

MYTHOLOGY, JOSEPH CAMPBELL, AND THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT: This article shows that the work of *mythologist* Joseph *Campbell* indicates a solution to what might be called the socio-economic conflict: the conflict between self-interest and the individual's need to be part of a community of shared values. That solution is to "follow your bliss" or the wisdom of your own heart rather than the dictates of some impersonal social system. This rule brings an individual the greatest possible happiness while at the same time it revitalizes his or her community of heroes following their bliss whose values are that of personal creativity and integrity. Campbell's own scholarship exemplified the ideals of socio-economics since he considered himself a generalist who read widely in many fields looking for and finding a transcendent message.

INTRODUCTION

The discipline of socio-economics, in its aim to study how individuals resolve the conflict between self-interest and their need to be part of a community of shared values, draws upon many other disciplines. These include the traditional major disciplines from the social sciences and humanities: anthropology, sociology, political science, philosophy, history, and economics. To this list should be added *mythology* because it communicates the solution to this "socio-economic conflict". That solution, in the words of the late *mythologist* Joseph *Campbell*, is for individuals to "follow their bliss" or "follow the wisdom of their own hearts." *Campbell* saw this advice as the message of all the world's *myths*. An important aspect of those *myths*, the hero's journey, was a major focus of *Campbell's* work. It was in the hero's journey that *Campbell* saw the "follow your bliss" message. To suggest that this "rule" is a solution to the socio-economic conflict and to encourage individuals to follow it is a valid endeavor for socio-economists because socio-economics is as much a normative science as it is a

positive science (Etzioni & Lawrence, 1991, p. 348).

Campbell is a good link between socio-economics and *mythology* because he was very much concerned about individual behavior, the values which directed it, and how it interacted with society. But he also carried out a more detailed analysis of the hero's journey aspect of *mythology* than other scholars, although this work is similar to theirs. 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 leads ultimately to a story of a dragon-slayer, 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 shows that *Campbell's* hero is Jungian (Segal, 1990, p. 42) and similar to Erik Erickson's in that the hero's journey is a quest for personal identity (Segal, 1990, p. 34). Jung himself said that the hero archetype represents this need of the human psyche (Jung, 1956, p. 178). Jungian therapists use *Campbell's* work in guiding their patients' journey (Eliot, 1990, p. 232). Even modern Freudians see *myths* as a useful tool (Segal, 1990, p. 44). Also, James Hillman said of *Campbell*, "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" (quoted in Cousineau, 1990, p. 178).

Campbell has also been quite influential. Those whom he influenced includes not only filmmakers like George Lucas and Steven Spielberg but also writers like Richard Adams, Lorna Catford, Michael Ray, Carol S. Pearson, and Maureen Murdock.

It is also important for socio-economics to look at *mythology* because this is an era in which *mythology* is being used to understand economics. Silver (1991) analyzes the ancient economy through *mythology* while Putka (1993, p. A1) reports that business case studies are now being written which compare literary figures, including heroes, to business managers. 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 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" (Eliade, 1990, p. 42).

This article has six parts. The first part briefly summarizes *Campbell's* view of *mythology*. The second part explains in detail what *Campbell* meant by "follow your bliss" and compares it to the

psychology of Carl Rogers. The third part provides an example of bliss following heroes revitalizing society by comparing the hero in *mythology* with the entrepreneur in capitalism. The fourth part explains how heroic values can be seen as the values of a community; and the fifth part looks at *Campbell* as a socio-economist. The sixth part provides conclusions.

[CAMPBELL'S VIEW OF MYTHOLOGY](#)

To summarize and paraphrase *Campbell*, a *myth* is a story about a hero which coordinates the living person with the cycle of his/her own life, with the environment in which he or she is living, and with the society which itself has already been integrated in the environment. *Myths* are also symbolic representations of our psyches (*Campbell*, 1968, p. 255).

It is a standard belief not only that *myths* are symbolic representations of our psyches but also 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 therefore, 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. 255-256). Leeming shares this view (Leeming, 1973, p. 9) along with a large number of Jungian interpreters (see Barnaby & D'Acierno, 1990, p. 3). Jung himself said, "*Myths* are original revelations of the pre-conscious psyche, involuntary statements about unconscious happenings" (Jung & Kerényi, 1951, p. 101).

