

## Chapter 2 - A Hero's Welcome

"Once upon a time", we say when a new story crosses our lips. We pull them out of an apparent void and share them with each other as a way of communicating understanding and important information. We convey much to each other through storytelling and the medium of Myth. We teach each other about love, honesty, depravity, cold-heartedness, sensitivity, levity, humor, lust, ambition, level-headedness, sensibility, humility, all of the great human attributes, and all their lowly counterparts.

We pass on these lessons because we believe it is right and necessary. We the next generation to benefit from what we have learned. They in turn, will pass on these lessons and what they are learning for themselves. The succession of knowledge passed from one hand to the next, across the millenniums, across all cultures, has been essential to succeeding generations.

Sadly, we turned away from myth so enamored have we become with the latest technology. In the pursuit of quick fixes we lost our connection to the human spirit. We lost sight of death. We lost sight of life. As mentioned earlier we know we cannot understand one without an appreciation of the other. Without the lessons of myth we are topsy turvey, turned upside down and without a rudder. Simply put, we are lost and scrambling to find our way out of the chaos.

Chaos typically breeds feelings of fear, confusion, impotence and uncertainty. Drugs, alcohol, gambling, and so many other addictive substances and practices are the road well traveled by many who are seeking some type of relief. Love and hate play themselves out regularly in this theatre of addiction and denial. Love and hate are the classic themes of myth and poetry. Love and hate become tangled up in this arena, because the remedies applied are poor substitutes for what we really need, and that is an informed life. Addiction means loss, ineptitude, dissatisfaction and fear. In the presence of such fear many want to numb themselves. Numbing appears as the only way when spirit is not available. This response to chaos contributes to further chaos. An informed life is filled with Spirit, meaning and direction. This is where a healing journey can begin. All healing journeys lead back to spirit, or home, if

you please.

All healing journeys are quests. They represent the quest of the hero, one that is played out in a new format, a new millennium format which we will call the “path of recovery.” This is it in our modern times. The hero’s journey is a healing journey, and millions of people are traveling this path worldwide. They are twelve stepping, reviving themselves in seminars, looking for truer ground through therapy or group work, seeking their inner self while venturing forth into the darkness of their existence. This is a true heroic journey. This is mythology in action for today’s culture.

This is the path of the wounded man and the wounded woman, the traumatized child and the confused adolescent. There are innumerable variations of this tale, and they are all truly heroic. There is no doubt of that. Ask someone who is on the path, one who has traveled some distance on their healing journey and has disabled some of their formidable demons. Ah yes, the path charted by the hero myth is clearly evident today.

Wherever people gather is where one can confront themselves. Not so long ago people met at oases and watering holes. Camel drivers and silk traders came together to exchange goods and ideas. People meet today in churches, bazaars, universities and theatres continuing the practice of exchanging ideas and goods. Yesterday’s bazaars have become today’s shopping malls. Shopping malls are filled with people looking for something. Some are engaged in a process of numbing while others are searching for something that will make them bolder, braver and stronger. The same adventurers who are seeking their true self are crossing paths with people who are avoiding life while gorging themselves with food, or clothes, or some other distraction, hoping for a miracle to fill their empty hearts. Hearts that could be filled with spirit are instead being filled with the goods and services of 1001 merchants eager to please an aching population.

Interesting places these malls are. What does this have to do with heroes and heroines? All persons are mirrors to each other, and malls offer the largest, most multifaceted mirrors of all. They are today’s watering holes, town plazas, and bazaars. They offer glimpses into many possible realities, from the poorest to the richest, from the gross to the sublime, with multiple variations in between.

For now we will limit ourselves to this mirroring aspect. This is where heroic journeys begin. Somewhere, somehow, something has to strike you and reflect something back to you about your life. That jolt of recognition will take place in the mirroring eyes of another. All eyes are mirrors to the soul.

Others may be looking at you for the same reason, to see what they can learn about themselves. There is reciprocity, a give and take, which is the nature of all life. There is no giving without receiving. All cycles have their counterpoints which keep them in balance. As soon as you know this, you've gleaned an important awareness. This important and fundamental fact, that the Earth is an ever expanding, ever evolving series of cycles, points and counterpoints, is played out in the macrocosm and microcosm of your life and mine.

Like it or not, we interrelate. We all affect each other in perceptible and imperceptible ways. These are more significant than we realize, because we are each a turn in this eternal web, and our turn sets someone else's turn in motion. That is, we influence each other and we need each other. We need our self too, in very significant fashion, more so than many of us realize. It is this lost self we are pursuing. That is our goal as aspiring heroes and heroines. We are on a quest, to our selves, our real selves, our Sacred self.

Our Self is the true center of our being and the place from which our individual truth emanates. It's where we can come to know our passions, our place in the world, our purpose and our destiny. Without our self we truly have nothing except the mainstream reference and structures around us which are now crumbling. The evidence is clear; we hear about it daily from the media. Politicians and religious authorities are falling from grace because they have violated a private and public trust. Religion is in decline due to diminishing attendance. The middle class is crumbling due to outsourcing of jobs and diminished purchasing power. To clarify, crumbling here does not mean total disintegration, although some would argue that is indeed the case. To me it means a rather serious reshuffling.

The signs and symbols that define this rising era point to the self as the true center of the personality and the soul as its spiritual counterpart. Ego as the personality's central authority now belongs to the dying era we are leaving behind. Self and soul are rising in its place and are inextricably intertwined. They are one and the same at a fundamental level –

like the way 'particle and wave' are used interchangeably to describe the electron. Self and soul are flip sides of the same coin. They come from our Divine Nature which resides within. You, we, I, are the source of our being and a home for this Divinity. You, we, I, are God, incarnate in a body.

