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ABOUT THE COLLECTED WORKS
OF JOSEPH CAMPBELL

At his death in 1987, Joseph Campbell left a significant body of published work that explored his lifelong passion, the complex of universal myths and symbols that he called “Mankind’s one great story.” He also left, however, a large volume of unreleased work: uncollected articles, notes, letters, and diaries as well as audio- and videotape recorded lectures.

The Joseph Campbell Foundation was founded in 1991 to preserve, protect, and perpetuate Campbell’s work. The Foundation has undertaken to archive his papers and recordings in digital format, and to publish previously unavailable material and out-of-print works as *The Collected Works of Joseph Campbell*.

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF JOSEPH CAMPBELL
Robert Walter, Executive Editor
David Kudler, Managing Editor

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Joseph Campbell said in 1972, while he was compiling his book *Myths to Live By* from two decades' worth of lectures, that he experienced a revelation:

My notion about myself was that I had grown up during that time, that my ideas had changed, and, too, that I had progressed. But when I brought these papers together, they were all saying essentially the same thing—over a span of decades. I found out something about the thing that was moving me. I didn't even have a very clear idea of what it was until I recognized those continuities running through that whole book. Twenty-four years is a pretty good stretch of time. A lot had happened during that period. And there I was babbling on about the same thing.¹

As I compiled this book, which is drawn from over a dozen lectures, interviews, and seminars that Campbell gave between 1962 and 1983, I had a similar impression.

I had culled all of these lectures because they traced Campbell's exploration of the idea of mythology as a tool for promoting and understanding the psychological growth of the individual—what he called the fourth or psychological function of myth. My first thought was to present a sort of historical overview of Campbell's thoughts on the subject.

And yet I found that the ideas that he was expostulating at the end of the period in which he was finishing his Cooper Union lecture and the gargantuan *Masks of God* series were indeed very much in line with those that he was continuing to explore close to the end of his life, albeit in more informal, intensive settings, such as the workshops at the Esalen Institute with which he celebrated his birthday every year. Some of his thinking grew—his feelings about the promise and dangers of LSD as a gateway to unlocking the mythic images of the collective unconscious, for example—yet the overall thesis remained the same. He felt that myth offered a framework for personal growth and transformation, and that understanding the ways that myths and symbols affect the individual mind offered a way to lead a life that was in tune with one’s nature—a pathway to bliss.

The slow elaboration of his thoughts has made editing this volume both infinitely easier and infinitely more difficult than editing the previous volumes of *The Collected Works of Joseph Campbell* series that I have worked on. *Sake & Satori: Asian Journals—Japan* was drawn from a single, sequential source, which allowed me to concentrate on making sure that Campbell was telling his story well. *Myths of Light: Eastern Metaphors of the Eternal* was based on a number of lectures and unpublished writing, covering thirty years of Campbell’s thinking on Indian and East Asian religion, but once I had sorted the topics into a form that made sense as an exploration of the idea of the transcendent divine, each section fell into place fairly cleanly, one lecture to a section.

The first section of the current volume, chapters 1 and 2, looks at the historical development of myth as a tool for the growth, not of societies, but of individuals. This section was drawn from a similarly diverse set of lectures; my main task in presenting them was to make sure that any redundancies were eliminated, so that the reader wasn’t treated to four separate rehearsals of the four functions of mythology, for example.

The second section, however, chapters 3 through 5, focuses on the fundamental psychology of myth, and was drawn from a series of presentations delivered over the course of almost a decade, all entitled “Living Your Personal Myth” (a title which Campbell himself was never fully comfortable with). Sometimes this was an hour-long lecture, sometimes a week-long

seminar. In each case, the topics covered shared a similar approach yet were presented in different order, with different emphasis, depending on Campbell's audience, then-current events, and his own developing thoughts on the subject. This made piecing together an intelligible but full exploration of his ideas more than usually challenging.

The third section, chapter 6, explores the basic premise set forth in Campbell's seminal work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* as a tool for looking at one's own life. It presented yet another challenge. Most of this material was drawn from a three-day segment of a month-long seminar in 1983. Since the entire seminar took place in the form of an extremely free-form, wide-ranging discussion, its shape was extremely diffuse. Finding a narrative thread without either imposing a thesis or reducing the exploration to the point of incomprehensibility was challenging, to say the least. This was probably the most difficult, humbling experience of all.

