

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH REPORT

New Mythos: Escape from Planet Earth

Research Team:

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VISIT I

January 16-18, 2010

James Waddell, David Lowe, Paul Waddell

In the initial visit team members were especially interested, first, in learning more about how Campbell showed that the function of myth was to provide a narrative pattern that gave significance to our existence. We were especially interested in learning more about the Four Life Structuring Forces of Life on Earth that Campbell saw as the grounds of the old Mythos. He believed that these four structures or conditions of earthly existence gave shape to the Hero With A Thousand Faces. These Four Structuring Forces of Life on Earth are:

1. Earth as the Home of Life Provides Gravity (Conditions Form of the Body and its Organs)
2. Diurnal Alternation of Light and Dark
3. Contrast in Physical Form and Spheres of Competence of the Male and Female (Reproduction, Birth from a Womb, A New Beginning, Link to Mother Earth)
4. Readiness for Life (Normal Stages of Human Growth and Emotional Stability from Moment of Birth to Death and its Stink of Decay)

[Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (Viking Press: New York, 1959) pp. 57 ff.] Campbell was influenced by Adolf Portmann, "The Earth as the House of Life," (1953) OPUS Archives, The Joseph Campbell Collection, ERANOS PROJECT: REPORT NO. XXIII, 17 (443) 1945-51 & Jubilee.]

Our second interest in the initial visit was to learn whether Campbell thought the advent of the space age altered these structuring life forces or conditions of being human when humankind left the earth to become a dweller of the universe. What did he think was the reality of living in space? Did he perceive that the flight from earth is a repudiation of the Earth as Mother of all who dwell upon it? Did he have

any thoughts about the significance of the move from a **given** earthly human condition to a **fabricated** universal human condition? Did he identify a link between earthly flight and the modern human creation of artificial life and the desire for immortal existence through such devices as cloning and cybernetics? Did he reflect on the shape of a hero's journey if the hero no longer needs to be born of a woman, is free of gravity, capable of turning night into day, and no longer is subject to aging or the stink of decay?

After reviewing archival material, team members had a clearer understanding of Campbell's relating the *Four Structuring Forces of Life on Earth* to *The Four Functions Of Myth*. This review showed Campbell believed that the most important function of the Old Mythos of the pre-space age was based on the body's earthly existence. In an unpublished lecture he said the final function of myth is "To guide the individual through the stages of his life harmoniously, from infancy through the crises of puberty, to adulthood and then retiring, disengaging and passing through the last mysterious gate." ["Myth and the Body," First Lecture at AMHN (10/27/ 82), Opus Archives, The Joseph Campbell Collection, Box 108, Series: Unpublished Lecture Transcripts, Folder U 29, (revised in Inner Reaches of Outer Space)].

Gerald Clark in an interview with Campbell reiterated the point that "...in Campbell's view, the most important function of mythology is to guide the individual, stage by stage, through the inevitable psychological crises of a useful life...." [Gerald Clark, "The Need for New Myths," **Time** (January 17, 1972), pp. 30-31, Opus Archives, The Joseph Campbell Collection, Interviews Folder 160.]

Campbell realized, however, that the dawn of the space age changed the very ground of mythology. In response to an interviewer's observation, "Then the space age challenges everything that makes us earth-centered or group-centered," Campbell proclaimed:

The reality of living in the space means that we are born anew, not again into an old-time religion but to a new order of things. There are no horizons—that is the meaning of the space age. We are in a free fall into a future that is mysterious. It is very fluid and all this is disconcerting to many people.

["Joseph Campbell, in Eugene Kennedy, "Earthrise: The Dawning of a New Spiritual Awareness, **The New York Times Magazine** (April 15, 1979), p. 51 (?), OPUS Archives, The Joseph Campbell Collection, Box 107, Interviews, Folder I 12.]

Campbell was aware that a collision of myths could arise out of the disappearance of horizons and reflected on the consequences of "spaceship earth." ["The Modern Situation," Outline, OPUS Archives, The Joseph Campbell Collection, Vol. IV, M 58.]

