

# "The Creative-Destroyers: Are Entrepreneurs Mythological Heroes?"

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## ABSTRACT

The psychology of entrepreneurship can be better understood by comparing it to the hero's adventure (as well as the trickster's) in mythology because myths are often seen as symbolic representations of the psyche. The hero and the entrepreneur are found to be similar in their respective adventures, a three part sequence of separation from the community, initiation into new creative powers and a return to the community with a boon for his fellow citizens. Both are creative, curious, energetic risk takers who are guided by mentors. Entrepreneurship can be seen as a manifestation of a universal human psychological condition, the desire for individual creativity.

## INTRODUCTION

It has not been uncommon in the past, and even today, to refer to the entrepreneur as a hero. Burch (1986), for example, writes "In America today, many people view the entrepreneur as the hero of capitalism and the free enterprise system" (p. 24). Another, Gilder (1984), refers to them as "the heroes of economic life" (p. 24) and says we have "An Economy of Heroes." Sarachek (1978) compares them to the heroes found in the myths of Horatio Alger. But what is a hero? None of these authors defines one. The important question is: Are entrepreneurs in any way like the hero from mythology? If these authors are using a standard dictionary definition, then the entrepreneur is the central figure of capitalism and possesses courage, strength, nobility, achievement and "other qualities." Such a conclusion is consistent with what is commonly thought about entrepreneurs by those who would call them heroes. What is important is that the nature of these characteristics possessed by

the entrepreneur closely resemble the characteristics of the hero in mythology. It is a standard belief that not only are myths symbolic representations of our psyches, but that the role of the hero in myth is universal and that myths help to instruct individuals in charting a course for their own lives. This assertion is based on the work of psychoanalysis. This is because in myths, according to Campbell (1968) "symbolic expression is given to the unconscious desires, fears, and tensions that underlie the conscious patterns of human behavior" and that understanding the myth puts us in touch with "the deep forces that have shaped man's destiny and must continue to determine both our private and our public lives" (p. 255-6). Leeming (1973) shares this view (p. 9) along with, according to Barnaby and D'Acerno (1990), a large number of Jungian interpreters (p. 3). Jung (1951) himself said "Myths are original revelations of the pre-conscious psyche, involuntary statements about unconscious happenings ... " (p. 101).

This paper compares, and finds many similarities between the hero in mythology and the entrepreneur. Finding such similarities has important implications regarding the psychology of entrepreneurship, the nature of capitalism and government control over economies.

But the importance may be even deeper than this. Myths, to the extent that they are about the hero's journey (which will be summarized later) were stories about spiritual development, self-discovery, and the tapping of great creative power. They teach us how to find these things in ourselves by showing us how the hero does it. To the extent that the hero and the entrepreneur are similar, there may be a heretofore unacknowledged spiritual dimension to capitalism if its essence is seen as entrepreneurship. This added spiritual dimension is important because as Gilder (1981) points out, capitalism is not usually seen for its own inherent but as unheroic and merely not as bad as the other economic (p. 4). Schumpeter (1962), in a way, also saw capitalism as "unheroic." He wrote "I have called the bourgeois rationalist and unheroic. He can only use a rationalist and unheroic means to defend his position or to bend a nation to his will" (p. 137) and "[C]apitalist civilization is rationalistic 'and anti-heroic'" (p. 128).

Showing how the entrepreneur is like the universal hero in mythology might help to show that there is a chance for spiritual and creative fulfillment and self discovery in capitalism through entrepreneurship. If government economic policies and economic systems should be based on human nature (which may be to seek adventure and self discovery) and if the entrepreneurs are like mythological heroes, a strong case can be made for the superiority of capitalism (or some system that allows a large degree of entrepreneurship).

The late mythologist Joseph Campbell, of whom the psychologist James Hillman said "No one in our century, not Freud, not Thomas Mann, or Levi-Strauss, has so brought the mythical sense of the world back into our everyday consciousness" (Cousineau, 1990, p. 178), called the entrepreneur the "real hero" in American capitalist society without rigorously analyzing that thesis (New Dimensions-See Appendix). This paper uses Campbell's description of the hero's journey. Archer Taylor (1964, p. 128) summed up some of the major work on heroes and the patterns of their stories with:

"Four scholars have perceived a biographical pattern in tales. The texts used by Hahn, Rank, and Lord Raglan are stories of gods and heroes. Campbell goes farther and includes a few fairy tales. Propp believes that his formula for fairy tales lead ultimately to a story of a dragons layer, in other words, to the story of Perseus and Andromeda that the three others analyzed. The ways in which these scholars see and describe the tales vary, but the differences could be reconciled with rather little effort. The discovery of a biographical utilization of a pattern is no very surprising result of their labors. It is a natural utilization of a pattern easily inferred from life itself, or from biography, history, and human psychology. The four scholars have declined to go very far beyond pointing out the pattern. Campbell goes further than any of the others in commenting on its variations."

Campbell's model of the hero's adventure is also quite similar to Leeming's (1973) and Mircea Eliade's (1990, p. 39). Segal (1990) shows that Campbell's hero is Jungian (p. 42) and similar to Erik Erickson's in that the hero's journey is a quest for personal identity (p. 34). Jung (1956) himself said that the hero archetype represents this need of the human psyche (p. 178). Eliot (1990) reports that, in fact, Jungian therapists use Campbell's work in guiding their patients' journey (p. 232). Even modern Freudians see myths as a useful tool (Segal, 1990, p.

44). This paper examines the parallels in the role of the hero (which Campbell found to be similar in many of the world's cultures) and the entrepreneur.

