

Joseph Campbell

THE
POWER
OF
MYTH

with Bill Moyers

BETTY SUE FLOWERS, Editor



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CAMPBELL: Yes. As Karlfried Graf Dürckheim says, "When you're on a journey, and the end keeps getting further and further away, then you realize that the real end is the journey."

The Navaho have that wonderful image of what they call the pollen path. Pollen is the life source. The pollen path is the path to the center. The Navaho say, "Oh, beauty before me, beauty behind me, beauty to the right of me, beauty to the left of me, beauty above me, beauty below me, I'm on the pollen path."

MOYERS: Eden was not. Eden will be.

CAMPBELL: Eden is. "The kingdom of the Father is spread upon the earth, and men do not see it."

MOYERS: Eden is—in this world of pain and suffering and death and violence?

CAMPBELL: That is the way it feels, but this is it, this is Eden. When you see the kingdom spread upon the earth, the old way of living in the world is annihilated. That is the end of the world. The end of the world is not an event to come, it is an event of psychological transformation, of visionary transformation. You see not the world of solid things but a world of radiance.

MOYERS: I interpreted that powerful and mysterious statement, "The word was made flesh," as this eternal principle finding itself in the human journey, in our experience.

CAMPBELL: And you can find the word in yourself, too.

MOYERS: Where do you find it if you don't find it in yourself?

CAMPBELL: It's been said that poetry consists of letting the word be heard beyond words. And Goethe says, "All things are metaphors." Everything that's transitory is but a metaphorical reference. That's what we all are.

MOYERS: But how does one worship a metaphor, love a metaphor, die for a metaphor?

CAMPBELL: That's what people are doing all over the place—dying for metaphors. But when you really realize the sound, "AUM," the sound of the mystery of the word everywhere, then you don't have to go out and die for anything because it's right there all around. Just sit still and see it and experience it and know it. That's a peak experience.

MOYERS: Explain AUM.

CAMPBELL: "AUM" is a word that represents to our ears that sound of the energy of the universe of which all things are manifestations. You start in the back of the mouth "ahh," and then "oo," you fill the mouth, and "mm" closes the mouth. When you pronounce this properly, all vowel sounds are included in the pronunciation. AUM. Consonants are here regarded simply as interruptions of the essential vowel sound. All words are thus fragments of AUM, just as all images are fragments of the Form of forms. AUM is a symbolic sound that puts you in touch with that resounding being that is the universe. If you heard some of the recordings of Tibetan

monks chanting AUM, you would know what the word means, all right. That's the AUM of being in the world. To be in touch with that and to get the sense of that is the peak experience of all.

A-U-M. The birth, the coming into being, and the dissolution that cycles back. AUM is called the "four-element syllable." A-U-M---and what is the fourth element? The silence out of which AUM arises, and back into which it goes, and which underlies it. My life is the A-U-M, but there is a silence underlying it, too. That is what we would call the immortal. This is the mortal and that's the immortal, and there wouldn't be the mortal if there weren't the immortal. One must discriminate between the mortal aspect and the immortal aspect of one's own existence. In the experience of my mother and father who are gone, of whom I was born, I have come to understand that there is more than what was our temporal relationship. Of course there were certain moments in that relationship when an emphatic demonstration of what the relationship was would be brought to my realization. I clearly remember some of those. They stand out as moments of epiphany, of revelation, of the radiance.

MOYERS: The meaning is essentially wordless.

CAMPBELL: Yes. Words are always qualifications and limitations.

MOYERS: And yet, Joe, all we puny human beings are left with is this miserable language, beautiful though it is, that falls short of trying to describe—

CAMPBELL: That's right, and that's why it is a peak experience to break past all that, every now and then, and to realize, "Oh . . . ah. . . ."