One of the joys of reading—and editing—Joseph Campbell's work is that his mind, like Indra's net of gems, ties on glistening jewel of thought to another, always finding the connecting thread. As I said in the introduction to *Myths of Light*, the remarkable conceptual leaps in this volume you may attribute to Campbell. Any lapses in logic you may lay solely at my feet.

It is important to note that my contribution in bringing this book to life is but one of many. I would like to acknowledge the tireless work of JCF president Robert Walker, who has not only kept Campbell's legacy alive in the seventeen years since his death, who not only manages the small but thriving not-for-profit corporation that has kept Campbell's work moving forward, but who also helped me sort through crates of transcripts and audiotapes, drawing on his own experience as Campbell's friend and editor in searching for just the right material for this book.

I would also like to acknowledge the continued efforts of Jason Gardner of New World Library, who has been our partner in bringing this wonderful, growing series to life, and of Mike Ashby, who has barely broken a sweat when confronted by Sanskrit, Japanese, and *Finnegans Wake*.

I wish to acknowledge, too, the contributions of Sierra Millman and Shauna Shames, brilliant young people whom you will hear more of in

years to come and who provided transcriptions for sections of this work. Ms. Millman additionally served as an early copyeditor for the first three chapters, which gave the current work its shape.

Finally, I wish to thank my wife, Maura Vaughn, with whom I tread the path, and who makes the path worth treading.

David Kudler
July 16, 2004

INTRODUCTION²

I was speaking to a group recently at the Esalen Institute in California. Most were women, and they were very interested in the question of whether there were role models to be found in classical myth for women trying to serve as soldiers and executives and such in modern life—which there weren't. And so the question came up of whether mythic figures should serve as role models at all.

I would say that, whether they should or shouldn't, the typical situation has been that a society's myths *do* provide role models for that society at that given time. What the mythic image shows is the way in which the cosmic energy manifests itself in time, and as the times change, the modes of manifestation change.

As I told them, the gods represent the patron powers that support you in your field of action. And by contemplating the deities, you're given a kind of steadying force that puts you in the role, as it were, that is represented by that particular deity. There are the patron deities of agriculture, patron deities of way, and so on. In our classical tradition, there is no patron deity for the woman in the field of business, action, warcraft, or so on. Athena is the patron of warriors, not a warrior herself. While Artemis may have been a huntress, what she represents is the transformative power of the

goddess, of nature, not action within the social sphere. What could a businesswoman possibly learn from Artemis?

Where you have a mythic image, it has been validated by decades, centuries, or millennia of experience along that path, and it provides a model. It's not easy to build a life for yourself with no model whatsoever. I don't know how it is now, right this minute, when so many new possibilities have opened up for life. But in my experience it has always been the model that gives you the idea of the direction in which to go, and the way in which to handle the problems and opportunities that come up.

Myth is not the same as history; myths are not inspiring stories of people who lived notable lives. No, myth is the transcendent in relationship to the present. Now, a folk hero is different from the subject of a biography, even when the hero may have been a real person once upon a time—John Henry or George Washington. The folk hero represents a transforming feature in the myth. When you have an oral mythic tradition, it's right up to date. In the folktales of the American Indians, you have bicycles, you have the form of the Capitol dome in Washington. Everything gets incorporated into the mythology immediately. In our society of fixed texts and printed words, it is the function of the poet to see the life value of the facts round about, and to deify them, as it were, to provide images that relate to the everyday to the eternal.

Of course, in trying to relate yourself to transcendence, you don't have to have images. You can go the Zen way and forget the myths altogether. But I'm talking about the mythic way. And what the myth does is to provide a field in which you can locate yourself. That's the sense of the mandala, the sacred circle, whether you are a Tibetan monk or the patient of a Jungian analyst. The symbols are laid out around the circle, and you are to locate yourself in the center. A labyrinth, of course, is a scrambled mandala, in which you don't know where you are. That's the way the world is for people who don't have a mythology. It's a labyrinth. They are battling their way through as if no one had ever been there before.