A relevant issue here is empiricism. Although this paper presents no original empirical analysis, it does rely on entrepreneurial research that is empirically based (e.g., *The Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship*). This is also true of the writings of George Gilder, who used Karl Vesper's *New Venture Strategies* and the annual *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research* as well as *The Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship* to explicate the subject. Bull and Willard (1993) "accept that much of the innovating entrepreneur's decision process is beyond systematic calculation (p. 188)." Bygrave (1993) feels that it may be mathematically impossible to model entrepreneurship "because there is 'an essential non-algorithmic aspect to conscious human action'" (p. 255). Karl Vesper, editor of *The Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship*, feels that both empirical and reflective papers are needed to understand entrepreneurship (from personal correspondence). This is intended to be a reflective paper.

The model of the hero's adventure presented here probably does not apply completely to all entrepreneurs. No single model could. But given that the evidence and views compiled here show entrepreneurship to be similar to the hero's adventure, a new and important perspective on the psychology of the entrepreneur is gained. The entrepreneur, however, is seen as a hero, not a saint. The adventure involves both creation and destruction. Negative aspects of entrepreneurship such as business failure and job destruction are just as real as the positive aspects. The entrepreneur, therefore, may be a trickster, another mythic figure, as well as a hero. Tricksters and heroes are both agents of

change. Tricksters are as universal as heroes and may be creative or subversive. (Willis, 1993) writes "Mischievous, cunning and humorous, tricksters are often seen as possessing the ability to switch between animal and human personae." (p. 24) A parallel, and very negative view of the entrepreneur comes from Karl Marx:

"Every man speculates upon creating a new need in another in order to force him to a new sacrifice, to place him in a new dependence, and to entice him into a new kind of pleasure and thereby into economic ruin. Everyone tries to establish over others an alien power in order to find there the satisfaction of his own egoistic need. With the increasing mass of objects, therefore, the realm of alien entities to which man is subjected also increases. Every new product is a new potentiality of mutual deceit and robbery. Man becomes increasingly poor as a man; he has increasing need of money in order to take possession of the hostile being. The power of his money diminishes directly with the growth of the quantity of production, i.e. his need increases with the increasing power of money. The expansion of production and of needs becomes an ingenious and always calculating subservience to inhuman, depraved, unnatural and imaginary appetites. Private property does not know how to change crude need into human need; its idealism is fantasy, caprice, and fancy. No eunuch flatters his tyrant more shamefully or seeks by more infamous means to stimulate his jaded appetite, in order to gain some favour, than does the eunuch of industry, the entrepreneur, in order to acquire a few silver coins or to charm the gold from the purse of his dearly beloved neighbour. The entrepreneur accedes to the most depraved fancies of his neighbour, plays the role of pander between him and his needs, awakens unhealthy appetites in him, and watches for every weakness so that later on he may claim the remuneration for this labour of love." (p. 78)

Such critiques of modern advertising are well known. The entrepreneur may be a bringer of death and destruction rather than a creator of boons. His or her journey may be one that prepares them for and develops

their ability to cause harm to the community rather than to help it. Which ever is true depends upon the motive for starting a new business: maximization or the spirit of adventure. While economics assumes profit maximization, some research suggests the need to be creative and the spirit of adventure (see p. 17). Even Schumpeter (1983) saw the spirit of adventure and the joy of creating as motives for entrepreneurship. (p. 923) Perhaps, like many human actions, entrepreneurship results from mixed motives. In that case, then, the entrepreneur is both hero and trickster. This makes sense because as Eliade (1969) points out, tricksters often perform heroic deeds. (p. 156) Jung (1964) saw the trickster as a step in the evolution to one's becoming a hero or even a shaman. (p. 147) A recently published book called *The New Entrepreneurs: Business Visionaries for the 21st Century* sees entrepreneurs as heroes who will contribute to the overall well-being of the community. Just as the trickster evolves into the hero in mythology, the entrepreneur may be evolving into a hero from the trickster of Karl Marx .

Before moving on to the actual comparison, two facts need to be noted.

The first is that the assertion of the universality of entrepreneurship is now being explored by other scholars. One example is a recent study done by Ian MacMillan and Rita Gunther McGrath of the Wharton School's entrepreneurial center. They found that "entrepreneurs think alike, no matter what country they call home" (*The Wall Street Journal*, February 6, 1992, p. A1). Another is Berger (1991) who shows how entrepreneurship IS a worldwide phenomenon that is transforming economies even in the most unexpected of places.

The second involves the idea of using mythology or psychology in economic analysis. This is not new and there are several notable examples. The first, from

O'Donnell (1989), is Keynes's idea that irrational animal spirits are necessary for an adequate level of entrepreneurial initiative (p. 256). The second, from Rostow (1960), is the inclusion of the desire for adventure as an important element in human behavior (p. 149). The third is work done by Ian Mitroff (1983) which uses archetypes to analyze the behavior of stakeholders in social systems. He even cites the work of Joseph Campbell. Fourth, this is an era in which mythology is being used to understand economics. Silver (1991) analyzes the ancient economy through mythology while Putka (1993) reports that business case studies are now being written which compare literary figures, including heroes, to business managers (p. A1). Even two business professors at Stanford University, Catford and Ray (1991), have written a popular book on mythology partly inspired by Campbell. So it is not surprising that Eliade (1990) wrote "The mythic imagination can hardly be said to have disappeared; it is still very much with us, having only adapted its workings to the material now at hand" (p. 42). Finally, Shapero and Sokol (1982) believe that for a complete understanding of entrepreneurship it will be necessary to delve into such fields as occupational psychology, cultural anthropology, the sociology of religion and personality psychology (p. 74). Mythology is really not too far away from those disciplines.

## **THE HERO'S ADVENTURE**

This part gives a basic outline of the hero's adventure in mythology.

The page references in this part are all from Campbell (1968).

### *The hero 's adventure*

This section provides a brief summary and description of the hero's adventure.

The following summary of the hero's adventure comes from section 3, the Hero and the God, which is in Prologue: *The Monomyth in The Hero With a Thousand Faces*.

