknown world (the belly of the whale) for initiation. Here, the individual encounters tests, allies, and enemies (the road of trials) and approaches the inmost cave (the meeting with the goddess, woman as the temptress) to endure the ordeal (atonement with the father, apotheosis). Thereafter, a reward is the ultimate boon. The hero may be tempted to rest at this stage, believing that he or she has already gained all things ever desired (refusal of the return). However, it is vital to return. After further challenges in the special world (the magic flight, rescue from without) the hero goes back with the crossing of the return threshold to enter



again the ordinary world. The hero experiences a resurrection which transforms him or her into being a master of the two worlds. Finally, the return with the ultimate boon benefits the ordinary world, thereafter offering a freedom to live (Campbell, 2008, pp. 28-29). Within the Appendix there is an illustration of the hero's journey that was first developed by Campbell. However, one can see that this illustration is only loosely connected to the above description albeit highly interesting for those motivated to explore the hero's journey. Additionally, this illustration shows that Campbell frequently varied his descriptions of the hero's journey. The core elements remain constant (Vogler, 2007; Voytilla, 1999). Campbell (2008) pointed out that

many tales isolate and greatly enlarge upon one or two of the typical elements of the full cycle ..., others string a number of independent cycles into a single series (as in the Odysee). Differing characters or episodes can become fused, or a single element can reduplicate itself and reappear under many changes (p. 212).

According to Allison and Goethals (2017, pp. 383-390), not all hero's journeys contain the same stages, archetypes or dynamics. Hero's journeys can vary with regard to subject (hero or follower(s)), entity (individual, dyad, group, organization, or society), speed (slow or fast), duration (short-lived or long-lasting), life phase (early, middle or late), type (moral, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, physical, and/or motivational), depth (shallow or deep), or source (internal or external).

The concept of the hero's journey is applicable for a large variety of human problems and supports people in reflecting on their own life (Banzhaf, 2000). The pattern "seems to extend in many dimensions, describing more than one reality. It accurately describes, among other things, the process of making a journey, the necessary working parts of a story, ... and the passage of a soul through life" (Vogler, 2007: p. xiv). Essential variations are the nine-step model of creative self-experience (Rebillot, 1993) and the twelve-stage skeletal framework for writers (Vogler, 2007). Banzhaf (2000) developed the hero's journey further in combining it with the 22 tarot cards of the major arcana. Campbell (2003) already foresaw the fruitful possibility in combining the hero's journey and Tarot:

The most interesting question I ever got was when I was lecturing here at Esalen in the (Abraham) Maslow Room in 1967. Somebody asked, 'What about the symbolism of the Waite deck of tarot cards?' Well, I hadn't thought about it.... That was a very exciting thing, I had the luck to recognize

a couple of sequences there. There is one for the Four Ages of Man: Youth, Maturity, Age, and what Dante calls Senility.... And then the big set at the end, the Honors Suit, the Major Arcana, has to do with the mystical path. It worked out just like that; it was right in front of my face. It was a fascinating experience, the most interesting I have had here.... I saw it there, what it represented was a program for life that derived from European medieval consciousness. And actually carried into symbolic form many of the implications of Dante's philosophy. That was the one that really hit me.... That's what's known as the Hermetic Gnosticism—Bodhi, in Sanskrit. Change the perspective of your eyes, and you see the whole world before you now is radiant. Do you see? (pp. 172-175)

Due to the fact that the stages are closely anchored in the human psyche (Banzhaf, 2000), the hero's journey has the potential to help with all kinds of human challenges. Banzhaf (2000) even considered it as a personal guidance for a human's life path. Such a path can support people to reflect on their own life.

When people see themselves confronted with unbridgeable problems, they often have the feeling they are the only ones who have to deal with these special kinds of problems. However, in various contexts, other people have already experienced similar problems and challenges. Therefore, people can identify with the hero's journey, since it shows them that overcoming challenges is an important part of life. Even more, while performing the hero's journey, change and transformation happen.