I've lately gotten to know the work of a splendid psychiatrist in Germany named Karlfried Graf Dürckheim (not to be confused with the French sociologist Émile Durkheim). This psychiatrist has summarized the whole problem of health—psychological and physical—with reference

to myth, continuing the work of Carl Gustav Jung and Erich Neumann.³ There lives in us, says Dürckheim, a life wisdom. We are all manifestations of a mystic power: the power of life, which has shaped all life, and which has shaped us all in our mother's womb. And this kind of wisdom lives in us, and it represents the force of this power, this energy, pouring into the field of time and space. But it's a transcendent energy. It's an energy that comes from a realm beyond our powers of knowledge. And that energy becomes bound in each of us—in this body—to a certain commitment. Now, the mind that thinks, the eyes that see, they can become so involved in concepts and local, temporal tasks that we become bound up and don't let this energy flow through. And then we become sick. The energy is blocked, and we are thrown off center; this idea is very similar to the tenets of traditional Chinese and Indian medicine. So the psychological problem, the way to keep from becoming blocked, is to make yourself—and here is the phrase—*transparent to the transcendent*. It's as easy as that.

What myth does for you is to point beyond the phenomenal field toward the transcendent. A mythic figure is like the compass that you used to draw circles and arcs in school, with one leg in the field of time and the other in the eternal. The image of a god may look like a human or animal form, but its reference is transcendent of that.

Now, when you translate the moving, metaphoric foot of the compass into a concrete reference—into a fact—what you have is merely an allegory and not a myth. Where a myth points past itself to something indescribable, an allegory is merely a story or image that teaches a practical lesson. It is what Joyce would call *improper art*.⁴ If the reference of the mythic image is to a fact or to a concept, then you have an allegorical figure. A mythic figure has one leg in the transcendent. And one of the problems with the popularization of religious ideas is that the god becomes a final fact and is no longer itself transparent to the transcendent. This is what Lao-tzu means when he says, in the first aphorism of the *Tao-te Ching*, "The Tao that can be named is not the Tao."⁵

Make your god transparent to the transcendent, and it doesn't matter what his name is.

Now, when you have a deity as your model, your life becomes transparent to the transcendent, so far as you realize the inspiration of that god.

This means living, not in the name of success or achievement in the world, but rather in the name of transcendence, letting the energy come through.

Of course, to reach the transpersonal, you have to go through the personal; you have to have both qualities there. The nineteenth-century German ethnologist Adolf Bastian talked about there being two elements to every myth: the elementary and the local. You have to go through your own tradition—the local—to get to the transcendent, or elementary, level, and just so you have to have a relationship to God on both a personal and a transpersonal basis.

In primal societies, the shaman provides a living conduit between the local and the transcendent. The shaman is one who has actually gone through a psychological crack-up and recovery. The young boy or girl approaching adolescence either has a vision or hears a song. This vision or song amounts to a call. The person experiences a shivering, neurotic sickness. This is really a kind of psychotic episode, and the family, being in a tradition that knows about this thing, will send for a shaman to give the young person the disciplines that will carry them out of this dilemma. The disciplines include enacting certain psychological rites that put the individual back in touch with the society again, of singing his or her song.

Of course, what this individual has encountered by going deep into the unconscious is the unconscious of their whole society. These people are bound in a small horizon and share a limited system of psychological problems. And so the shaman becomes a teacher and protector of the mythic tradition but is isolated and feared; it's a very dangerous position to be in.

Now, and older person can *want* to become a shaman in some societies, and so then has to undergo certain ordeals to gain the power that the primary shaman has gained automatically. In northeast Siberia and in many parts of North and South America, the call of the shaman involves a transvestite life. That is, the person is to live the life of the opposite sex. What this means is that the person has transcended the powers of his or her original gender, and so women live as men and men as women. These transvestite shamans play a very large role in the Indian mythology in the Southwest—the Hopi, the Pueblo, the Navaho, and the Apache—and also among the Sioux Indians and many others.

Waldemar Bogoras and Waldemar Jochelson first recognized this gender

reversal among the Chukchi people on the Kamchatka Peninsula in Siberia.⁶ These two men witnessed a constellation of reactions to this phenomenon. One is that some young men who had heard the call to become what they call a “soft man” were so ashamed and so negative to it that they committed suicide. If the shaman does not answer the call, then he will be psychologically shipwrecked and will fall to pieces. It’s a very deep psychological summons.

I recently read the story of a woman who grew up in a mining town in West Virginia. When she was a little girl, she went walking in the woods and heard marvelous music. And she didn’t know what to do with it, or anything about it. The years passed her by, and, in her sixties, she came to a psychiatrist with the feeling that she had missed a life. It was in deep, hypnotic memories she recalled this song.⁷ You recognize it, of course: it’s the shaman’s song.