"The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation-initiation-return: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth. A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man." (p. 30)

In short, "The myths tell of a dangerous journey of the soul, with obstacles to be passed" (p. 366) Examples are Prometheus who stole fire from the gods and Jason who found the Golden Fleece. The universal nature of the myth is proclaimed with " ... 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" (p. 35) and "Everywhere, no matter the sphere of interests (whether religious, political, or personal), the really creative acts are represented as those deriving from some sort of dying to the world; and what happens in the interval of the hero's nonentity, so that he comes back as one reborn, made great and filled with creative power, mankind is also unanimous in declaring" (p. 35-6). The myth helps us to understand "the singleness of human spirit in its aspirations, powers, vicissitudes, and wisdom" (p. 36). So there is a basic pattern to the hero's adventure which is universal.

The following is Campbell's own summary of the entire adventure whose specific phases will be referred to later in where it is compared to the process of entrepreneurship.

"The mythological hero, setting forth from his commonday hut or castle, is lured, carried away, or else voluntarily proceeds, to the threshold of adventure. There he encounters a shadow of presence that guards the passage. The hero may defeat or conciliate this power and go alive into the kingdom of the dark (brother-battle, dragon-battle; offering, charm), or be slain by the opponent and descend in death (dismemberment, crucifixion). Beyond the threshold, then, the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten him (tests), some of which give magical aid (helpers). When he arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward. The triumph may be represented as the hero's sexual union with the goddess-mother of the world (sacred marriage), his recognition by the father-creator (father-atonement), his own divinization (apotheosis), or again-if the powers have remained unfriendly to him-his theft of the boon he came to gain (bride-theft, fire theft); intrinsically it is an expansion of consciousness and therewith of being (illumination, transfiguration, freedom). The final work is that of the return. If the powers have blessed the hero, he now sets forth under their protection (emissary); if not, he flees and is pursued (transformation flight, obstacle flight). At the return threshold the transcendental powers must remain behind; the hero re-emerges from the kingdom of dead (return, resurrection). The boon that he brings restores the world (elixir)" (p. 246-7).

Earlier it was stated that Campbell's view of the hero's adventures is similar to Eliade's view. Below is Eliade's (1990, p. 39) own summary:

"Another class of widespread myths concerns those of the king's son who is abandoned after birth because of a prophecy threatening danger to the king. Consigned to the waters, the child

is saved by animals or shepherds, and is suckled by a female animal or a humble woman. When full grown, he embarks on extraordinary adventures (monster slaying, etc.) Later he finds his parents and takes revenge, finally being recognized and winning rank and honor. In most of these myths, the dangers of trials of the hero (encounters with monsters and demons, descents into hell, being swallowed by an aquatic monster, etc.) have an initiatory meaning. By overcoming all these ordeals, the young man proves that he is surpassed the human condition and henceforth he belongs to a class of semidivine beings. Many epic legends and folktales utilize readapt the highly dramatic scenarios of a hero's initiation (e.g., Siegfried, Arthur, Robin Hood, etc.).

## **THE PROCESS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

This part describes the process of entrepreneurship. A brief, general description is given first. Then the process of entrepreneurship according to Burch, Schumpeter, Kirzner and Gilder will be summarized.

Entrepreneurs are those people who are able to discover an opportunity for economic profit either through developing a new method of production that results in greater efficiency or by producing a new product. In either case, the entrepreneur must be both a creator and a risk taker. They are creators in the sense that they simply have an idea for a more efficient production process or a new product. If the idea were not new, the new method or product would already be used or on the market and there would be no creativity. In that case, no opportunity for economic profit would exist. This is because in a competitive environment economic profits will erode when new firms enter the market. They are risk takers because if it were absolutely certain that economic profits could be made, there would be no risk. It would have been clear to anyone that

the economic profits were available and in a competitive environment entry of firms into the market would have again eroded away the economic profits. Since there is uncertainty, there is always some element of risk in starting any new business endeavor. The entrepreneur is always taking a chance that the new venture will not only fail to yield economic profits, but may fail entirely. Their actions are based only on a hunch. Why does an individual take such a risk based only on a hunch or their own creative work where no one else has done so before? What type of individual will be both creative and willing to take a risk? The next four sections deal with these questions.

### *Burch on Entrepreneurship*

According to Burch (1986), " ... the essence of entrepreneurship is the initiation of change," (p. 17) and is the "process of giving birth to a new business" (p. 18). It usually appears from outside the present structure (p. 19). He lists the five types of innovations brought by entrepreneurs that are from Schumpeter (Burch, 1986, p. 26):

1. Introduction of a new product or service that is an improvement in the quality of the existing product or service.
2. Introduction of a new method that increases productivity.
3. The opening of a new market, in particular an export market In a new territory.
4. The conquest of a new source of supply of raw materials, half manufactured products or alternative materials.
5. The creation of a new organization.

According to Cauthorn, these are typical innovations and the list was not meant by Schumpeter to be exhaustive (Cauthorn,

1989, p. 8). But where do these innovations come from?

"For making these or other innovations, systematic and logical thinking can lead you just so far. For thinking innovatively, imagination is more important than knowledge. Imagination and the ability to think creatively come from the right side of the brain. There we learn to think intuitively and creatively and learn how to deal with fuzzy, messy problems" (p. 28).

They do not come from logic. Reliance on "Logic alone points away from entrepreneurial activity" (p. 32).

The process of entrepreneurship leads to

"Large corporations [which] soon become risk-averting and cautious and are run, not by, innovating entrepreneurs, but by bureaucratic committees. These bureaucratized giants eliminate the entrepreneur and replace him or her with cautious and conservative managers who are, at best, maintainers" (p. 24).

### *Schumpeter on Entrepreneurship*

The process whereby the above innovations occur was called "Creative Destruction" by Schumpeter (1962). This was

"The opening of new markets, foreign or domestic, and the organizational development from the craft shop and factory to such concerns as U. S. Steel illustrate the same process of industrial mutation if I may use that biological term-that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating the new one. This process of Creative Destruction is the essential fact about capitalism. It is what capitalism consists in and what every capitalist concern has got to live in" (p. 83).