Within the lifespan of a human being, "there are multiple hero journeys...with varying degrees of suffering, healing and transformation" (Efthimiou, 2017, p. 152). Campbell (2004) explains, "what I think is that a good life is one hero journey after another. Over and over again, you are called to the realm of adventure, you are called to new horizons" (p. 133). He lively frames this thought:

Full circle, from the tomb of the womb to the womb of the tomb, we come: an ambiguous, enigmatical incursion into a world of solid matter that is soon to melt from us, like the substance of a dream. And, looking back at what had promised to be our own unique, unpredictable, and dangerous adventure, all we find in the end is such a series of standard metamorphoses as men and women have undergone in every quarter of the world, in all recorded centuries, and under every odd disguise of civilization. (Campbell, 2008, p. 8)

### Let the Journey Begin

The challenge for this special issue project was to engage the potential of the hero's journey through interdisciplinary and cross-methodological approaches. The article selection covers a broad range of topics in tribute to Campbell and his extensive oeuvre. It serves as an inspiring impulse to many of the possible ways in which Campbell and the hero's journey can be understood. Distinguished scientists and outstanding practitioners with diverse backgrounds and interests participated and applied the hero's journey in an innovative way and to new fields. In *Myths to Live by*, Campbell (1993) already outlines possible research topics which were and are breeding ground for researchers in the field of mythological application:

Although false and to be rejected as accounts of physical history, such universally cherished figures of the mythic imagination must represent facts of the mind ... And whereas it must, of course, be the task of the historian, archeologist, and prehistorian to show that the myths are as facts untrue ... it will be more and more, and with increasing urgency, the task of the psychologist and comparative mythologist not only to identify, analyze, and interpret the symbolized 'facts of the mind', but also to evolve techniques for retaining these in health and ... assist mankind to a knowledge and appreciation of our own inward, as well as the world's outward, orders of fact. (p. 12)

Therefore, there are several questions to aid in creating one's own journey through the 12 articles. Who is the hero in our contemporary world? How can we interpret the hero's journey as an inspiration of our everyday life? What are common and different features between various types of hero's journeys? What is the impact of the hero's journey and archetypes on various professional areas and domains? To what extent are archetypes performed, enacted and embodied in our society?

Each article was allocated to one stage of the hero's journey to create this special issue journey. This allocation is subjective and essential thoughts of each contribution will be found upon reading them. It should simply whet the reader's appetite to start his and her own journey in approaching the sparkling wholeness of this special issue.

The first article, "Joseph Campbell Goes to the Movies: The Influence of the Hero's Journey in Film Narrative", is by Vogler. He is the advocate of the hero's journey during the last decades. His twelve-stage model which he compares in his article with Campbell's approach has been a call to adventure for many screenwriters and playwrights in

Hollywood to move out of the familiar sphere of storytelling. Vogler gives a vivid overview of the influence of Campbell's ideas on story development in the film industry and shows how the hero's journey can be used as an effective trigger for modern storytelling.

In "The Hero with a Thousand Facebooks: Mythology In Between the Fall of Mumanism and the Rise of Big-Data Religion", Ranieri focuses on the role of digital transformation from a mythological perspective. He highlights that big data should not be regarded as the end of mythology but a kind of supernatural aid that encourages humans moving into the future as heroes. Ranieri is even going one step further by reading digital transformation as the new mythology of today. This understanding could soften the growing fear of humans to lose meaning during their life journeys.

Efthimiou and Franco present in their contribution "Heroic Intelligence: The Hero's Journey as an Evolutionary and Existential Blueprint" a new perspective on the hero's journey as a seat of intelligence which crosses the boundaries of the biological, psychological, social, cultural, historical, phenomenological, and existential domains. They argue that the hero's journey is deeply ingrained in our evolution bridging heroism, intelligence and transformation. Crossing of the first threshold, crossing into new areas, the article supports a new understanding of the human organism as a hero organism. In particular, Efthimiou and Franco emphasize the heroic process and becoming of the hero during his or her journey.

In "From Monomyth to Interdisciplinary Creative Polymathy", Darbellay investigates the experiences and transformations of researchers who travel between boundaries. Interdisciplinary researchers experience an initiation as they are swallowed into the academic unknown through the belly of the whale which leads to polymathic skills and scientific creativity. Darbellay points out that interdisciplinary researchers are not automatically scientific geniuses but rather ordinary heroes with a talent to develop new insights from different disciplines. He accentuates the pluralistic potential of the monomyth and introduces the hero with a thousand and one faces.

