

STOP WORRYING, START LIVING

A GUIDE FOR THE SPIRITUAL *warrior* WORRIER

Cover Design:

Tree silhouette with roots © Kudryashka #1950502

The illustrations found on the following pages are in public domain or available for download from www.istockphoto.com. Three artists, however, contributed their work under licence:

Howard David Johnson, Terence John Cleary, Vanessa Ryan

Book Layout Inspired by: *The Writers Journey, Mythic Structure for Writers*
by Christopher Vogler

Layout: Pageprint@pageprint.net

Copy-editing Team: Lois Braun and Elizabeth Falk.

Proof Readers:

Olivia Emma Ravenall and Vicki Neale

Copyright: Caroline Ravenall, 2012

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission from the author/publisher,
Caroline Ravenall.

ISBN 978-1-897509-20-3

For copies of this book contact Caroline at:

info@carolineravenall.com

WITHOUT WHOM....

Until one has written a book, one has no idea about what's involved. It sounds easy. It isn't. Writing a book is a team effort, so there are a few people who should be mentioned:

Les Kletke, my book coach in Altona, Canada, whom I met by chance at a National Speakers Convention in Cape Town in 2009. Not only has he become a firm friend for life, he's the reason that this book exists today. He has given me the inspiration and guidance I've needed, and frequently talked me down from the ledge when the going got to be too much. Who'd have thought that one could have a coach on the other side of the world! But it works. (www.globalghostwriter.com)

Nick Williams (www.inspired-entrepreneur.com) who continuously encourages me to 'show up'.

My partner, Steve, who supported me throughout this process, allowing me to take eighteen months away from the grind to actually get the book finished. I don't think he knew what he was letting himself in for; he's put up with my highs and lows, and even though it's been difficult, he's also started on his own warrior's journey. This book wouldn't have happened without him.

Copy-editing team Lois Braun and Elizabeth Falk in Altona, Canada, who patiently edited, re-edited and edited again all the changes I made while striving for the perfect manuscript.

My friend Vicki Neale, who has been a rock throughout this process, and my mum, Olivia Emma Ravenall, who painstakingly proofread the final manuscript before it went to print and made some invaluable contributions to the end product.

Peter from Cafe Q in Warkworth, Natacha and Jonathan from the Dragonfly Cafe in Matakana, and Fenella and Bob from Matakana Market Kitchen, whose restaurants became my headquarters for many months before my home office became a reality.

My friends and family who have been a continuous support, and have badgered and cajoled me in their own inimitable ways, not to give up: my sister Suzanne, Bridget Edwards and Gavin Heimann, Peter Kramer and Annie

Heneke in Johannesburg; Adell Van Zyl in Cape Town; Vanessa Ryan in Nelson; Jo and Michael Hartley; Margot Minett; Vicki and Terry Neale in Auckland; and of course, my mum who has always been there, no matter what.

All those who have contributed to the book writing/publishing process but preferred to remain anonymous. You know who you are. I am very grateful for your thoughtfulness, insight and wisdom.

When I pick up a book for the first time, particularly one with over 400 pages (like this one) I tend to open it up and scan the contents before agreeing to buy it. I like to read in small chunks and find myself feeling a little overwhelmed when faced with oceans of solid text without natural breaks or illustrations. So when I set out to write this book, I had a very clear idea of how I wanted it to look. Whilst many of the illustrations you see on the following pages are in the public domain, there are three artists who contributed their work under licence and should be mentioned.

The first, the American illustrator Howard David Johnson (www.howarddavidjohnson.com) who has worked with many prestigious clients around the globe. His mythical art is simply out of this world. Those who wish to embroil themselves in myths will find his website makes for very interesting reading and viewing. I feel very privileged to be showcasing some of his work. The Grail Maiden (p.20), the Sleeping Beauty (p.62), the Dragon Slayer (p.133), Bellerophon and Pegasus (p.161,) Faerie Guardians (p.171), the Moon Goddess Diana (p.262), Pandora's Box (p.266), the Dragon Nidhoggr (p.280), the Protectors of the Earth (p.336), a Modern Semiramis (p.399), the Legendary King Arthur (p.403).