Later he writes, while discussing the above mentioned types of innovations (which he calls the function of entrepreneurs), "This kind of activity is primarily responsible for the recurrent "prosperities" that

revolutionize the economic organism and the recurrent "recessions" that are due to the disequilibrating impact of the new products or methods" (p. 132). He saw the undertaking of these new things as a distinct function performed by people who go outside the normal economic structure.

### *Kirzner on Entrepreneurship*

Kirzner discusses entrepreneurship in terms of entrepreneurial or economic profit. This discussion was given at the beginning of this part. Kirzner further clarifies the process with

"But, during the instant of an entrepreneurial leap of faith, the instant of daring the new line of production, there is scope for the discovery that, indeed, the ends achieved are more valuable than had hitherto been suspected" (p. 163).

Kirzner calls this as replacing the "old ends-means framework" with a new one.

Kirzner saw the essence of entrepreneurship as "unawareness both by the entrepreneur himself and by the market in general that he in fact possesses the resources of vision at all" (p. 180). And what does market entrepreneurship do? It "reveals to the market what the market did not realize was available or, indeed, needed at all" (p. 181). But although the entrepreneur was unaware of the opportunity for economic profit, he still must be alert to see the opportunity when it comes along.

There are two main elements in entrepreneurship that Kirzner emphasizes:

1. Luck- The entrepreneur had a vision, he made a discovery. There was no systematic or efficient attempt to find a better product or method of production. But he was alert to the new opportunity.
2. Purposefulness-he acted in a systematic way based on his hunch or vision

How is luck an important element of entrepreneurship? For example you can find a large sum of money, and that is luck. You might also stumble on a process or technique that can yield economic profits. Is such a discovery luck? It must be. This raises the question of whether pure profits can be sought systematically or purposefully. No. A person may claim to be searching for economic profits and erroneous valuations of resources by the market. But they must guess at where and how to search. If they guess correctly, they were lucky. The entrepreneur simply has to be alert to opportunities for economic profits and act on them when they come.<sup>1</sup>

### *Gilder on Entrepreneurship*

For Gilder (1984), the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship make up what he calls the "real economy" in capitalism, not the "colliding multinational corporations, national industrial policies, and macroeconomic tides that overwhelm the simple energies and enthusiasms of individual entrepreneurs" (p. 31). Perhaps the following passages best illustrate what Gilder thinks entrepreneurship is:

"The entrepreneurial start-up is the most creative domain in American enterprise largely because it affords the best learning process. A man who builds a company from scratch acquires depth of understanding of what makes it work that an imported chief executive, however, effective his management information systems, however many cases he has explored in depth at the Harvard Business School, cannot easily command. The entrepreneur gains a dynamic and integrated view of his company and a realistic view of enterprise.

"Because he started in rebellion against established firms, he bears a natural skepticism toward settled expertise. Because he had to make scores of decisions before all the information was in, he recognizes that enterprise always consists of action in

uncertainty. The entrepreneur prevails not by understanding an existing situation in all its complex particulars, but by creating a new situation which others might try to comprehend. The enterprise is an aggressive action, not a reaction. When it is successfully launched, all the rest of society government, labor, other businesses-will have to react. It entails breaking the looking glass of established ideas-even the gleaming mirrors of executive suites-and stepping into the often greasy and fetid bins of creation" (p. 247).

He calls entrepreneurship an "irrational process" carried on by "orphans and outcasts" (p. 275) in the face of a hostile environment (p. 56). The entrepreneur brings, through creativity, the unexpected boon by discovering the "unknown continents of the real economy" (p. 56). Entrepreneurship "requires a life of labor and listening, aspiration and courage" (p. 258) while being the "redemption of an oppressed and desperate world" (p. 258). The creativity comes from the immigrants, outcasts and former employees who are outside the established, large and dominant firms (p. 132).

To summarize these remarks, it could be said that entrepreneurship is a kind of creative, irrational rebellion committed in the face of uncertainty which occurs while the courageous entrepreneur is journeying on his own, personal path breaking adventure.

Gilder also sees entrepreneurship as a psychological journey of the entrepreneur.

"Any creative breakthrough, in science or art, enterprise or love, depends on glimpsing and engaging some higher realm of life. Beyond the long labyrinths of things, the multifarious carrels of fact, the inspired explorer can finally break out into the mansions of providential mind. He then sees the limits of the culture of thanatopsis: the dismal mazes of entropy and death, the grim aporias of sense and flesh, the vain hoards of sterile wealth. He can stand at last with wild surmise on the frontiers of matter where life and God again begin, and see



a world renewed and shining with possibility"  
(p. 70).

## COMPARING THE HERO AND ENTREPRENEUR

It should be recalled that the hero either leaves his native land and takes the risk of facing a new environment alone or challenges the authority of his society. In either case, he is taking a risk based on a belief in his own personal integrity and creativity. Just like the entrepreneur, the hero is a creator and risk taker.

Some of the possible parallels between the hero's adventure and the activity of the entrepreneur can be seen by examining the section titled "The Hero and the God" from Campbell (1968). (see p. 6) First, the basic pattern of the myth needs to be recalled: a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return. An entrepreneur must step out of the ordinary way of producing and into his imagination about the way things could be to discover the previously undreamt of technique or product. The "fabulous forces" might be applying the assembly line technique or interchangeable parts to producing automobiles or building microcomputers in a garage. The mysterious adventure is the time spent tinkering in research and development. But once those techniques are discovered or developed the hero-entrepreneur now has the power to bestow this boon on the rest of mankind.

Campbell (1968) also has a section called "The Cosmogonic Cycle" which "unrolls the great vision of the creation and destruction of the world which is vouchsafed as revelation to the successful hero" (p. 38). The connection to Schumpeter's theory of creative destruction is clear. A successful entrepreneur simultaneously destroys and creates a new world, or at least a new way of life. Henry Ford, for example, destroyed the horse and buggy age while creating the age

of the automobile. But even more to the point is the fact that the hero finds that the world "suffers from a symbolical deficiency" (p. 37) and that "the hero appears on the scene in various forms according to the changing needs of the race" (p. 38). The changing needs and the deficiency may directly correspond to the changing market conditions or the changing desires for products. The entrepreneur IS the first person to perceive the need or opportunity for market profits.