Campbell stated what he thought *mythology* was and his view in relation to others with:

Mythology has been interpreted by the modern intellect as a primitive, fumbling effort to explain the world of nature (Frazer); as a production of poetical fantasy from prehistoric times, misunderstood by succeeding ages (Muller); as a repository of allegorical instruction, to shape the individual to his group (Durkheim); as a group

dream, symptomatic of archetypal urges within the depths of the human psyche (Jung); as the traditional vehicle of man's profoundest metaphysical insights (Coomaraswamy); and as God's Revelation to His children (the Church). Mythology is all of these. The various judgments are determined by the viewpoints of the judges. For when scrutinized in terms not of what it is but of how it functions, of how it has served mankind in the past, of how it may serve today, *mythology* shows itself to be as amenable to the obsessions and requirements of the individual, the race, the age (*Campbell*, 1968, p. 382).

Myths have four functions (*Campbell*, 1988, p. 31):

1. Mystical. Realizing what a wonder the universe is and what a wonder you are, and experiencing awe before the mystery. *Myth* opens the world to the dimension of mystery, to the realization of the mystery that underlies all forms.
2. Cosmological dimensions. This is the dimension with which science is concerned—showing you what the shape of the universe is, but showing it in such a way that the mystery comes through.
3. Sociological. This supports and validates a certain social order. These *myths* vary from place to place.
4. Pedagogical. How to live a human life under any circumstances.

Insomuch as the *myth* is about the adventure of a hero, the pedagogical function is most important. The lesson (of how to live a life under any circumstances) is: *follow your bliss*. What this means will be explained in the next part. The hero's adventure will be briefly explained first:

The standard path of the *mythology* 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 (*Campbell*, 1968, p. 30).

A more detailed summary is given in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (*Campbell*, 1968, pp. 245-246). The essence of *myth* is the call to the adventure of following your bliss (Briggs & Maher, 1989, p. 23). A more complete overview of *Campbell's* work can be found in Segal's book, *Joseph Campbell: An Introduction* (1990).

THE MEANING OF FOLLOWING YOUR BLISS

What does it mean to follow your bliss? In general, it means three things:

1. Money and material things are secondary (*Campbell*, 1988, pp. 148,229). The following is dialogue between Joseph *Campbell* and Bill Moyers from *The Power of Myth* (1988,p. 148):

C: My general formula is "Follow your bliss." Find where it is, and don't be afraid to follow it.

M: Is it my work or my life?

C: If the work you're doing is the work that you choose to do because you are enjoying it, that's it. But if you think, "Oh, no! I couldn't do that!" that's the dragon locking you in. "No, no, I couldn't be a writer," or "No, no, I couldn't do what So-and-so is doing."

M: In this sense, unlike heroes such as Prometheus or Jesus, we're not going on our journey to save the world but to save ourselves.

C: But in doing that, you save the world (emphasis added).

Elsewhere, *Campbell* says that the savior is the one who can transcend the pairs of opposites (Briggs & Maher, 1989, p. 45). This means going beyond the duality of individual and group that is stressed in socio-economics (*Campbell* 1988, p. 229):

C: Each incarnation has a potentiality, and the mission of the life is to live that potentiality. How do you do it? My answer

is, "Follow your bliss." There's something inside you that knows when you're in the center, that knows when you're on the beam or off the beam. And if you get off the beam to earn money, you've lost your life. And if you stay in the center and don't get any money, you still have your bliss.

Finally, Leeming sums up the Jungian importance of *myths*:

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' (Leeming, 1973, p. 321).

2. If you follow your bliss, doors (opportunities) will open up for you where they would not have opened up before. They will also open up for you where they would not have opened up for anyone else (Cousineau, 1990, p. 214). This echoes one of *Campbell's* favorite writers, Goethe:

Concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elemental truth—the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, the Providence moves, too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred (Catford & Ray, 1991, p. 5).

3. Following your bliss has to be contrasted with following a system or a social system. A system creates roles for us that are not of our own choosing. This dehumanizes us (*Campbell*, 1988, p. 143-144). The following is also dialogue between Joseph *Campbell* and Bill Moyers from *The Power of Myth* (pp. 143-144):

M: Do movies create hero *myths*? Do you think, for example that a movie like *Star Wars* fills some of that need for a model of the hero?

C: I've heard youngsters use some of George Lucas' terms—"the Force" and "the dark side."

So it must be hitting somewhere. It's a good sound teaching, I would say.