The second, Terence John Cleary (www.terencejohncleary.com) for the beautiful illustration of The Old Wagon Wheel on page 202.

And the third, my special friend Vanessa Ryan, whose artistic abilities are just amazing. Like Father, like daughter! The Tree of Life image you see at the beginning of each chapter and outlined in full on page 191, is her work.



For all those who are worrying and wandering



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
A PRACTICAL GUIDE – GETTING THE BEST FROM THIS BOOK	7
THE VALUE OF THE MYTH	13
BOOK ONE – MAPPING THE JOURNEY	
The Ordinary World	27
The Unseen World	39
The Call to Adventure	47
Refusal of the Call	57
Crossing the Threshold	65
Wandering in the Wilderness	75
Meeting the Mentor	83
Approaching the Innermost Cave	89
Allies and Guides	97
Tests and Trials	107
Tricksters	115
The Final Battle	127
The Reward	135
The Return	141
Falling Back	153
Freedom to Live	163
BOOK 2 – LESSONS FROM THE SPECIAL WORLD	
Introduction	175
Accept Your Own Divinity	181
The Divine Matrix	193
Nothing Is Ever Lost	205

When You're a 'Handel' in a 'Bon Jovi'	213
Stop the World I Want to Get Off	223
Snakes and Ladders	235
The Angel with the Big Book	245
A Lid for Every Pot	255
A Pilgrimage through Matter	265
Slaying the Dragon	271
Angels and Demons	283
The Quickening of the Spirit	293
BOOK 3 – WEAPONS AND TOOLS: WAKING UP	
Introduction	303
Waking Up	307
Know Thyself	317
Seek Guidance	341
Letting Go	361
Look Into not At	375
Cultivate Balance	385
Characteristics of a Spiritual Warrior	401
EPILOGUE	
ITHACA	418
Looking Back on the Journey	421
APPENDICES	
Notes	430
Bibliography	437
Esoteric Orders and their Work – Dion Fortune	441
The Riddle – The Brothers Grimm	443
Oedipus and the Sphinx – The outcome of the myth	445
About QXCI/SCIO and Nelson Medicine	447
About the Author	452

INTRODUCTION

Come to the edge, he said.

They said, we are afraid.

Come to the edge, he said.

They came,

And he pushed them,

And they flew.

Guillaume Appollinaire (1880–1918)

French poet and playwright

‘I am afraid,’ he said. ‘Nothing makes sense any more. Everything I am, everything I have worked for, everything I have believed is just so pointless. Where do I turn? I don’t have a map, or a compass. I feel like I am going mad.’

My heart went out to him. This poor man, who babbled on almost incoherently, whose success on the surface was outwardly visible, had everything to live for. But yet his eyes were fearful. He was tired and burned out and utterly perturbed by the darkness and imbalance within himself. The desperation behind those eyes betrayed the inner feeling of absolute hopelessness that threatened to consume him totally from every angle; the terrible fear and the absolute terror of stepping into the unknown, to change, to look deeper.

I knew those feelings only too well. As an overly anxious individual who for over forty years unknowingly suppressed her creative spirit in an effort to fit in with the world, I spent most of my life worrying about pretty much everything. Did I live my life in the right way? Was I successful enough? What was I supposed to be doing? Was I too fat, too thin? Where was I going? I was only too familiar with the frequent stomach butterflies and gnawing restlessness eating away at my insides almost every moment of every day. The shortness of breath, the heart palpitations, the dizziness and queasiness that consumed me every time I tried to push against my own personal boundaries. I’d learned to live with the underlying fear that threatened to irrationally take over and override everything else in existence.

This excessive worry inevitably led to frequent bouts of depression and anxiety – not all of them debilitating, but life became a real struggle and effort. The continuous striving was hard. I would find myself frequently suffering from fatigue and burnout. My weight fluctuated up and down along with the worry, which just added to the problem. I knew all the stress-busting techniques for my A-type, high-energy personality: exercise, stilling the mind, positive affirmations, meditation, relaxation, looking for the good and taking frequent breaks in nature. But this still did not quell the internal chaos. There were monsters within, scary ones, ones that I certainly didn't understand nor want to face.