It is through attending to this song, to this visionary image, that the shamans center themselves. They give themselves peace by chanting the songs and performing the rites. At the very tip of South America, in Tierra del Fuego, there live about the simplest tribal people on the American continent, the Ona and Yagan people. In the early twentieth century, Father Alberto de Agostini, a priest who was also a scientist, lived among them for some time and gave us practically all we know about their mythology. He tells of waking up in the night and hearing the local shaman playing his drum and chanting his song alone, all night long—holding himself to the power.⁸

Now, that idea of holding yourself to the power by way of your dream myth is indicative of the way in which myth works generally. If it is a living mythology, one that is actually organically relevant to the life of the people of the time, repeating the myths and enacting the rituals center you. Ritual is simply myth enacted; by participating in a rite, you are participating directly in the myth.

In the Navaho world today, where there is a great deal of neurosis because these warrior people are on a reservation rather than leading their traditional lives, the sand-painting rituals are used for healing—just going over the myth and over the myth. This makes you transparent to the transcendent.

This is the way myth works.

I find, in my experience of these matters, that my best teaching has always come from India. Back when I was about to turn fifty and had been studying and teaching mythology for half a lifetime, I finally asked myself, How do I pull all this together? Well, I thought, there's one place where myth has been dominant for ages, and not only dominant but translated into ideas, so that you can read about it; there are millennia's worth of commentary and discussion. You aren't forced to simply get what you can from immediate aesthetic appreciation.

So I went to India, and suddenly everything made sense to me.⁹ I have found my own best thinking in these matters comes largely out of what I learned from there.

There is a doctrine that comes out of the Vedantic tradition that has helped me to understand the nature of the energy that flows through myths. The Taittirīya Upaniṣad speaks of five sheaths that enclose the *ātman*, which is the spiritual ground or germ of the individual.

The first sheath is called *annamaya-kośa*, the food sheath. That is your body, which is made out of food and which will become food when you die. The worms, the vultures, the hyenas, or the flame will consume it. This is the sheath of our physical body: the food sheath.

The second sheath is called the sheath of breath, *prānamaya-kośa*. The breath oxidizes the food; the breath turns it into *life*. That's this thing, this body: food on fire.

The next sheath is called the mental sheath, *manomaya-kośa*. This is the consciousness of the body, and it coordinates the senses with the you that thinks it is you.

Then there is a big gap.

And the next sheath is called the wisdom sheath, *vijñānamaya-kośa*. This is the sheath of the wisdom of the transcendent pouring in. This is the wisdom that brought you to form in the mother womb, that digests your dinners, that knows how to do it. This is the wisdom that, when you cut yourself, knows how to heal the wound. The cut bleeds, and then a scab comes along; finally a scar forms, and this is the wisdom sheath going to work.

You go for a walk in the woods. Somebody has built a barbed-wire

fence. It leans right into the tree. The tree incorporates that barbed wire. The tree has it, the wisdom sheath. This is the level of your nature wisdom that you share with the hills, with the trees, with the fish, with the animals. The power of myth is to put the mental sheath in touch with this wisdom sheath, which is the one that speaks of the transcendent.

And the sheath inward of the wisdom sheath is the sheath of bliss, *ānandamaya-kośa*, which is a kernel of that transcendence in and of itself. Life is a manifestation of bliss. But *manomaya-kośa*, the mental sheath, is attached to the sufferings and pleasures of the food sheath. And so it thinks, Is life worth living? Or, as Joyce asks in *Finnegans Wake*, “Was life worth leaving?”¹⁰

Just think: the grass grows. Out of the bliss sheath comes the wisdom sheath and the grass grows. Then, every two weeks, someone comes along with a lawn mower and cuts the grass down. Suppose the grass were just to think, Ah, shucks, what’s all this fuss about? I quit?

That’s mental sheath stuff. You know that impulse: life is painful; how could a good god create a world with all of this in it? That is thinking in terms of good and evil, light and dark—pairs of opposites. The wisdom sheath doesn’t know about pairs of opposites. The bliss sheath contains all opposites. The wisdom sheath is just coming right up out of it, and it turns into pairs of opposites later on.

When I was in Egypt, I went to the miserable little tomb of Tutankhamen. Compared with the tomb of Seti I right beside it, it was just somebody’s outhouse. There are two little rooms the size of a studio apartment. Seti’s tomb is as big as a small gymnasium. That’s why nobody bothered to rifle Tutankhamen’s tomb, and that’s why we got all that wonderful stuff from it.