A summary of the basic parallels between the hero's adventure and the activity of the entrepreneur is as follows: both the entrepreneur and the hero must go through separation. For the hero this may mean leaving his native land. For the entrepreneur it may mean leaving a present job or company to start out on his own. The hero is usually initiated by a mentor who teaches him the use of some supernatural aids. The entrepreneur may need to learn from his mentor how to manage and organize people and production (once the product has been developed) or perhaps some technical or research skills necessary to develop the new product. In the return stage the hero brings back a "boon" to mankind. Examples that Campbell gives are Prometheus (fire) and Jason (the golden fleece) (p. 30). The entrepreneur steps out of his workshop and returns with an idea that may also be a boon to mankind. Heilbroner (1989) provides a good example from history in James Watt, the inventor of the steam engine (p. 74).

### *Comparing the Hero's Adventure with the Process of Entrepreneurship*

This section shows the similarities between some of the details from the various phases of the hero's adventure with events that happen during entrepreneurship. What the various writers have written about

entrepreneurship will be cited as evidence of these similarities for each phase, which will be discussed one by one, in the order that they were presented by Campbell. Each phase belonged to the three stages of the adventure, *Separation or departure, Initiation, and Return*. The salient facts of each phase necessary for the comparison will be noted.

### *Separation*

This is the separation from the world.

Before discussing the details of each phase of each stage of the hero's adventure, some general similarities between the process of entrepreneurship and the *Separation* will be given. It will be recalled here that the "hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder." In what way is there a separation and such a venturing forth for entrepreneurs? Gilder (1984) makes many observations about entrepreneurship that indicate that a kind of separation occurs. These are:

1. The entrepreneur starts in "rebellion against established firms" (p. 247).
2. The "endlessly recurring miracles of capitalism" are carried out by "outcasts and orphans"(p. 257).
3. "The fastest-growing new firms often arise through defections of restive managers and engineers from large corporations or through the initiatives of immigrants and outcasts beyond the established circles of commerce" (p. 132).
4. "In the beginning of the entrepreneurial life there is nearly always a crisis of breaking away" (p. 26).

Shapero and Sokol (1982) mention that entrepreneurs are very often outsiders (p. 74). They see the road to entrepreneurship as one of displacement, which takes on many

forms. But only some people will see a given event as a displacement and turn it into an opportunity. Campbell says that few people are heroes, while Gilder and Schumpeter say that only a rare person does or can become an entrepreneur. Perhaps those people believe in locus of control. It is interesting to note, that in criticizing Marxism, Campbell (1988) says that we are responsible for our own fates (p. 161). So he describes the hero in two ways that are similar to the advocates of entrepreneurship: he attacks Marxism and says the hero believes in locus of control. This goes along with Brockhaus's (1982) finding of a high correlation between the need for achievement and belief in internal locus-of-control (p. 43).

Shapero and Sokol (1982) also report that many entrepreneurs start their ventures at the time of their midlife crisis (p. 81). Reynolds (1991) reports that "those most likely to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities are those with post-secondary education, in their late thirties, and with an established career record (p. 63). Segal (1990) says that the Jungian hero of Campbell is one who is starting out on the journey of self discovery in the second half of life (p. 42).

Brockhaus (1982) also supports the idea that entrepreneurs separate as do heroes because he says that many entrepreneurs are immigrants, refugees and those dissatisfied with their jobs (p. 53).

Finally, Leeming (1973) sums up the Jungian importance of myths with:

"The person who lives without myths lives without roots, without links to the collective self which is finally what we are all about. He is literally isolated from reality. The person who lives with a myth gains 'a sense of wider meaning' to his existence and is raised 'beyond mere getting and spending. '" (p. 321).

For the entrepreneur, this process of getting and spending may be secondary because Burch (1986) and Levenhagen and Thomas

(1990) argue that money and profit maximization are only secondary motives. Below each phase of the adventure will be summarized followed by a description of how it is similar to entrepreneurship.

The Call to Adventure. The "Call to Adventure," or the signs of the vocation of the hero is the first phase of the *Separation* stage. Here the hero is awakened by some herald (which may be luck, a wandering eye, or a meeting with a strange creature) which touches the unconscious world and the hero's creative destiny. The call to adventure takes the hero out of his familiar surroundings into a new world of both pain and creative power. Campbell also says that very often a well or some such similar device is used to symbolically represent the infinitely deep unconscious of the human mind.

Entrepreneur: According to Kirzner (1979), the essence of entrepreneurship is "unawareness both by the entrepreneur himself and by the market in general that he in fact possesses the resources of vision at all" (p. 180). The hero does not know he has creative power until the call comes. There is some herald which signals this. Kirzner has noted that entrepreneurs may be lucky, or alert (the wandering eye) (p. 169-170).

In "The Call" the hero awakes to his creative destiny and Gilder (1984) says that "The entrepreneurial start-up is the most creative domain in American enterprise because it affords the best learning process" (p. 247). The entrepreneur learns by "stepping into the often greasy and fetid bins of creation" (p. 247). These bins are like the dark wells of Campbell mentioned above. And just as the hero sets out into unknown territory, the entrepreneur tries to "discover the unknown continents of the real economy."

Furthermore, Burch (1986) says that entrepreneurs "All have a yen to adventure," (p. 15) are drawn to new ventures and

quests, and are irresistibly drawn to the unknown (p. 36).

Refusal of the Call. This is a very dull case, when the adventure is refused because the subject refuses to give up what he thinks is his own best interest (to stay where he is, either figuratively or literally). The result is not only boredom but separation from the vast creative power he could have realized. Campbell (1968) also calls this phase the folly of the flight from god (p. 37). Gilder sees the entrepreneur who has answered the call as someone who not only has not fled from God but actually knows the laws of God. So both the hero and the entrepreneur avoid the folly of the flight from god.