He warned:

Certainly, there is a new age coming, and it will be a planetary age. But the beginnings of ages are usually terrible, with great violence, yang in a most brutal way. New ages don't come softly; they are times of aggression and smashing. I see no signs of anything gentle happening.

[Joseph Campbell, "Myths of the Universe: The Earth Spirit and the Coming of a New Age, An Interview with Joseph Campbell by Cate Miodini, ANIMA (thirteen 1) p. 36, OPUS Archives, The Joseph Campbell Collection, Box 107, Interviews, Folder: I 20.]

Examination of documents showed that he had an historical perspective on Western Science's tendency to be the servant of technology and was concerned that "The spirit of Hell has betrayed to man the secret of mastering the world-mechanism and even of himself enacting the part of God." ["Western Science," OPUS Archives, The Joseph Campbell Collection, Box 121, Series: Outtakes, Modern Condition OMC 32.]

Campbell, however, did not necessarily see that *Homo Faber*, man the maker, builder, was a totally bad development for humankind. As *Homo Faber* a human could exercise freedom of the will,

"not as a sinner, but as a creator

- a) not to find, but to create identity (not to ask, but to say, what one is made for)
- b) not ruled by animal-plant-or-planet, not by Society but each individual as a "species" (a thou)"

["The Modern Myth?" OPUS Archives, The Joseph Campbell Collection, Box 121, Series: Outtakes, Modern Condition, Folder MC 60.]

Campbell admired an individual, especially an artist, who did not consider himself a thing, but as an irreducible "Thou." This type of artist, who does not simply imitate nature,

"...brings the images of mythology to manifestation, and without images (whether mental or visual) there is no mythology...(It) is the nonjudgmental way of seeing that is proper to the arts which allow things to stand forth and be seen as they are, neither as desirable nor to be feared, but as statements, each in its own mode, of the nature of being.

[Joseph Campbell, **The Inner Reaches of Outer Space: Metaphor as Myth and As Religion**, The Joseph Campbell Foundation (New World Library: Novato, California, 2002), p. xxii.]

One thing Campbell believed that a person can do for another was to remind him of the inner forms of those images lost at birth. Through Art and Philosophy they can be recalled, they evoke memories from inner life. [THE JCF, L841, "Cosmology and the mystic imagination," tape 1, 5/14/83, Jung Institute, San Francisco.]

Another thing Campbell believed was that a human's inner space (*a priori knowledge*) makes it possible to understand outer space. When he was asked how the calculations made here on earth can work out in space, he responded that the laws of space are *a priori knowledge*. They are with in us from birth. Inner space and outer space are the same. Humans are born from space.

[THE JCF, L841, *Cosmology and the mystic imagination*, tape 1, 5/14/83, Jung Institute, San Francisco.]

He reflects on this Kantian notion at length in **The Outer Reaches of Outer Space**.

Campbell believes that the artist will lead the way in the creation of a New Mythos in this time of the space age with its violence, aggression, and smashing. As will be seen below in the report on the team second visit to the OPUS Archives, Campbell said that there was no better medium than film to make myth come alive.

While Campbell recognized that the irradiation of horizons created a perilous age, he was not a prophet of doom. He thought the view of the earth from the moon might help humankind remove tribal, religious, and national boundaries. These boundaries lead to the hating of out-groups by in-groups. With a lunar perspective of Spaceship Earth humanity is in a position to see itself as one, as a planetary in-group, free from hate, uniting to protect the earth. ["The Myths and Masks of God: Experiencing the Divine," OPUS Archives, The Joseph Campbell Audio Collection, Tape 3, Vol. 5 (Cooper Union Lecture 3, 1971).]

Campbell was amazed that that the media did not give more importance to the spiritual dimensions of the 1969 Apollo moonwalk. [Ibid.] He was appalled by the way people tried to look away from the meaning of the moon landing:

I remember seeing a picture of an astronaut standing on the moon. It was up at Yale and someone had scrawled on it 'So What.' That is the arrogance of the kind of academic narrowness one too often sees: it is trapped in its own prejudices, its own stale categories.

“Earthrise: The Dawning of a New Spiritual Awareness,”
p. ?]