M: I think that explains in part the success of *Star Wars*. It wasn't just the production value that made that such an exciting film to watch, it was that it came along at a time when people needed to see in recognizable images the clash between good and evil. They needed to be reminded of idealism, to see a romance based upon selflessness rather than selfishness.

C: The fact that the evil power is not identified with any specific nation on this earth means you've got an abstract power, which represents a principle, not a specific historic situation. The story has to do with an operation of principles not of this nation against that. The monster masks that are put on people in *Star Wars* represent the real monster force in the modern world. When the mask of Darth Vader is removed, you see an unformed man, one who has not developed as a human individual. What you see is a strange and pitiful sort of undifferentiated face.

M: What is the significance of that?

C: Darth Vader has not developed his own humanity. He's a robot. He's a bureaucrat, living not in terms of himself but in terms of an imposed system. This is the threat to our lives that we all face today. Is the system going to flatten you out and deny you your humanity, or are you going to be able to make use of the system to the attainment of human purposes? How do you relate to the system so that you are not compulsively serving it? It doesn't help to try to change it to accord with your system of thought. The momentum of history behind it is too great for anything really significant to evolve from that kind of action. The thing to do is to learn to live in your period of history as a human being. That's something else, and it can be done.

M: By doing what?

C: By holding to your own ideals for yourself and, like Luke Skywalker, rejecting the system's impersonal claims upon you.

M: When I took our two sons to see **Star Wars**, they did the same thing the audience did at that moment when the voice of Ben Kenobi says to Skywalker in the climactic moment of the last fight, "Turn off your computer, turn off your machine and do it yourself, follow your feelings, trust your feelings." And when he did, he achieved success, and the audience broke out into applause.

C: Well, you see, that movie communicates. It is a language that talks to young people, and that's what counts. It asks, Are you going to be a person of heart and humanity—because that's where the life is, from the heart—or are you going to do whatever seems to be required of you by what might be called "intentional power"? When Ben Kenobi says, "May the Force be with you," he's speaking of the power and energy of life, not of programmed political intentions.

In the movie **Star Wars**, Luke Skywalker turns off his computer (the impersonal system) and relies on the "Force" or his intuition to destroy the Death Star.

Generally speaking, following your bliss unlocks your creative potential because you separate from your community or system. "You can't have creativity unless you leave behind the bounded, the fixed, all the rules" (*Campbell*, 1988, p. 156). Attaining the joy of being a creative, spiritually fulfilled person is probably the best thing we can do for ourselves. But it is also the best thing we can do for our world. Here, the socio-economic conflict is solved or dissolved. You save yourself and your world by following your bliss. (*Campbell*, 1988; p. 148, quoted above). There need to be no conflict between your own deepest desires and the needs of the rest of the world. Furthermore, *Campbell* said (about following your bliss):

The influence of a vital person vitalizes, there's no doubt about it. The world without spirit is a wasteland. People have the notion of saving the

world by shifting things around, changing the rules, and who's on top and so forth. No, no! Any world is a valid one if it's alive. The thing to do is to bring life to it, and the only way to do that is to find in your own case where the life is and become alive yourself (*Campbell*, 1988, p. 149).

This sentiment is found in the economic historian John Hughes's book, **The Vital Few: The Entrepreneur and American Economic Progress** (1986). He argued that individual entrepreneurs played a vital role in the development of the American Economy.

Campbell's idea of "following your bliss" is also similar to the views of the psychologist Carl Rogers. He is part of the movement in American psychology called "humanistic psychology." He sees humans as having "a natural tendency toward actualization," meaning that they are interested in "the growth and fulfillment of potentialities" (see *Campbell* extract on page 367 where he uses the word potentiality in explaining the meaning of following your bliss). This actualization is the mainspring of creativity (Catford & Ray, 1991, p. 213). For Rogers, "if we are not forced into socially constructed molds, but rather are accepted for what we are, we will live in ways that enhance both ourselves and society" (this goes along with *Campbell's* idea of following your bliss as the opposite of following a role dictated by the social system). The idea that we can enhance both ourselves and society by following our bliss or actualizing is, of course, the main thesis of this paper. Rogers also felt that people should listen to their "inner guiding voice" (see *Campbell* extract, p. 367, where he says that there is something inside you that knows when you are in the center). Our rational and conscious thought has to be in touch with this inner voice in order for us to make wise life decisions (Nye, 1986, ch. 4). This outlook is not only similar to *Campbell's* idea about bliss, but it is also similar to his following of Kant's views on the limited ability of our rational faculties.