At age 35, I had it all. As head of Sales and Marketing in Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic Airways, I was a rising star. Focused and determined, I was seconded to South Africa at 29 years of age as part of a two-man team to set up the airline and launch the first Virgin brand on the African continent. I earned a great salary, travelled internationally and was destined to move around the globe from country to country working my way up in the Virgin hierarchy. I could regale listeners with wonderful stories of the time I spent with this renowned entrepreneur – mention the word *Virgin* or *Richard Branson* at any social occasion and people's eyes would light up. My diary was filled with business appointments. Parties? I was on the guest list of everyone who was anyone. I had amazing friends and acquaintances, lots of spare cash and many male admirers. What more could I ask for? If this was part of a successful life then I had arrived!

That was until the day that it all went horribly wrong. I can't remember when it started exactly, but the gnawing feeling of dissatisfaction and anxiety grew within me to fever pitch. One night I found myself sitting on the floor of my bedroom with my head in my hands sobbing uncontrollably – yet again. Months of depression had taken their toll. I was utterly exhausted. Overwork of course had contributed to this, along with my excessive drive, anxiety and constant striving for perfection. But deep down there was something more than this: a deep disillusionment with life, with the mundane routine that presented itself every day. I was stuck, physically, mentally and emotionally. A dichotomy raged within: I had a yearning for things to be different, but at the same time felt the impenetrable urge to keep them the same.

How do we make sense of our world when we suddenly wake up one day to realise that everything that we were convinced represented stability and security, is no longer? When everything we are striving for doesn't make sense? When the landscape is meaningless and we find ourselves fighting to regain control of the vision, hopes and dreams that motivated us for so long? Who do we turn to when we have deeper questions about life's issues – our boss? a psychologist? a life coach? I tried many avenues.

Talking to a psychologist helped, when I finally found the right one. Through the process of cognitive behaviour therapy I started to understand how to manage my moods and emotions, and think differently. The sessions were great in terms of getting my head around the issues that clouded my judgement. I put them neatly into boxes and filed them away. However, it didn't answer the questions that still burned so deeply.

For this I sought a coach to help me dig deep and find the answers. Coaches are great in terms of prompting and guiding you to find your own answers, providing that the coach is not stuck in the 'upping-your-game' mindset, and has the ability to help you transcend the issues of life. The coachees (clients) must also have a clear objective and know what they want to achieve. I didn't.

Friends and family were a wonderful support; that is, those who were close enough or astute enough to know what was really going on. Many have indeed given me insights and ah-ha moments over the years, but none of them were able to make any more sense of life and its meaning than I was. Their ideas and judgements were based on their own realities of life, their own ideas of what was right and wrong, ideas developed from religion, parental conditioning, confused teachers and the world around them.



In my humble experience, one of the only ways to overcome our own personal limitations and the resulting conditions they cause is to find *meaning*. Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl said, "Those who have a "why" to live, can bear with almost any "how." And I think he was right. This simple dynamic alone is worth more than a thousand anti-depressants or early-morning trips to the gym in an effort to release those magical endorphins. Meaning provides us with the motivation to move forward, to recover, and to rediscover life, even if we do need some help and support along the way. Without it, we cannot progress. It is the engine that drives us forward, giving us inspiration and hope.

A quest for meaning and the deeper answers to life's questions inevitably brings us to explore matters of the spirit. It's a quest that needs to transcend the rational considerations of the 'ordinary world' demanding that one enters the realms of the 'hidden and unseen' in an effort to find the answers to life's deeper questions : Why am I here? What's my purpose? Who am I really? And how should I be living my life? But where does one start?