He realized with the Italian poet, Giuseppe Ungaretti, there was never such a night in the history of the world. Seen from the moon the earth is in heaven. This vision of the small and beautiful the earth led Campbell to share Ungaretti’s wonderment:

What are you doing, Earth, in Heaven?

Tell me, what are you doing, Silent Earth?

[Giuseppe Ungaretti, “What are you doing, Earth, in Heaven,” Joseph Campbell, **The Mythic Image**, Bollinger Series C (Princeton University Press: Princeton, New Jersey, 1974), p. 498.]

For Campbell earthrise is a symbolic compass:

Earthrise is like all symbols. They resemble compasses. One point is in a fixed place but the other moves to the unknown. The fear of the unknown, this free fall into the future, can be detected all around us. But we live in the stars and we are finally moved by awe to our greatest adventures.

[“Earthrise, The Dawning of a New Spiritual Awareness,” p. ?]

The Silent Earth, viewed from the moon, obliterated the distinction between Mother Earth and Father Sky. Campbell believed earthrise provided the symbol that allowed us to feel the truth of the discovery Copernicus made over four centuries ago. Before earthrise we may have theoretically accepted Copernicus’s map of the universe, but we continued acting as if heaven was up there and earth down here. We maintained the religious idea that such things as body and soul, flesh and spirit, natural and supernatural were similarly divided as heaven and earth. But,

With the moonwalk, the religious myth that sustained these notions could no longer be held. With our view of earthrise, we could see that the earth and heavens were no longer divided but that the earth is in the heavens. There is no division and all the theological notions based on the distinction between the heavens and the earth collapse with that realization. There is a unity in the universe and a unity in our own experience. We can no longer look for spiritual order outside our own experience.

[Joseph Campbell in "Earthrise: The Dawning of a new Spiritual Awareness," p. 16. Additional thoughts of Campbell about the moonwalk were found in "The Need for New Myths: Master Keys to Man's Psyche," OPUS Archives, The Joseph Campbell Collection, Box 108, Lecture Notes, Folder NL 44. See also Joseph Campbell, "The Moon Walk _ The Outward Journey," **Myths to Live By** (Penguin Compass: New York, 1993), pp. 233-249.]

As the space age was shattering old mythologies Campbell called for new teachings:

For surely it is folly to preach to children who will be riding rockets to the moon a morality and cosmology based on the concepts of the Good Society and of man place in nature that were coined before the harnessing of the horse!

[Joseph Campbell, **The Mask of God**, p. 12.]

Today some of these children live in space stations, and others test spacecraft for taking tourists into space. Increasingly, there is pessimism about the earth's ability to survive and such physicists as Steven Hawking are urging emigration to other planets or moons. Some people have already opted to have their ashes jettisoned into space. Starting in 2011, they will have the choice of have portions of their dead bodies deposited on the moon. Meantime advances in medicine are providing artificial limbs and organs. Cloning and cybernetic skills are progressing, and Craig Vetter has artificially created a living creature. Optimism flourishes that sickness and aging will disappear and immortality will be possible as humanity travels the universe.

Team members examined the OPUS Archives to see if there were any seeds to determine whether Campbell foresaw such a future and had prescience about the myths that would narrate it. As stated above, he was aware that the space age would be a turbulent time and new myths would emerge. Team members, however, did not find direct reflection of Campbell about the space age's repudiation of Mother Earth and rejection of kinship with all Earth's living creatures. In short, the team found no extensive examination by Campbell on the space age's shift from the *Givenness* of the human condition on earth to the *Fabrication* of human existence in the universe. While he had written about the shaping of the Old Mythos by "The Structuring Forces of Life on Earth," members found no similar writings on "The Structuring Forces of Life in the Universe."