THE ENTREPRENEUR AS CAPITALIST HERO

Morong (1992) found many similarities between the hero's adventure and the work of entrepreneurs as well as similarities in their personality traits.

Entrepreneurs follow their bliss; thus, they revitalize our economy. This is consistent with the socio-economic vision which reorients a person from being a consumer to being a producer (creator) (Lindenberg, 1990). The next few paragraphs summarize this comparison.

Heroes and entrepreneurs are called to and take part in the greatest and most universal adventure that life has to offer: the simultaneous journey of self-discovery, spiritual growth, and the personal creativity they make possible. There is an amazing and profound similarity between not only the journey that entrepreneurs take and the adventure of heroes but also in their personality traits. The comparison is profound because the *myths* are about universal human desires and conflicts that we see played out in the lives of entrepreneurs. How is the hero's adventure similar to the entrepreneur's adventure?

The hero's journey begins with a call to adventure. He or she is awakened by some herald which touches his or her unconscious world and creative destiny. The entrepreneur, too, is "called" to the adventure. By chance, he or she discovers a previously unknown product or way to make a profit. The lucky discovery cannot be planned in itself the herald of the adventure.

The entrepreneur must step out of the ordinary way of producing and into his or her 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 entrepreneur now has the power to bestow this boon on the rest of humanity.

Heroes bring change. *Campbell* refers to the constant change in the universe as "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" (*Campbell*, 1968, p. 38). This is similar to Joseph Schumpeter's theory of entrepreneurship called creative destruction.^[1] 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. The hero also finds that the world "suffers from a symbolical deficiency" and "appears on the scene in various forms according to the changing needs of the race" (*Campbell*, 1968, p. 38). The changing needs and the deficiency correspond to the changing market conditions or the changing desires for products. The entrepreneur is the first person to perceive the changing needs.

Regarding personality traits, the hero and entrepreneur are risk-takers and creators. But what is the source of their creativity? People become creative when in the words of *Campbell*, they "follow their bliss." The drive comes from within. It is this courageous action that opens up doors and creative possibilities that did not previously exist. This is the journey of self-discovery and spiritual growth. Although it may be long, painful, and lonely, it is very rewarding.

In addition to the above similarities, both the entrepreneur and hero are aided by mentors, are humble enough to listen to others in order to learn (and thus become creative), and face a road of trials where they must continually slay the demons and dragons of their own unconscious (such as fear, their egos) in order to discover their creative ability which ultimately comes from giving themselves up to a higher power. They must also see the universe as a kind of nurturing mother that provides all that is needed rather than as a hostile place. Both either replace or attain an atonement with their fathers, whom they must learn is merciful in order to be creative. Ultimately, they become selfless and can see the creative possibilities that the universe offers. They become masters of two worlds, one of imagination and creativity and the other of material things and business. This mastery makes it possible for them to bestow the boon.

It is interesting to note that Schumpeter listed three classes of motives for entrepreneurship: the will to found a 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, pp. 92-93). All three classes of motives are antihedonistic, with the third being the most so. This certainly makes it plausible to see the entrepreneur as someone who follows his/her bliss.

Campbell saw the heroic bliss follower as one who revitalizes the world. It is certainly true that this is the role played by the entrepreneur. Zoltan Acs wrote recently in *Challenge* magazine "In many countries today, small firms have outpaced large ones in innovation and job creation. It is time for economists to pay more attention to the role of small business in today's global economy" (Acs, 1992, p. 38). It is important to mention here that entrepreneurs think the same way all over the world and, in fact, are reshaping the economy all over the world. The universality of entrepreneurship is now being validated 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*, 1992). Another is Brigitte Berger's recent book, *The Culture of Entrepreneurship* (1991), showing how entrepreneurship is a worldwide phenomenon that is transforming economics even in the most unexpected of places.

Finally, *Campbell* himself, in a radio interview once, discussed capitalism and entrepreneurship. He agreed that the entrepreneur was the real hero in our capitalistic society. (This conversation is reproduced in the paper Appendix.)