When one is trying to establish answers to questions that are not immediately forthcoming at a time in our life when one needs them quickly, it can be very discouraging, to say the least. (Not to mention time consuming and costly, particularly if you keep meeting up with the wrong people.) It is

hard to find ‘a truth’ that makes sense in the plethora of today’s modern religions and spiritual beliefs. As a self-confessed agnostic, I needed something substantial, a *framework* that made both logical and spiritual sense at the same time. Since childhood, I hadn’t been able to find answers to a single one of my questions in Western orthodox religions. The orthodox systems of the East, although they seemed to hold more of what felt right, required me to lose myself in all consuming practices that the teachers themselves couldn’t fully explain, at least not in a way that captured my heart and answered one fundamental question: Why? In the same way, self-appointed ‘spiritual’ gurus, with their unsubstantiated airy-fairy philosophies about life and God also made me sick with frustration. How come they had all got the plot and I hadn’t? I felt as if I was really going around in circles.

That was, until I suddenly found myself in the middle of my own crazy spiritual adventure, my own ‘warrior’s journey’ – moving from the world of day-to-day straight into the pages of Dan Brown’s *Da Vinci Code*. It started when I met an extraordinary man who was to become my teacher, guide, and inspiration for many years. He led me on a journey that took me to places I couldn’t have imagined. The journey, however, had its fallibilities. I learned, to my chagrin, that even the spiritual path is not paved with gold once the heavy gates guarding its secrets are set ajar. The path is treacherous and difficult to navigate. It requires discernment, courage and patience and it’s certainly not for the faint hearted. But the upside is, as in all the ‘hero myths’ of the world, that there is a reward at the end, even though it may not be abundantly obvious to others or even to ourselves when we are in the throes of expedition.



Few know how to deliver themselves out of their misfortunes.

The Golden Verses of Pythagoras



Life is difficult. To transcend it, each one of us needs a personal philosophy, one that we can cling to in times of difficulty. Without it, we are dragged through the streets by our emotions, inner conflicts and problems, lurching from one crisis to the next as life’s worries and problems overtake us. Any personal philosophy needs to have a strong foundation, one whose roots run deep; a philosophy which becomes our own personal road map and compass, providing us with a platform of understanding upon which further knowledge and wisdom can be built and false doctrines discarded.

To find the answers to some of life's toughest questions, one needs to go on a journey, and this is fundamentally what this book is about. Ultimately, the journey is a quest for *personal liberation*, a way to stop worrying and start living to one's full potential. This book is intended for those who, amid the muddle of 'spiritual technobabble' out there in 2012, want to place their feet firmly on solid ground and not be gently swathed in cotton with mystique and mystery. I am assuming that by reading this, you have come far enough on your own journey in life to at least be intrigued by matters of the spirit, having found yourself searching for a different perspective. 'Adopt another's philosophy until you can find your own' were valuable words of advice once given to me. So my hope is that this book will perhaps serve as a stimulant, providing some *mental nuts to crack* or some *food for thought* in the form of questions, challenges, stories and ideas.

I don't profess to have all the answers; on the contrary, I continue to struggle with life issues daily. I just have the capacity to handle them a little better than I once did. However, the lessons I've learned have given me more energy, motivation and enthusiasm for life. I have more confidence to live authentically at my own pace with a greater degree of courage. Most of all, this journey has given me hope – even on my darkest days, when the world does its best to unseat me.

What you will find in these pages is by no means inclusive nor a universal panacea. I share my journey as a kind of 'road map', together with some of the lessons and weapons that I have found invaluable in shaping my understanding and sense of purpose. My wish is that you can find some truth within these pages that resonates with you, a truth that also gives you hope and supports you on your own path through life.

God speed.

A Practical Guide

GETTING THE BEST FROM THIS BOOK

This book has been written in three parts using excerpts from myth, fairy tales and legend throughout. (I'll explain the value of mythology below and in greater detail in the next chapter.)

Book One: Mapping the Journey tells of *my* journey; a journey of transformation from *worrier* to *warrior*. It's a tale from the trenches depicting the highlights and pitfalls that anyone sincerely searching for answers about life, the universe and everything may experience. It's been written as a *road map for change*, a sixteen-stage mythological compass of sorts to help readers navigate their own journey. (A graphical representation of the road map can be seen in Fig. 1 below.) It tells of an adventure, of going against the grain, of stepping into the unknown in an effort to live life more authentically. It also speaks of how I navigated my own spiritual journey without having to turn myself into a pretzel in some impossible yoga position or scour the monasteries and ashrams of India in search of a guru. And finally, it tells of the struggle to overcome my inner demons, which inevitably accompany any journey that leads us away from the beaten track.