Think about the coffin Tutankhamen in terms of the Indian image of the sheaths. I don’t know if that is what the Egyptian sculptors intended, but this is what I saw. You have three quadrangular boxes, one inside the other: food sheath, breath sheath, and mental sheath. That’s the outside. Then you have a great stone coffin that separates the inner two sheaths from the ones on the outside. And what do you have inside? You have a sarcophagus made of wood, inlaid with gold and lapis lazuli. This is shaped in the form of the young king, with his signs of kingship crossed over his

chest. That, I would say, is the wisdom sheath, the level of the living organic form.

And within that is the sheath of bliss: a solid gold coffin in the form of Tutankhamen, with several tons of gold. When you realize how gold was mined in those days, that sarcophagus cost many a life and lots of suffering to get that much gold. And this was the sheath of bliss.

And within this, of course, was the *ātman*, the body itself. Unfortunately, the Egyptians made the enormous error of mistaking eternal life for the eternal concretized life of the body. And so what do you find when you go to the Egyptian Museum? You pay an extra dollar to go to the Mummy Room. And you come into a room with three rows of wooden coffins. And in each sleeps a pharaoh. And the names of the pharaohs are there like the names on a collection of butterflies: Amenhotep I, II, III, and so forth.

All I could think of was the room in a maternity ward, the nursery where they have the little babies. The Egyptians based all of this—building the pyramids and these great tombs—on this basic mistake, that eternal life is the life of *annamaya-kośa*, the food sheath. It has nothing to do with any such thing. Eternity has nothing to do with time. Time is what shuts you out from eternity. Eternity is now. It is the transcendent dimension of the now to which myth refers.

All of these things enable you to understand what myth really is about. When people say, “Well, you know, this couldn’t have happened, and that couldn’t have happened, and so let’s get rid of the myths,” what they are doing is getting rid of the vocabulary of discourse between *manomaya-kośa* and *vijñānamaya-kośa*, between mental wisdom and organic, life-body wisdom.

These deities in myths serve as models, give you life roles, so long as you understand their reference to the foot in the transcendent. The Christian idea of *Imitatio Christi*, the imitation of Christ—what does that mean, that you should go out and get yourself crucified? Nothing of the kind. It means to live with one foot in the transcendent, as God.

As Paul says, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”¹¹ That means that the eternal thing works in me. And this is the meaning of the Buddha consciousness, the consciousness that is both the entire universe and you yourself.

The myth tells you that if you engage the world in a certain way, you are under the protection of Athena, under the protection of Artemis, under the protection of this, that, or the other god. That's the model. We don't have that today. Life has changed in form so rapidly that even the forms that were normal to think about in the time of my boyhood are no longer around, and there's another set, and everything is moving very, very fast. Today we don't have the stasis that is required for the formation of a mythic tradition.

The rolling stone gathers no moss. Myth is moss. So now you've got to do it yourself, *ad lib*. I speak of the present as a moment of free fall into the future with no guidance. All you've got to know is how to fall; and you can learn that, too. That is the situation with regard to myth right now. We're all without dependable guides.

Yet even now you can find two guides. The first can be a personality in your youth who seemed to you a noble and great personality. You can use that person as a model. The other way is to live for bliss. In this way, your bliss becomes your life. There's a saying in Sanskrit: the three aspects of thought that point furthest toward the border of the abyss of the transcendent are *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda*: being, consciousness, and bliss.¹² You can call transcendence a hole or the whole, either one, because it is beyond words. All that we can talk about is what is on this side of transcendence. And the problem is to open the words, to open the images so that they point past themselves. They will tend to shut off the experience through their own opacity. But these three concepts are those that will bring you closest to that void: *sat-cit-ānanda*. Being, consciousness, and bliss.

Now, as I've gotten older, I've been thinking about these things. And I don't know what being is. And I don't know what *consciousness* is. But I do know what *bliss* is: that deep sense of being present, of doing what you absolutely must do to be yourself. If you can hang on to that, you are on the edge of the transcendent already. You may not have any money, but it doesn't matter. When I came back from my student years in Germany and Paris, it was three weeks before the Wall Street crash in 1929, and I didn't have a job for five years. And, fortunately for me, there was no welfare. I had nothing to do but sit in Woodstock and read and figure out where my bliss lay. There I was, on the edge of excitement all the time.