[FOLLOWING YOUR BLISS AS A VALUE SYSTEM](#)

Since the socio-economic conflict pits the individual versus the society, or rather the individual's perceived self-interest versus the desire to be part of a community of shared values, the advice to follow you bliss (as a solution to the socio-economic conflict) needs to be consistent with

a set of values. Socio-economics posits that people sometimes make decisions "within the context of values, beliefs, ideas, and guidelines installed in them by others, and reinforced by their social circles" (Etzioni & Lawrence, 1991, p. 4). That is, if you are following your bliss, you would have to know that you are living in accord with the group's values. These values are creativity and personal integrity. The individual who follows his or her bliss needs to know that he or she is part of a community of adventurers who seek spiritual fulfillment by developing their own creative potential. They will also not "sell out" their principles for money, status, power, security, or to meet the needs of the system. We need to make these values the values of the entire world. Perhaps this is a role that the new discipline of socio-economics can play. Joseph *Campbell* said over and over that all of us living on planet earth now need to identify with one group: the entire human race, not any one racial, ethnic, or economic group. The world community is (or needs to be) a community of heroes. Be heroic and you will help yourself and your community while promoting the values of your community.

This ideal is expressed in a small, concluding section (1991,p. 242) of the book *The Path of the Everyday Hero* by Lorna Catford and Michael Ray (two professors of business at Stanford University):

It seems that a group of heroes from all professions-athletics, mothering, government, military, business, health care, rescue, aviation, exploration and the arts got together to form a club. They decided that it would be an exclusive club; so exclusive in fact, that no one other than certified heroes could attend the meetings. But when they all gathered around for their first meeting, they saw that they had a problem. There was no one there to serve or to do the business of the club.

So one of the heroes had a reasonably nonheroic idea. They would put each of the jobs needed to be done on pieces of paper and then draw out the job they would have for that meeting. And someone became the president, another the cook, another served. One guarded the front door, others cleaned bathrooms, washed windows, kept minutes, arranged and performed entertainment, handled finances, and provided transportation.

At the next meeting, the former president drew cooking detail, the janitor from the previous meeting kept minutes. Jobs were switched around and around from meeting to meeting. Everyone was happy. And no one ever forgot that no matter what their job, they were fundamentally a hero and always would be.

Don't ever forget either.

We wish you luck in all your endeavors. Travel well on your path."

Campbell probably would have agreed with this sentiment. He said that the lines of Walt Whitman's poem *Leaves of Grass* "are marvelous" (**Campbell**, 1972, p. 259). One of the lines reads, "And there is no trade or employment but the young man following it may become a hero."^[2]

The question facing our world today is can we integrate and reconcile the different *myths* and religions in the world so that we can all see each other as heroes? There is a precedent for this. In the Near East, in ancient times (around 700 B.C.), religious temples were places of commerce. When different cultures came into conflict with each other, economic efficiency was enhanced by the integration of different *myths*:

Commerce was also facilitated by the construction of temples at international borders, especially where like islands and ports, they were well demarcated geographically. The evidence makes clear that ancient societies sought to reduce transaction costs by identifying one group's god with the god of another or by identifying one group's god with the god of another or by inventing new gods whose *myths* linked them to both potential trading partners. Religious syncretism not only facilitated the transfer of goods but of artisans and technology (Silver, 1992, p. 19).

It is also important to raise the question of whether or not human beings are similar enough for this to happen. **Campbell** certainly saw all humans as having the same psyche. He agreed with Jung that "humanity had a collective unconscious" (Obson, 1991, p. 125). Otto Rank said that we were all born as heroes (**Campbell**, 1988, p. 124). Charles Darwin and David Hume also saw the similarities across

racess. Darwin noticed "numerous points of mental similarity between the most distinct races of man" and believed in the "close similarity between the men of all races in tastes, dispositions, and habits" (Darwin, 1871, p. 539). Hume said that people "were much the same in all time and places" (Silver, 1992, p. 26). Earlier, it was acknowledged that the heroes of capitalism, entrepreneurs, also "thought much the same way." Finally, consumption patterns, when incomes are similar, are also much the same around the world (Ruffin & Gregory, 1986, p. 111). **Campbell** himself advocated world unity based on his belief in psychic unity (Segal, 1990, p. 193).