The team will offer its own comparison of these two different structuring forces of life:

OLD MYTHOS

1. Earth Dweller
2. Earth-Given Life
3. Earth is Mother of all who
Dwell on Her
4. Born of a Woman
5. Mortal
6. Gravity Provides Tie to Earth
7. Diurnal Alternation of Light
and Dark, Providing Time to
Sleep, Dream
8. Human Biological and Emotional
Development

NEW MYTHOS

1. Universe Dweller
2. Human-Made Life
3. Earth is an Exchangeable Planet
4. Artificial Reproduction
5. Immortal through replacement
of Body Parts, Cloning, Cybernetics
6. Human Manipulation of Gravity
7. Control of Light, Sleeping,
Dreaming
8. Choose Stage of Existence

The team did find Campbell reflecting on “The Problem of Mankind Today.” He was deeply concerned about the corrosive effect religious doctrine and institution had on humankind. He also was disturbed about dangers of too much stress on the group or the individual. [[“The Problems of Mankind Today,” OPUS Archives, The Joseph Campbell Collection, Box 121, Camp. OMC 29.](#)]

Especially important to the team’s project, Campbell saw the destructiveness of science when it becomes a dictator:

Now people who have never studied science and really don’t understand it properly put faith into it and think this is the salvation. Science provides techniques for realizing the dynamics of your wish.

Goethe put this into Faust. Mephistopheles is the scientist who can provide the implementation for Faust’s wishes. And that’s the proper role of science, as the vehicle for human realization. But when a scientist sets himself up as the dictator, that’s Mephistopheles taking over. The mystery dimension of human life is not regarded and only what is prudent, rational, or fun, comes in.

[Joseph Campbell, "Are New Myths Possible?" OPUS Archives, The Joseph Campbell Collection, Box 109, Unpublished Transcripts (University of Arkansas, Fayetteville), Folder U 72,V 72/ L 215.]

The team noted also that Campbell believed *Unlimited Space* was emerging everywhere as the prime-symbol for the Faustian soul. ["Space (Exploration) → Perspective (Art), OPUS Archives. The Joseph Campbell Collection, Box 121, Series: Outtake, Europe, E 72. See also "Western Science (Spengler)," Opus Archives, The Joseph Campbell Collection, Box 121, Outtakes, Modern Condition, OMC 32.]

Campbell has said, "... myth has to do with the harmonization of one's consciousness in relation to the ground of being in nature, in the body, which is itself a manifestation of mystery." [**The Hero's Journey: Joseph Campbell on his Life and Works**, edited by Phil Cousineau, Joseph Campbell Foundation (Novato, California: New World Library, 1990), p, 138.]

This statement of Campbell about the function of myth has to do with an Old Mythos arising out a given bodily existence on natural earth. What will the New Mythos look like as the Faustian soul, uprooted from Mother Earth, faces Unlimited Space? What will the New Mythos look like as it arises out of a human fabricated body fleeing earth to exist in unlimited space?

The answer to this question is rising though out Western culture. This story of earthly flight is emerging from the voices of astrophysicists, astronauts, cosmologists, philosophers, journalists, novelists, and poets. Science fiction writers gave early voice to the story, and one of its clearest voices is in modern film. The team believes this genre forcefully depicts the developing Mythos of an earth-alienated hero whose very conditions for being human are changing. Modern film as a vehicle of mass sentiments and mass desires shows that the human dream to escape earth's imprisonment was commonplace for sometime. Scientific discoveries and technological developments had to catch up with these dreams and show they were neither wild nor idle. Modern film, in short, provides a veiled explanation of the truth of the space age before and after it arrived.

The team's second visit to the OPUS Archives was aimed, therefore, at learning about Campbell's assessment of film as an expression of mythology. The team also needed more time to examine his thoughts about medical advances and their relation to the human condition.

VISIT II

June 30- July 1, 2010

Team Members: James Waddell, Elizabeth Callahan, Paul Waddell

Archival material revealed that Campbell for most of his life was not interested in American film, because he believed it did not understand metaphor. It was too focused on naturalism. Then in the early 1980's George Lucas invited him to San Rafael to see **Star Wars, The Empire Strikes Back, and Return of the Jedi**. Lucas informed Campbell that the trilogy was based on **The Hero With a Thousand Faces** and other of Campbell's books, lectures, and tapes. In viewing the films, Campbell saw that Lucas was continuing to tell the story of "...the problem of the modern mechanistic world of Faust versus Mephistopheles." Darth Vader, the father of the Jedi story, allows the machine Mephistopheles to determine his impulses, and he goes to hell. Campbell believes that Lucas in creating these films shifted audiences from the world of literate minds to the popular masses that Campbell thinks are now running the world. He saw that literature was giving way to the visual field. "Its though the spark had left the easel and the writer's pen and jumped into the camera." [Joseph Campbell, "Joseph Campbell: 70 Years of Making Connections," interview by D. J. R. Bruckner, **The New York Times Book Review** (December 18, 1983), p. 28 (?), OPUS Archives, The Joseph Campbell Collection, Box 107, Interviews, Folder: I 6.]