Supernatural Aid. The hero receives aid from a mentor who himself has taken on his own adventures. The mentor is a protective figure who represents the peace of Paradise and the forces of nature. Here Campbell (1968) also said that "the hero's act coincides with that for which his society is itself ready. He seems to ride on the great rhythm of the historical process" (p. 71-2).

Entrepreneur: Schumpeter, of course, has referred to this as creative destruction. Gilder (1984) says that the entrepreneur prevails by creating a new situation to which the rest of the world will have to react, if successful. It is the successful entrepreneur who is the source of the historical process of creative destruction. He further looks to the historical process with "The spirit of enterprise wells up from the wisdom of the ages and the history of the West and infuses the most modern technological adventures" (emphasis added) (p. 258).

Burch (1986) says that entrepreneurs tend to imitate a personal hero from childhood (p. 30). This is like aid from the mentor since Campbell says that the characters in the myth represent feelings from our infantile psychology.

Shapiro and Sokol (1982) emphasize the role that mentors had in inspiring and influencing the budding entrepreneur. In fact, in many of the cases they cited, the entrepreneur came to know their mentors unexpectedly because they were from other countries or cultures (p. 52). This is similar to the hero being called to the adventure by some surprising or unexpected herald. Brockhaus (1982) supported the importance of mentors (p. 52). It must be noted the word mentor comes from Greek mythology. Mentor was the name of Odysseus's trusty friend and counselor.

The Crossing of the First Threshold. Before the hero can enter the zone of unknown powers, he must first cross a threshold which is guarded by demons who are also a source of power to the hero because he must give up his ego to face them and enter the belly of the whale. In Campbell (1968) the crossing releases the "divine enthusiasm that overturns the reason and releases the forces of the destructive-creative dark" (p. 81-2). Entrepreneur: Where Gilder says that entrepreneurship makes up the real economy, he refers to the enthusiasm of entrepreneurs. The word enthusiasm means full of god, from the Greek, with *en* meaning in and *theos* meaning god. It is interesting that Campbell uses the term destructive-creative along with enthusiasm because it is the enthusiastic entrepreneurs who generate the creative destruction in capitalism.

Gilder (1984) also says of entrepreneurs that they are able to "penetrate the frontiers of the darkness that is always closing in on mortal minds, and [can] reach-in risk and worship-for the inestimable treasures of light beyond" (p. 67). Campbell (1968) has a similar passage: "The adventure of the hero represents the moment in his life when he achieved illumination-the nuclear moment when, while still alive, he found and opened the road to the light

beyond the dark walls of our living death" (p. 259).

Gilder (1984) suggests that the entrepreneur must kill his ego with "Entrepreneurs can be pompous and vain where it doesn't count; but in their own enterprise, the first law is listen. They must be men meek enough and shrewd enough to endure the humbling eclipse of self that comes in profound learning from others" (p. 246). Again, the entrepreneur taps into the vast well of creative ideas not by being arrogant but by being humble enough to listen to others.

Another quote from Gilder (1984) illustrates this point. "Their self interest succumbs to their deeper interest and engagement in the world beyond themselves (this recalls separation and crossing the threshold) impelled by their curiosity, imagination, and faith" (p. 254).

Burch (1986) adds to be a successful entrepreneur "You must be able to travel an uncharted course" (p. 32) and that entrepreneurs are willing to enter a tunnel of darkness (p. 36).

The Belly of the Whale. The entering of the whale symbolizes the hero's realization of his creative ability by giving himself up to a higher power.

Entrepreneur: Kirzner refers to the instant of an entrepreneurial leap of faith. This is when the entrepreneur gives himself up to a higher power in order to be more creative. According to Burch (1986) he gives up the logic of his ego and listens to his imagination. Entrepreneurial activity is a result of imagination more than of logic (p. 29). Gilder (1984) adds "Any breakthrough, in science or art, enterprise or love, depends on glimpsing and engaging some higher some higher realm of life" (p. 70).

## *Initiation*

This is the penetration to the source of power.

The Road of Trials. Once the hero has crossed the first threshold and entered the belly of the whale, he faces a seemingly endless road of tests and trials with the aid of his mentor or the benign power of nature. He slays dragons at each trial, but only if he can constantly put his ego to death.

Entrepreneur: Anyone who has started a new business given the rate of new business failures necessarily must face a road of trials which include getting capital, land and labor to mesh together efficiently and creatively. There are long hours of work, bureaucratic regulations to deal with, irate customers, mechanical breakdowns, competitors, etc. that have to be overcome in order for the entrepreneur to succeed. Gilder (1984) writes "The entrepreneurial achievements of the 1970's and the early 1980's came in the face of a hostile press, resistant culture, and a stagnant "economy." The breakthroughs of these entrepreneurs are an amazing testimony to human will and ingenuity, vision and tenacity in defiance of the odds" (p. 56).

Gilder (1984) also writes of the difficulties faced by the entrepreneur with "In their own afflicted lives, they discover the hard predicament of all human life, threatened by the creeping encroachments of jungle and sand" (p. 18) and "In the harsh struggles and remorseless battles of their lives, entrepreneurs are no saints, and far from sinless. They bear scars and have inflicted many. Since their every decision has met an empirical test beyond appeal, they are necessarily the world's true realists, most proven pragmatists" (p. 256)

Burch (1986) adds "Few, if any entrepreneurs have escaped failure. Most have seen the wild beasts of failure trample on their rose gardens" (p. 33).