One question that arises in trying to promote heroism is the question of is the hero trying to do good work or trying to rise above and gain control over the rest of society. Our society has a tendency to think the latter. This may be due in part to the decline in reading *mythological* texts and other stories about cultural heroes in our educational system. If we could reverse this trend, we would no longer have to fear the hero (Silver, 1989, ch. 3: "Of Mermaids and Magnificence"). If heroes represent the elite, I think **Campbell** would have agreed with Silber. **Campbell** said:

Sport is really an elite experience. You can't have a game where everybody wins. But there's an awful lot of that kind of thinking in our sociological thinking now where nobody should be beating anybody else and let's fix it so he can't. Then you spend the rest of your life looking at a movie to see whether you can see a real elite performance. That's where life really is-in the upper brackets, not the lower ones (quoted in Cousineau, 1990, p. 220).

CAMPBELL AS SOCIO-ECONOMIST

Before concluding, it should be noted, that interestingly enough, Campbell himself seems to have exemplified the ideals of socio-economics: he read widely in many areas while being concerned with individual behavior, the values we live by, and how we interact with our world as individuals. He read in the areas of *mythology*, religion, psychology, and anthropology. He even had an interest in history, reading Toynbee and Spengler. He considered himself a generalist, saying "In retrospect to the world of the intellect I was never interested in small, specialized studies. I think they

tend to dehumanize you" (Cousineau, 1991, p. 27). It should not be surprising that his work has implications for socio-economics today.

There are a number of other ways in which *Campbell* seems to have sensed the socio-economic conflict. First, consider the following exchange from *An Open Life: Joseph Campbell in Conversation with Michael Toms* (Briggs & Moher, 1989, p. 53). The topic was how the rational side of our nature keeps us separate as individuals:

Toms: Perhaps the nature of conflict is related to the inability to go beyond the mind, to recognize the connection that we all have.

Campbell: That's right. But then the opposite problem comes up: becoming too strongly linked to the commonality-losing touch with your own individuality. Part of our loyalty to life is being loyal to our own lives, you see, not sacrificing your self, but letting oneself play in relation to the other in a prudent and positive way.

Toms: Striking a balance.

Campbell: Exactly that, Striking a balance.

This seems to express the basic idea of the socio-economic conflict described earlier. But this represents the dualistic thinking of socio-economics. This duality is logical, but it limits our ability to be in touch with eternal consciousness. That is, to go beyond seeing everything as a conflict of opposites and just see things as they are, that all is one (*Campbell*, 1986, p. 73). The new discipline of socio-economics is right to point out this basic conflict. But we can end the conflict by going beyond dualistic thinking. In fact, *Campbell* said "Self-preservation is only the second law of life. The first law is that you and the other are one" (Obson, 1991, p. 173).

Campbell relies on Schopenhauer to fully explain the problem:

Individuation is but an appearance in a field of space and time, these being the conditioning forms through which my cognitive faculties apprehend their objects. Hence the multiplicity and differences that distinguish individuals are likewise but

appearances. They exist, that is to say, only in my mental representation. My own true inner being actually exists in every living creature as truly and immediately as known to my consciousness only in myself. This realization, for which the standard formula in Sanskrit is *tat tvan asi*, is the ground of that compassion upon which all true, that is to say unselfish, virtue rests and whose expression is in every good deed (*Campbell*, 1986, pp. 112-113).

When we realize that the other person and I are one, there need be no conflict. To help the other is to help yourself.

As mentioned earlier, *Campbell* thought we needed a few global *mythology*. He felt that the pictures of the earth taken from space helped this cause. "As viewed by the astronauts from the moon, the earth lacks those lines of sociopolitical division that are so prominent on maps. And as recognized here below, the web of interlacing socio-economic interdependencies that now infolds the planet is of one life. All that is required is a general change of vision to accord with these contemporary facts" (*Campbell*, 1986, p. 124, emphasis added). So, he saw the world coming together as one community. He probably did not have the disciplinary meaning of socio-economics in mind when he wrote this, but he seems to have been in touch with its transcendent themes.

