

News for Life after 55

The Power of Myth in Retirement

Hello. This newsletter grew out of my renewed exploration of The Power of Myth by Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers. It seems particularly relevant for this time of life.

Our diminishing body

The problem in retirement is the body has long sense reached its mid-life height of power and is in decline. One of the psychological problems we face is the reality of growing older and the fear of death. But as we age, we start to identify ourselves less with the body, which is falling away and more with the consciousness in our body. We become more aware of how this body is a vehicle of consciousness and we discover that if we identify with the consciousness, we can watch the body go like an old car.

Somehow with the diminishment of our own body, our consciousness expands to the experience of that which is eternal. According to Joseph Campbell, the basic theme of all mythology is that there is an invisible plane supporting the visible one. This is expressed in the idea of Buddha consciousness or mystical Christian consciousness of an immanent luminous consciousness that informs all things and all lives.

The Mask of Eternity

An 18-foot high Hindu sculpture in a cave along the harbor in Bombay (as shown in the image above) shows us the dual nature of life. The two masks on the left and right side present pairs of opposites, the duality we find in the plane of time—mother and father, good and evil, right and wrong. All are sets of opposite pairs in the movement of time. But the center mask represents the stillness of eternity, the plane of our consciousness beyond time. Movement is time, but stillness is eternity.

River Clarion—Mary Oliver

*I don't know who God is exactly.
But I'll tell you this.*

*I was sitting in the river named Clarion,
on a water splashed stone
and all afternoon I listened to the voices
of the river talking,
Whenever the water struck the stone it had
something to say,
and the water itself and even the mosses
trailing under the water.
And slowly, very slowly, it became clear*



*to me what they were saying,
Said the river: I am part of holiness.
And I too, said the stone. And I too whispered
the moss beneath the water.*

As we age, we begin to get more glimpses into our eternal consciousness. According to Joseph Campbell, realizing how this moment in our life is actually a moment of eternity and experiencing the eternal aspect of what we are doing in the temporal experience is the mythological experience.

What are myths?

According to Joseph Campbell, myths are the world's dreams. They provide messages and wisdom about living. They come from every culture, but all have timeless themes of the spiritual potentialities of the human life. They bring us into a level of spiritual consciousness, give cosmological scientific understand, and teach us how to behave in a civilized society.

All the great religions are metaphorical stories of the cosmic mystery and each religion is a kind of software that has its own set of signals, says Joseph Campbell. If a person is involved in a religion and built their life on it, its best to stay with the software they are given.

Myths offer life models that are appropriate to the time in which we are living, but we are changing so fast that what was proper 50 years ago is not proper today, says Joseph Campbell. When the world changes, then the religion has to be transformed as well as we see with Pope Francis' 2015 climate initiative Landato Si.

Myths for today

According to Joseph Campbell, things are changing so fast that the only mythology that is valid today is the mythology of the planet. He notes that when we come to the end of one time and the beginning of a new one, it's a period of tremendous pain and turmoil. The threat we feel and

everyone feels is the notion of Armageddon coming.

According to Fritjof Capra, the author of *The Tao of Physics*, as individuals, as nations, and as a planet we are experiencing the end of a worldview. The old worldview or paradigm sees the world the planet as a mechanical system where man dominates and controls nature and believes in unlimited material progress and unchecked ecological destruction. (Some world leaders and a number of companies and investors still hold and operate under this worldview.) With growing scientific studies, we are now starting to see the world as a integrated whole not made up of building blocks, but as a network or *web of life* that is fundamentally interconnected and interdependent.

This new worldview recognizes that we are all embedded in and ultimately dependent upon the cyclical processes of nature. As such, all of us are being called to shift our lives on a personal, local, national, and global basis to align with a mythological worldview that focuses on sustainability, especially with the ravages of the climate reinforcing this immediate need as fierce storms, floods, and fires threaten our way of life around the planet.

Our planetary mythology

According to Joseph Campbell, the closest thing to a planetary mythology is to act in relation to the brotherhood of all living beings. Says Joseph, I think our new mythology is right here on earth, in the body, in the womb of our being.

Perhaps no better worldview that brings us full circle can be seen than that given by Chief Seattle, the last spokesman of the Paleolithic moral order, in a letter to the President in 1852.