Velikovsky with his article "Darwin & Kubrick, Joe Campbell & Me: Eminent-Genius and Everyday-Joe Heroes on a Journey" takes the reader on a journey through the lives of the two geniuses. The article describes the lives of Charles Darwin and Stanley Kubrick as a monomythic hero's journey. Velikovsky comes to the conclusion that both personalities had to pass a road of trials till they were finally regarded as creative geniuses in the domains of science and the arts. The hero's journey can be regarded as a general problem solver algorithm of any kind of creative lifework, regardless if the hero is a genius or an everyday person.

The hero's journey as a pathway to psychological creativity is elaborated by Williams in "The Hero's Journey: A Creative Act". The article addresses from a psychological perspective that the hero has to connect with unknown inner reserves, inner resources, and inner potentials during his or her journey. Their integration can only occur in the atonement with the father so that the hero is transformed. Williams shows that only transformed heroes are able to create and innovate thus providing boons for others. This act allows to live a more psychologically creative life beyond existing notions, beliefs and behaviors.

In his article "From Orphan to Sage: The Hero's Journey as an Assessment Tool for Hip Hop Songs Created in Music Therapy", Viega presents an interpretive clinical assessment to construct meaning from songs. This assessment is based on Campbell's hero's journey and Pearson's archetypal stages of human development. Viega analyzed songs by adolescents who identified with Hip Hop culture and who have experienced childhood trauma. He interprets these songs as sonic portraits of the songwriters' own journeys to reveal the trials, clinical goals, fears, and especially rewards, the ultimate boon which is present in the lyrical and musical components.

Randles conceptually explores in his article "Music Education's Hero Collective: More Like the Justice League than Superman" a necessary change in North American music education. Randles introduces the term hero collective to rescue the music education field from its current compromised conditions. The hero collective seems to be a more realistic concept to describe future curriculum development in music education as a creative process. To avoid a refusal of the return and a change in the future of music education practice, the hero collective should be seen more as loosely related heroes like The Justice League on their similar but different journeys.

Campbell's namesake, Joseph of Genesis, is the anchor point in Balkaran's article "Joseph's Journey: Uncovering Israel's Unconscious". Whereas Moses seems to be the paragon of a transactional leader, Joseph represents the transformational leader, the archetypal hero. The people of Israel perceived Joseph's creative power till the magic flight, the return to the known of the desert. Balkaran sees this hero's journey not as a trip but an unplanned adventure. Joseph's intuitive leadership power makes explicit what is encoded in Campbell's understanding that the masculine individual consciousness ventures into the feminine collective unconscious, the breeding ground of creativity.

In "From Zero to Hero: A Narrative Amplification of Design Thinking", Sonnenburg illustrates that the hero's journey can be used as a renewed changeling within the assemblage of prevalent creativity and innovation models, like design thinking. The hero's journey helps overcome

shortcomings of design thinking and leads to new perspectives and insights, especially in the crossing of the return threshold, when the prototype, the boon, is applied in the known organizational world. Sonnenburg stresses that bringing the prototype back to the organization can be even more challenging than travel through the unknown world.

Kostera looks in her article "Adventurers and Lovers: Organizational Heroines and Heroes for a New Time" for underpinning archetypal tales which relate to the essential principle of the organizing of alternative organizations. Kostera found in her studies two overarching archetypes: the individuation seeking adventurer and the unity seeking lover. Although they run in opposite directions, they can be brought together comparable to the master of the worlds. This narrative hybrid can best be described as a band of heroes bound by love for each other, sharing a higher cause but allowing one to be different on the common heroes' journey.

In the final article "Heroic Organizations and Institutions as Secular Temples: A Personal Outlook", Pearson applies an archetypal analysis to the United States and its institutions. She describes the explorer as the founding archetype which is the symbol of the freedom of life in the United States and beyond. This has recently lost its binding force in society. Pearson argues that it is necessary to reactivate the explorer to build bridges between people, social groups, and institutions. The global challenges of today, including terrorism, income inequality, and climate change can only be solved if there is a return to a mythical understanding which leads to a common pathway to bliss. It is fitting to conclude this introduction by quoting Campbell's (2008) own thoughts on this necessary renaissance of myth:

Wherever the poetry of myth is interpreted as biography, history, or science, it is killed. The living images become only remote facts of a distant time and sky... When a civilization begins to reinterpret its mythology in this way, the life goes out of it, temples become museums, and the link between the two perspectives is dissolved... To bring the images back to life, one has to seek, not interesting applications to modern affairs, but illuminating hints from the inspired past. (p. 213)

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Appendix

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