I think if *Campbell* could have summed up this issue in his own words, he would have used the following:

The question finally at issue, however, is not of individual psychology, alienation, and resentment, but of the irreducible conflict of metaphysics, vis-a-vis morals within the jurisdiction, not only of art, but of *myth*, religion, and social action as well. For during the course of the nineteenth century, the separation of these two opposed orders of human experience, concern, and fulfillment became in the West exaggerated to such a degree by the radical materialism of the increasingly industrialized megalopolitan centers of mass intelligence and democratization, that anything like the functional grounding of a social order in a *mythology* (so that individuals of whatever social class, participating in the metaphorical festivals, should become joined with all in a profoundly shared experience of the

ground and sense of their lives) simply disappeared into irrelevance. And with that, the proper artist lost his function. Today's pitiful contracts to invent monuments commemorating local-historical events and personages are hardly comparable to the earlier challenges of art, to break windows through the walls of the culture to eternity. Thus, the only true service of a proper artist today will have to be to individuals: reattuning them to forgotten archetypes, les grandes lignes de la nature, which have been lost to view behind a cloud of contending Jeremy Benthamoid philosophies of the "greatest [economic] good for the greatest number" (*Campbell*, 1986, pp. 144-5).

The importance of this for socio-economics was acknowledged in a recent issue of *The Responsive Community*. Benjamin Barber, reviewing Robert Booth Fowler's book *The Dance with Community: The Contemporary Debate in American Political Thought*, wrote "there can be no coming to terms with community without coming to terms with religion (or its absence). The bonds that hold communities together always point beyond the individuals by whom they are constituted" (Barber, 1992/1993, p. 87) and "Yet Tinder and Fowler surely are correct in believing that to imagine the otherness of human rights, upon which their capacity (never complete) for community depends, entails some comprehension of transcendental otherness and its consequences for human limits" (p. 87). This is exactly what *Campbell* is talking about when he quotes Schopenhauer. So he was in tune with the socio-economic desire for community. In fact, he wrote:

The central demand is not to surrender our exclusivity: everything that defines us as against each other. For years people have used religious affiliations to do this. Martin Buber speaks of 'I-Thou' and 'I-It' relationships. An ego talking to a Thou is different from an ego talking to an It. Wherever we emphasize otherness or outgroups, we are making person into Its: the gentile, the Jew, the enemy-they all become the same (Obson, 1991, p. 147).

Furthermore:

The ego that relates to the other as to a "Thou" is different from the ego that's relating to an "It." You

can turn anything into a Thou, so the whole world is a Thou. That's what the mystical experience is supposed to be. As soon as anything is an It, you have duality. I-Thou is not a duality. It is the nondual realization.

Working with that realization, the whole world is then radiant of life and joy. Finding everything a Thou and realizing it's life is the extreme statement of the implication of all of these religious meditations. That's the perspective that the mechanistic scientists resist" (Obson, 1991, pp. 130-1).

Maybe socio-economics is less mechanistic (and perhaps this means less rational as well) than the other, separate social sciences. It certainly is less mechanistic and rational than economics. *Campbell* also felt that to have compassion and sympathy, you need to be irrational (Briggs & Maher, 1989, p. 53).

Before moving on, the issue of religion needs to be addressed because it was raised in the previous paragraph in relation to the issue of community, an important one in socio-economics. One meaning that the word religion has is to reconnect that which has been separated. This is a point that *Campbell* often made. Socio-economics is partly about reconnecting the artificially separated social sciences (as Weber and Schumpeter saw them [Swedberg, 1990, p. 33]). In that sense, Socio-economics is religious, trying to reconnect and reestablish a larger community of scholars.

One of the foundations of socio-economics is Kantian philosophy (Etzioni & Lawrence, 1991, p. 4). *Campbell* was in tune with socio-economic here. *Campbell* frequently cited and built upon the work of Kant. For example, he felt that *myths* and rituals helped human beings (who, as Kant suggested in the Critique of Pure Reason, are limited by their mind and senses) to see beyond the common, everyday reality of our physical world to one beyond normal human categories (*Campbell*, 1968, p. 258). He summed this up with:6

The ultimate ground of being transcends definition, transcends our knowledge. When you begin to ask about ultimates, you are asking about something that transcends all the categories of thought, the categories of being and nonbeing. True, false: these

are, as Kant points out in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, functions of our mode of experience. And all life has to come to us through the aesthetic forms of time and space, and the logical ones of the categories of logic, so we think within that frame (Cousineau, 1990, p. 40).

Another idea for which Campbell found support in the work of Kant is the idea that we are "children of space" and, as such, know the laws of space, matter gravity, and so forth and that those laws will hold wherever we go in the universe (Cousineau, 1990, p. 75). *Campbell* also saw Kant as the philosophical source for Schopenhauer's realization that compassion--to see the other as yourself--was irrational (*Campbell*, 1986, p. 111).