The Meeting with the Goddess. The importance of the goddess for the hero here is not that he must meet her and fall in love with her, but that the goddess is representative of the universe. If the hero can come to know this "mother" universe, he can learn the creative secrets of the physical universe, which will enable him to deliver a boon. That is, if the hero can look at the world (or universe) as a protecting and nourishing place, like a mother, or be "married" to the universe, he will be able to deliver boons because he will be in tune with those creative secrets.<sup>2</sup> Entrepreneur: It must be recalled that this section and the next are very symbolic and do not relate directly to the hero's relationship to actual women. The hero needs to see the universe as a nurturing place. Burch (1986) refers to the entrepreneur's ability to take charge of and watch over a venture until it can stand alone as a "nurturing quality" (p. 29).

Woman as Temptress. Here the hero must not see the woman as someone tempting him with the pleasures of the flesh, rather he must accept the fact that we live in a material world and that everything we do is related to that fact. If he can go beyond seeing women as merely material things, he can keep the power attained in the meeting with the goddess.

Atonement with the Father. The hero has a father or knows someone who is a father figure who initiates him with new techniques, duties and attitudes so that he can take the place of the father and later become an initiator himself. The hero must also outgrow the notion that the father is an ogre and come to believe that the father is merciful. This is necessary for the hero to gain the creative power.

Entrepreneur: Gilder (1984) gives importance to the family and the father of the entrepreneur. "Most [entrepreneurs] were driven by conscious feelings of deprivation and guilt stemming from broken

families and connections. Many had lost their fathers in childhood through death or divorce. Resulting pangs of guilt and failure may unleash personal drive to vindicate themselves and retrieve a family order" (p. 18). He goes even further in discussing the role of the father by saying of entrepreneurs "Many lose their fathers, early fill their role, and transcend it gloriously in the world "(p. 18). This is echoed by Sarachek.

Shapero (1982) reports that many entrepreneurs had fathers who were entrepreneurs (85-6).

Apotheosis. This is the act of making a god out of a person. To become a god or god-like, the hero must become selfless. But to become selfless, the hero must transcend the pairs of opposites (especially birth and death) that make up the world as perceived by our rational minds. The hero must stand and be able to go between two worlds, the conscious and the unconscious and see the divinity and oneness in all things. This is shown to be the case for the entrepreneur in the step of the journey called "Master of Two Worlds" in the next section on The Return.

The Ultimate Boon. The ultimate boon is for the hero to deliver the knowledge of the divinity and oneness of all things to his community. This leads to the knowledge of the infinite creative abilities within each individual.

Entrepreneur: It has already been noted that both Schumpeter and Campbell understood the importance of the process of creation and destruction. Earlier it was noted that Schumpeter (1962) said creative destruction is "primarily responsible for the recurrent "prosperities" that revolutionize the economic organism" (p. 123). That is, he saw creative destruction as a bringer of boons.

## *Return*

In Campbell (1968) this is the life-enhancing return which is necessary to the "continuous circulation of spiritual energy into the world" (p. 36).

Refusal of the Return. Some heroes refuse the return because it might annihilate all recollection of the enlightenment found or it will be too difficult to bring this knowledge to the world. Kirzner says not to act on a hunch shows that it was not a hunch at all. This would mean that no enlightenment had been found in the first place. So someone who refuses to act on his hunch (or not return) . would not be an entrepreneur (or hero) to Kirzner.

The Magic Flight. If the hero displeases the gods in some way, he must flee from them on a flight of what Campbell (1968) calls "magical obstruction and evasion" (p. 197).

Rescue from Without. The hero, having touched the eternal, may wish to stay there rather than return to the world, in which case the world has to somehow bring him back.

The Crossing of the Return Threshold. If the hero does not have to be rescued from without, he must realize that although he has glimpsed and touched the divine that the world he left and to which he will return is also just as real. This allows him to cross the threshold rather than stay in the eternal so that he might deliver his boon.

Master of Two Worlds. The two worlds are the known, material world he left, and the one he entered on the adventure where he discovered creative power. Somehow the hero must be able to use the energy and creative ability discovered in his adventure for the benefit of mankind. He has to be able to delve into his unconscious and bring out that which the world needs without letting common, everyday concerns distort

his gift. He has this ability if he has killed his ego.

Entrepreneur: Gilder (1984) writes something similar about the character of entrepreneurs. "It is the entrepreneurs who know the laws of the world and the laws of God. Thus they sustain the world" (p. 19). The following elaborates on this:

"Every capitalist investment has the potential for a dual yield: a financial profit and an epistemological profit. One without the other is sterile. Economies progress when the process of investment is informed by the results of previous investments. What makes the capitalist entrepreneur uniquely valuable as a force for growth, and progress is that he combines in one person these two yields of enterprise" (p. 254).

The entrepreneur clearly must be a master of two very different worlds.

Freedom to Live. The hero is finally able, once he has killed his ego, to detach himself from the fruits of his own labor and sacrifice them to

God. He has discovered the creative, divine power that was in him all the time. According to Campbell (1968) he is "the champion of things becoming, not of things become, because he is" (p. 243).

Entrepreneur: Burch (1986) says that corporations tend to cease taking risks and are not run by entrepreneurs (p. 87) while also acknowledging that entrepreneurs are good at starting companies and making them successful, but not at managing them (p. 26). The entrepreneur is not a champion of the already existing corporation but of those that are becoming, to which he is giving birth. Campbell (1988) strongly emphasizes the heroic nature of mothers who give birth because of their sacrifice for another (p. 125). Gilder (1984) also lists sacrifice as an important characteristic of entrepreneurs. He says of entrepreneurship "It IS a world of service to others-solving their problems and taking on new ones for yourself-it is the

prime source of leadership and wealth" (p. 247) and of entrepreneurs "By the process of creating and responding to markets, they orient their lives toward the service to others" (p. 255). MacMillan and McGrath found that "American entrepreneurs give back more than others to society" (*The Wall Street Journal*, February 6, 1992, p. A1).

The most telling Gilder (1984) observation for this phase is "His (the entrepreneur) success is the triumph beyond the powers and principalities of the established world to the transcendent sources of creation and truth" (p. 258). The entrepreneur masters the two worlds of business and creativity.