Elsewhere, he wrote, "There is no better medium in the world than film; I mean, my God, you can do anything with it. The only thing is to find out what is worth doing." He believed Lucas had the courage to work out his own discovery. "I think that young man opened a vista and knew how to follow it. It was totally fresh, totally clean." [Joseph Campbell, **The Hero Journey: Joseph Campbell on his Life and Work**, p. 188.]

Campbell stressed that a statement of need and want from an artist such as Lucas:

...must come from you, not from the machine, and not from the government that teaching you, or not even from the clergy. It has to come from one's own inside, and the minute you let that drop and take what the dictation of the time is instead of the dictation of your own eternity, you have capitulated to the devil. And you are in hell. [Ibid., p. 188.]

Campbell believes that such space films as **Close Encounters of the Third Kind** are not about the symbols of the future. They are old-fashion stories about friendly forms coming from heaven to save humankind.

He though, however, that the film **2001: A Space Odyssey** was interesting in the way it dealt with symbols. In the opening of the film a group of little man like apes are snarling and fighting with each other. But one Australopithecine who is different breaks off and explores out of a sense of curiosity a panel of stone mysteriously standing upright in the landscape. After contemplating it, he touches it cautiously and with awe, similarly to the way an astronaut's foot approaches and gently touches the moon. Campbell comments:

Awe, you see, is what moves us forward. That's what the film maker recognized, that there was a continuity through all time of this motivating principle in the evolution of our species. So the panel is seen later on the moon approached by astronauts. And again, floating free in space, mysterious still.

"Earthrise: The Dawning of a New Spiritual Awareness,"
p. 53 (?).

WHAT WAS LEARNED IN THE ARCHIVES

AND

HOW THE RESEARCH EXPERIENCES THE FINAL PROJECT

The team learned that there cannot be any serious study of Joseph Campbell without analysis of materials in the Joseph Campbell Collection in the OPUS Archives. Although there is wide access to Campbell's published works, the Opus Archives provides exceptional entrée into the primary materials that reveal the shaping of Campbell's thoughts. The formulation of his thought is presented through the first spark of an ideal jotted as a note on a book just read, sharpened in a letter to a colleague, played with in different outlines, crafted into drafts, refined into lectures, revised on the bases on written and oral criticism, recorded on tape, published as an article or book, explained in interviews, and continuously refined in the forging fire of new ideas as they started the process over again.

For example, the team followed the development of his thinking about writing about mythology in the modern world. In a 1957 letter to Pat Covici, he sent a draft of his plan to write a volume on mythology in the modern world. One focus was to be the crisis in thinking brought about by the development of scientific research. Notes, outlines, and drafts of papers in the OPUS Archives show that he was primarily concerned with the subservience of science to a technology that lost awe before the universe. This thread runs through his life work. Yet, 1957 was the year that an earth-born rocket was launched into the universe. The importance of the space age, especially the moonwalks, evoked in Campbell a sense of awe before the mysterious. Notes, outlines, tapes, lectures, interviews in The OPUS Archives also document his increasing awareness that the space age shatters the old hierarchical religious mythologies. Now the team saw materials in the OPUS Archives that the space age would call forth new myths to tell the story of mankind as a dweller of the universe. Without putting aside his concerns about technology's reign over science, Campbell recognized at the end that the main story of the space age had to do with the lost horizons of the earth age.

The primary influence of the research experience in the OPUS Archives was to refocus the project from the story of the “Hero who Escapes from Prison Earth” to the more inclusive story about how the move from earth-dweller to universe-dweller changed the very conditions of being human.