*Every part of the earth is sacred to my people.
Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore,
every mist in the dark woods, every meadow,
every humming insect. All are holy in the
memory and experience of my people...We are
part of the earth and it is part of us. Will you
teach your children what we have taught our
children? That the earth is our mother? What
befalls the earth befalls all the sons of the
earth. This we know, the earth does not be-
long to man, man belongs to the earth. All
things are connected like the blood that
unites us all. Man did not weave the web of
life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he
does to the web, he does to himself.*



www.CraftingYourLifeAfter55.com
reverestassociates@gmail.com
(831) 475-6475

Events & Services

The *Crafting Your Life After 55* Workshop — Come explore creative ways to recognize and align with your life purpose after retirement. One participant said: *Outstanding! Amazing! Inspiring!*

Saturday, May 10th and 17th, 10 am to 12:30 pm, Cabrillo College Extension
\$80, Bring a friend \$70. Call (831) 479-6331 to register.

Saturday, Aug. 16th and 23rd, 10:30 am to 1:00 pm, Capitola Recreation
\$73 Resident/\$93 Non-resident. Call (831) 475-5935 to register.

The *Crafting Your Life After 55* Workbook Release 4.0 Is Available

With Release 4.0, the workbook contains a number of stories about people living fulfilling retirement lives. One participant said: *This was one of the best things I've done for myself since retiring. So valuable.*

\$19.95 plus 6.74 tax and shipping. (Unbound budget version \$8.95 plus \$5.95 t/s)
Pay using PayPal or send a check to Robin Everest
1555 Merrill St. #72, Santa Cruz, CA 55062. Please include your shipping address.

Robin Everest is teaching a eight-week class called *The Power of Myth* with the PBS book and DVDs this fall at Capitola Recreation.

Western Civilization is waking up, some of us faster than others, to this understanding. (I think many of us knew this as children. Says Joseph Campbell, it's a different kind of world to grow up in when you're out in the forest with the chipmunks and the great owls. All these things are around you as presences, representing forces and powers and magical possibilities of life that are not yours and yet are all part of life and that open out to you. Then you find it echoing in yourself, because you are nature.)

The ascent of the spirit

According to Joseph, this opening of the heart to all the world's beings is part of the ascent of the spirit as a people.

The spirit ascends through different centers or archetypal stages of experience that align with the chakras or energy centers of the body, explains Joseph Campbell. The first center, the root chakra, begins with the elementary animal experiences of hunger and greed and the second chakra with sexual zeal and onto the third chakra in the solar plexus with physical mastery of one kind or another.

These are all empowering stages of experience. But then with the ascent to the fourth chakra, the center of the heart is touched and a sense of compassion awakens for another person or creature. You realize that you and the other are in some sense creatures of the one life in being—and a whole new stage of life in the spirit opens out. The awakening of the heart from bestial self-interest to humanity is compassion.

According to Joseph Campbell, this opening of the heart to the world is what is symbolized mythologically as the virgin birth. It signifies the birth as a spiritual life in what was formerly an elementary human animal living for merely physical aims of health, progeny, power, and pleasure. But the religious way of life is to live not in terms of the self-interested intentions of this particular body at this particular time, but in terms of the insight of that larger consciousness.

For anyone who has reached the level of the heart in their lives—what you are trying to bring out is a realization of these spiritual principles. You become the vehicle for the radiance of spirit. You must

live not in terms of your own self-interested intentions, but from your deepest being where you are one with your non-dual transcendent consciousness.

Findings & practices

So how do we do that? How do we live from our depths? Here are some findings, and practices from Joseph Campbell.

Follow your bliss. Each incarnation has potentialities and the mission of life is to live those potentialities. Each of us is a completely unique creature and if we are ever to give any gift to the world it will be to fulfill our potentialities. We do this by *following our bliss*. According to Joseph Campbell, something inside you knows when you're in the center—that knows when you're on the beam or off the beam.

What is it that makes you happy? Stay with it no matter what people tell you. This is what I call *following your bliss*, says Joseph Campbell. When you overcome all the "thou shalt" messages in your life and live from your bliss at the center, you are transformed into a child moving out of its own nature experiencing the pure, fresh impulse of life.

Enter sacred time. You must have a room or certain hour or so each day where you simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be like working in your art studio, hiking, studying, writing at Verve. This is the place of creative incubation. In your sacred place you get the "thou" feeling of life native people had for the world in which they lived.

Love your fate. Which is in fact your life. Just as people whom you have met apparently by chance become leading agents in your life, so too will you have served as an agent in the lives of others. Everything arises in mutual relation to everything else.

In conclusion, according to the Navahos, the *pollen path* emerges as we live our life from the center of our being. We become propagators of life wherever we go.