## CONCLUSIONS

Given that we need to know more about the psychology of entrepreneurship and to the extent that actual entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurial process as well as what has been written about them coincide with the nature of the hero and his adventure in mythology, this paper provides important insights into the psychology of entrepreneurship because myths are representations of our psyches. Since the entrepreneur's (ad)venture so closely resembles the hero's adventure which in turn represents the internal action of the human psyche, entrepreneurship is a very natural human instinct. It is human nature to go both on the vision quest of the hero's adventure as outlined by Campbell as well as the vision quest of entrepreneurship. This is not to ignore the negative, destructive aspects and pay attention only to the creative side. They may be heroes but they are not saints. They could also be part trickster and all of the skills and knowledge they learn on their Journey can be used for purposes that cause harm as well as bring benefits. The hero and trickster are both agents of change, and change is always a two-edged sword. It may,

however, be a moral imperative for society to allow entrepreneurship to take place. Even though few people become heroes or entrepreneurs, their creative energy and world redeeming work is what makes for a vital and dynamic society as Jonathan Hughes pointed out in *The Vital Few: The Entrepreneur and American Economic Progress*. The work from systems theory attests to the need for systems to be open to

new energy and ideas that can only come from the outside. When a system or society is closed off, entropy sets in and the system starts to stagnate and die. We must allow the heroic entrepreneurs to leave the society or system (the separation) so they can be initiated into new sources of creative energy which they can bring back as a boon upon their return.

## FOOTNOTES

1. From personal correspondence with Israel Kirzner he writes "I should point out in my own treatment of the entrepreneur, he is not seen as a "hero". Moreover, in my own treatment pure luck is not seen as entrepreneurial. (but as the act of deliberately putting oneself into a situation which one hopes will prove lucky is entrepreneurial") It is my contention that the best way for a person to put themselves into a situation in which they will be lucky is for them to follow Campbell's advice that is based on his analysis of the hero's adventure. This is to follow your bliss, to listen to the wisdom of your heart and do what you love, not what the social system would have you do. If you follow your bliss, you are a hero. I believe that the most successful entrepreneurs follow their bliss and are therefore heroes.

It is interesting to note that Schumpeter listed three classes of motives for entrepreneurship: the will to found private kingdom, the will to conquer, and the joy of creating. The first one, although seemingly only one of greed, ranges, however, from "spiritual ambition down to mere snobbery" (Schumpeter, 1983, p. 92). The second he saw like a sporting event, with money used to keep score, and not as an end in itself (Schumpeter, 1983, p. 92). This is consistent with other, more recent research (Burch, 1986, p. 29). The entrepreneur who fits the third class of motives is in it for the sake of "exercising one's energy and ingenuity" and for the delight in venturing (Schumpeter, 1983, p. 92-3). All three classes of motives are anti-hedonistic, with the third being the most so. This certainly makes it plausible to see the entrepreneur as someone who follows his or her bliss.

2. Campbell (1968), p. 121, says that the adventure is essentially the same for men and women. The interested reader should see *The Female Hero In American and British Literature* by Carol S. Pearson and Katherine Pope as well as *The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness* by Maureen Murdock. These are listed in the references.

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## Appendix

Tape #1901: "Call of the Hero" with Joseph Campbell interviewed by Michael Toms  
New Dimensions Foundation audio tape from a live interview on San Francisco's radio  
station KQED

The following exchange was part of a discussion of the question of: What IS creativity?

Toms: In a sense it's the going for, the jumping over the edge and moving into the  
adventure that really catalyzes the creativity, isn't it?

Campbell: I would say so, you don't have creativity otherwise.

Toms: Otherwise there's no fire, you're just following somebody else's rules.

Campbell: Well, my wife is a dancer. She has had dance companies for many, many  
years. I don't know whether I should talk about this. But when the young people are  
really adventuring, it's amazing what guts they have and what meager lives they can be  
living, and yet the richness of the action in the studio. Then, you are going to have a  
concert season. They all have to join a union. And as soon as they join a union, *their  
character changes*. (emphasis added, but Campbell changed the tone of his voice) There  
are rules of how many hours a day you can rehearse. There are certain rules of how many  
weeks of rehearsal you can have. They bring this down like a sledge hammer on the  
whole thing. There are two mentalities. There's the mentality of security, of money. And  
there's the mentality of open risk.

Toms: In other societies we can look and see that there are those that honor elders. In our  
society it seems much like the elders are part of the main stream and there is a continual  
kind of wanting to turn away from what the elders have to say, the way it is, the way to  
do it. The union example is a typical one, where the authority, institution, namely the  
union comes in and says this is the way it's done. And then one has to fall into line or one  
has to find something else to do.

Campbell: That's right.

Toms: And it's like treating this dichotomy between elders and the sons and daughters of the elders. How do you see that in relationship to other cultures?

Campbell: This comes to the conflict of the art, the creative art and economic security. I don't think I have seen it in other cultures. The artist doesn't have to buck against quite the odds that he has to buck against today.

Toms: The artist is honored in other cultures.

Campbell: He is honored and quickly honored. But you might hit it off, something that really strikes the need and requirements of the day. Then you've given your gift early. But basically it is a real risk. I think that is so in any adventure, even in business, the man who has the idea of a new kind of *gift* (emphasis added) to society and he is willing to risk it (this is exactly what George Gilder says in chapter three, "The Returns of Giving" in his book *Wealth and Poverty*). Then the workers come in and claim they are the ones that did it. Then he (the entrepreneur) can't afford to perform his performance. It's a grotesque conflict, I think between the security and the creativity ideas. The entrepreneur is a creator, he's running a risk.

Toms: Maybe in American capitalistic society the entrepreneur is the creative hero in some sense.

Campbell: Oh, I think he is, I mean the real one. Most people go into economic activities not for risk but for security. You see what I mean. And the elder psychology tends to take over.

This discussion ended and after a short break a new topic was discussed.