So, what I've told my students is this: follow your bliss. You'll have moments when you'll experience bliss. And when that goes away, what happens to it? Just stay with it, and there's more security in that than in finding out where the money is going to come from next year. For years I've watched this whole business of young people deciding on their careers. There are only two attitudes: one is to follow your bliss; and the other is to read the projections as to where the money is going to be when you graduate. Well, it changes so fast. This year it's computer work; next year it's dentistry, and so on. And no matter what the young person decides, by the time he or she gets going, it will have changed. But if they have found where the center of their real bliss is, they can have that. You may not have money, but you'll have your bliss.

Your bliss can guide you to that transcendent mystery, because bliss is the welling up of the energy of the transcendent wisdom within you. So when the bliss cuts off, you know that you've cut off the welling up; try to find it again. And that will be your Hermes guide, the dog that can follow the invisible trail for you. And that's the way it is. One works out one's own myth that way.

You can get some clues from earlier traditions. But they have to be taken as clues. As many a wise man has said, "You can't wear another person's hat." So when people get excited about the Orient and begin putting on turbans and saris, what they've gotten caught in is the folk aspect of the wisdom that they need. You've got to find the wisdom, not the clothing of it. Through those trappings, the myths of other cultures, you can come to a wisdom that you've then got to translate into your own. The whole problem is to turn these mythologies into your own.

Now, in my courses in mythology at Sarah Lawrence, I taught people of practically every religious faith you could think of. Some have a harder time mythologizing than others, but all have been brought up in a myth of some kind. What I've found is that any mythic tradition can be translated into your life, if it's been put into you. And it's a good thing to hang on to the myth that was put in when you were a child, because it is there whether you want it there or not. What you have to do is translate that myth into its eloquence, not just into the literacy. You have to learn to hear its song.

I have a friend—a very interesting chap—who started out as a Presbyterian, got interested in Hinduism, and then served as an acolyte to a Hindu monk in New York for twenty years or so. Then he went to India and became a Hindu monk himself. One day he phones me and says, “Joe, I’m going to become a Catholic.”¹³

Well, the Church has become interested in ecumenical totality. At least, they think they are. Of course, when you sit down at the table with them, they’re not interested in it at all. They’re holding the cards very close. They handle it by knocking down the other systems. My friend, who has now gone from being a Hindu monk to a Roman Catholic, has been writing for an American Jesuit magazine, and he said, “No, you can’t treat other religions that way. If you’re going to get in touch with what the Hindus or Buddhists are thinking about, you have to find out what they’re thinking about, and not just read it in a derogatory way.”

And so he was sent over to Bangkok at the time of a great meeting of the monastic orders of the Catholic tradition. That was the conference where Thomas Merton was killed by a bad electrical fixture in some Bangkok hotel.

The interesting thing that my friend told me was that the Roman Catholic monks and the Buddhist monks had no trouble understanding each other. Each of them was seeking the same experience and knew that the experience was incommunicable. The communication is only an effort to bring the hearer to the edge of the abyss; it is a signpost, not the thing itself. But the secular clergy reads the communication and gets stuck with the letter, and that’s where you have the conflict.

My old mentor, Heinrich Zimmer, had a little saying: the best things can’t be told—they are transcendent, inexpressible truths. The second-best are misunderstood: myths, which are metaphoric attempts to point the way toward the first. And the third-best have to do with history, science, biography, and so on. The only kind of talking that can be understood is this last kind. When you want to talk about the first kind, that which can’t be said, you use the third kind as communication to the first. But people read it as referring to the third directly; the image is no longer transparent to the transcendent.

Here is a story that seems to me to embody the essential image of living one’s life, finding it and having the courage to pursue it. It comes from an

Arthurian romance, *La Queste del Saint Graal*, by an anonymous thirteenth-century monk.

There's a moment there in Arthur's banquet hall when all the knights are assembled around the Round Table. Arthur would not let anyone start to eat until an adventure had occurred. Well, in those days adventures were rather normal, so people didn't go hungry for long.

They were waiting for this day's adventure, and it did indeed occur. The Holy Grail itself showed itself to the assembled knights—not in its full glory but covered with a great, radiant cloth. Then it withdrew. All were left ravished, sitting there in awe.

Finally, Gawain, Arthur's nephew, stood up and said, "I propose a vow to this company, that we should all go in quest of that Grail to behold it unveiled."

Now we come to the text that interested me. The text reads, "They thought it would be a disgrace to go forth in a group. Each entered the Forest Adventurous at that point which he himself had chosen, where it was darkest and there was no way or path."

You enter the forest at the darkest point, where there is not path. Where there's a way or path, it is someone else's path; each human being is a unique phenomenon.

The idea is to find your own pathway to bliss.