Campbell was also in agreement with the socio-economic view that people are not completely rational and often make decisions based on their emotions. He often said that it was not the rational, conscious mind but the irrational unconscious mind that controlled our actions (*Campbell*, 1988, p. 145). He also often referred to Buddhist ideas. One was to "get away from your rational system and get into the wonderful experience that is moving through all things all the time" (Obson, 1991, p. 206). He saw the rational mind as the servant of the desires that emanated from unconscious mind (Obson, 1991, p. 261). In fact, he felt it was the rational mind that stressed opposites (Obson, 1991, p. 197). If the human race can get more in touch with its irrational unconscious, it might do a better job of going beyond the duality of self and community.

The 1990 document "What is Socio-economics?: A Brief Platform" gave this definition:

Socio-economics assumes that economics is embedded in society, polity and culture, and is not a self-contained system. It assumes that individual choices are shaped by values, emotions, social bonds, and judgements--rather than by a precise calculation of self-interest (Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics, quoted in Coughlin, 1991b, p. 3).

For *Campbell*, *myths* and *mythology* help shape the culture and values which are the context in which individuals make decisions (*Campbell*, 1972, p. 45).

He also saw *myths* as instilling a social conscience that could bring people to put the good of the group above their self-indulgent, biological drives (*Campbell*, 1972, p. 45, 220). When people act selfishly, their decision making is viewed as strategic. According to Robyn M. Dawes, socio-economics recognizes this role of values for the overcoming of the free-rider problem (Coughlin, 1991, p. 25). In that same paper, Dawes further says of schemes to overcome the free-rider problem:

They turn an apparent dilemma into a nondilemma by automatic or planned manipulation of the consequences accruing to the individual for strategic choice. Whether the side-payments^[3] come from a central authority, from the later reaction to others to the individual chooser, from benefit to the chooser's genes, or from internal feelings, they change the choice situation sufficiently so that an individual no longer faces an unambiguously dominating strategy leading to collectively deficient results (Dawes, quoted in Cousineau, 1990, p. 40).

Dawes also says that such schemes are compatible with views of human behavior that recognize the preeminence of primitive drives (as well as others) (Coughlin, 1991, p. 26). *Campbell* very often said that we are still controlled by these primitive urges: "The latest incarnation of Oedipus, the continued romance of Beauty and the Beast, stand this afternoon on the corner of Forty-Second Street and Fifth Avenue, waiting for the traffic light to change" (*Campbell*, 1968, p. 4). But what is more important is that using socially instilled values to overcome self-indulgent behavior and the free-rider problem for the good of the community and thereby turn a dilemma (like the socio-economic conflict) into a nondilemma, is exactly what is being suggested in this article. *Myths* teach us the values of heroes who follow their bliss. In doing so, they save themselves and the world. Then, the needs and goals of the individual and the group need not be in conflict. Socio-economics should add *mythology* to its arsenal and teach people what it means to follow their bliss. Dawes also says that it is group identity that makes side payments unnecessary (Coughlin, 1991, p. 26). If we could all identify ourselves as being in the world community or group of heroes, then we would all follow our bliss without needing

side payments, if *myths* could instill in us the follow your bliss message.

Campbell occasionally addressed the importance of economics for shaping the *myths* that shaped values and culture. He saw the *myths* of various cultures as essentially the same while acknowledging that different economic systems could produce *myths* that seemed to be different on the surface. For example, hunting societies had more patriarchal *myths* than planting societies (Segal, 1990, p. 103).

CONCLUSIONS

Finally, what are the prospects for making the world into a community of heroes? **Campbell's** first book (1968) was called *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* because he found all *myths* (as they are stories of the hero's adventure) to be similar, no matter from what part of the world or in time period they originated. He wrote, "It has always been the prime function of *mythology* and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward" (**Campbell**, 1968, p. 11). Socio-economics should also try to carry the human spirit forward. Underneath our surface level differences, we are all much more similar than we realize because our psyches are the same. We are all heroes. This can bind us all together in a true world community. The prospects look good.

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 on 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 not 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 put off 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're 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 (this is exactly what George Gilder says in chapter three, "The Returns of Giving" in his book **Wealth and Poverty**) to society and he is willing to risk it. 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.

NOTES

1. *"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" (Schumpeter, 1962, p. 83).*

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* (Pearson & Pope, 1981), as well as *The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness* (Murdock, 1990).

3. *I am viewing this as a compensation for not free riding.*

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