If I say to you, "trust your self, believe in your self, be your self", can you in any way go wrong? Can you say, "he's lying, I shouldn't, can't, won't trust myself"? Or would you say, "I can't trust him because he's telling me to trust me"? We could go on with more examples, but you can already see that this argument becomes circular and absurd. Trusting your self and connecting with your soul are essential to revealing who you are. And from that perspective, they cannot be questioned. Because, if you can't trust your self and you can't acknowledge your Soul, then where do you stand? Authenticity demands that you be true to your self. Only and authentic self can be authentic with others.

Here is the inherent beauty of myth. Whether it's a story or a parable, their simple truth is undeniable and unmistakable, because they point to You. They are a mirror to You. You are free to use them or not, to agree with their premise or not. They are not dictates, they are reference points. What does it mean to "trust your self"? From myth's point of view, it means, feel what you feel; speak your truth; acknowledge your mistakes; do your very best; pray for guidance; and LISTEN! Listen to that guidance that emanates from within you, from your heart and feeling center. There it is in action, your feelings, your inner guidance; the I Am that I Am, all at work within you, showing you the truth about You.

We must acknowledge here an important parameter which is everyone's responsibility and that is "first do no harm." This means your awareness and expression of feeling must not bring harm to yourself or others. Simply put, that would be contrary to your Divine Nature. With that in mind, how can you go wrong? You can't. How can you say no to your self? You cannot. How can you go forward on your path? With hope, determination and clear-headedness, you can activate that power that is yours. So you can be true to you, which is of the Creator, and bring forward those gifts which are yours to share with the world.

Every once in a while something happens in life that shakes us up. For some, it could be a course of study. For others, it could be a movie, a life crisis, a particular song, a major

loss or trauma. A crisis or major loss can be a call to awaken. One of my own significant challenges began several years ago, after my wife was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. I was frightened. I began listening more closely to what was going on within. I had been a fairly traditional psychotherapist, plying my craft as I was trained to do. Mixing intuition with other forms of guidance was part of my style and had served me well to that point. One day, after this crisis hit, I began writing. Actually, I felt compelled to write. I wrote stories, poetry and music with a spiritual bent and mythical flavor. All of this material was growth orientation. All these writings had similar themes knowing your self; being true to your self; waking up to soul; children's spirituality; song lyrics; and poetic reflections. From these writings came my first book of Parables, then another, and another, until I had several manuscripts on these subjects. Mythology, spirituality and personal growth were now moving through me, thanks in part to that particular life crisis. This had been my wake-up call.

What is trying to be born through you, my friend? What are your gifts and passions telling you? Creativity is a challenge, we know. But, we all have this capability. We are built to handle this challenge. Our inherent design, as spiritual and physical beings, naturally drives us toward creativity and innovation. Watch children. They create without inhibition. It is their nature. It is ours too!

## Passion & Purpose

*Who are we, standing here on this planet? Are we the “forgotten ones” from a time gone by, a piece of pre-history perhaps, that lets itself unfold through the pages of time? Are we here all alone, or are we part of something greater than we could ever imagine? Aren't we like children after all, looking out into the Universe, wondering what this life is all about?*

*As children we had dozens of questions about this world. We wondered where we were from and why we were here. We marveled about this place called Earth. There were grasshoppers, butterflies, leaping frogs, crawling snakes, annoying mosquitoes, dogs and cats, all sorts of strange things that we uncovered for ourselves each and every day. That was the period of our discovering this amazing environment in which we were enveloped. We wondered often then, looking up at the clouds, with a blade of grass sticking out of our mouth, “who are we?” and “why are we here?”.*

*Looking back at our respective childhoods, we can see the passion in every day of our life, manifesting itself here, there and everywhere as we set about on our path of discovery. We were young then, but oh so curious too. Somewhere along the line that flame of passion diminished, not going out completely; but reduced to a small ember. We need to fan the ember now to return it to the bright blue flame, we once were. Fires come and go. Passion, that is forever.*

*And what is passion without purpose? A car spinning its wheels perhaps? An electric motor running out of control with nowhere to go? Passion needs purpose to be drawn to, to be enlivened by and to be directed toward. Without purpose, where do we place our passion? Even if it's as simple as collecting stamps, we need passion to become motivated. In the morning, when we rise, what gets us going? For some it is the fear of getting fired or not making that next mortgage payment. But for most of us passion is central to our lives, exciting us about the day ahead, the challenges we face and the successes to which we aspire. Yes, there are those rare times when some of us would rather stay in bed. Even a lazy person can be passionate about doing as little as possible. Maybe they are holding their breath for a new world record, trying make a particular point or too frightened to get up and try.*

*The passionate life is a worthy life. It's exciting, even breathtaking at times. We are captivated by the things we love that we can even run into walls while thinking about them. Like the "siren call" to Ulysses, we are drawn toward this ever beckoning signal and we can get there if we learn to read the signs. These signs come from inside in later life. They are called "intuition", "inner self" or "higher self." These terms all refer to the same living entity, that inner pulse that beckons us to hear its message.*

*It's an exciting time when we finally hear it. It announces the birth of a new era. We become less motivated by what goes on outside of us and more attentive to our inner life. This is where our gold lies. We recognize it as our best possibility for future success. Without our inner guidance, we have no direction, we have no purpose. And without purpose, where is our passion to be directed?*

*Why do we keep looking out into the world for this purpose when all the wisdom seekers and prophets through history have told us repeatedly that it lies within? There, inside our hearts, that blue ember of passion smolders for us alone. It holds our purpose and our future. It is our personal siren call inviting us to fan our embers of passion back into a flame. It is our call to action.*