Book Two: Lessons from the Special World contains a summary of 'things to understand', spiritual lessons and insights which, in my experience, are too often shrouded in spiritual hype and religious mystique making non-believers balk and stick fervently to their agnostic ways. The lessons help to ground me during times of stress or personal difficulty, and substantiate my reason for being when I struggle for a perspective on life.

Book Three: Weapons and Tools is the self-help section of the book, containing some practical tools and insights that the modern-day spiritual warrior needs to use when navigating the white-water rapids of life.

A ROAD MAP FOR CHANGE

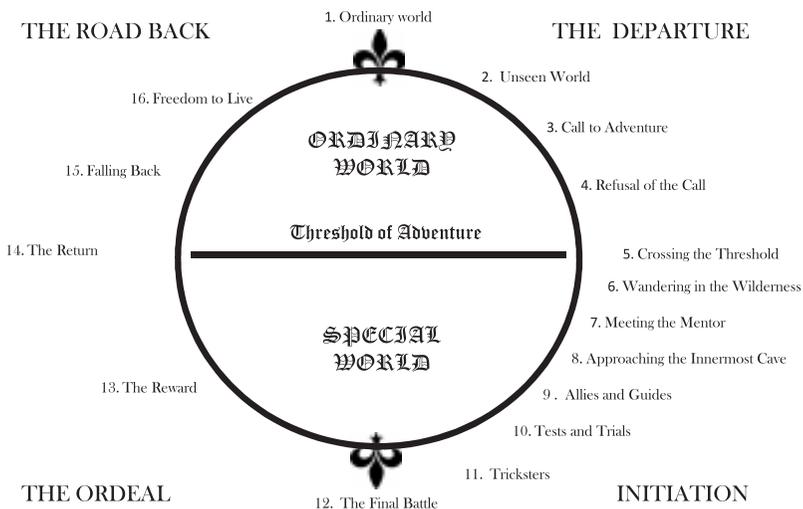
During times of great turmoil, when the answers to life's questions elude us and our old paradigms don't work anymore, we might want to have a more in-depth look at what's really going on. Mythology can serve as a good guide for taking action during times of change and transition because it doesn't wholly rely on one's personal belief system, nor on a world view that is no longer fully effective. As mythology doesn't favour any particular religion or system of belief, we are perhaps more accepting of the messages each tale brings forth, enabling us to consider our plight differently.

The road map in Book 1 is depicted as a *cycle of change*, one that has been loosely based on the work of Joseph Campbell (1904–1987), the American mythologist, writer and lecturer, whose book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, may turn out to be one of the most influential works of the 20th century. Campbell dedicated his life to uncovering the symbolism and meaning behind many of the myths and legends of our time. His work runs parallel to that of the Swiss psychologist Carl G. Jung, who wrote of the *archetypes* which appeared frequently in the dreams of his patients and the myths of all cultures. (Archetypes are underlying mythic *themes* or *stereotypes* that exemplify different forms of behaviour. They often appear as universal personifications in myths, legends, fairy tales, Shakespearean dramas and Biblical stories.) Jung suggested that both myth and dream reflected different aspects of the human psyche, each potentially coming from a deeper source: the collective unconscious of mankind.

If you want to understand the mythological hero's journey, there is no

THE WARRIOR'S JOURNEY ROAD MAP

Figure 1



substitute for reading some of Campbell's works, which are listed in the bibliography. In Chapter IV of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, called 'The Keys', Campbell gives an outline of the *hero's journey*, which I have taken the liberty of adapting to reflect the journey of the spiritual warrior. You can compare the two outlines below. I am retelling the hero myth in my own way, and you might someday want to do the same. Every individual can change the mythical path to suit his or her own purpose.



COMPARISON OF OUTLINES

THE WARRIOR'S JOURNEY

The Departure

The Ordinary World
 The Unseen World
 The Call to Adventure
 Refusal of the Call
 Crossing the Threshold

Initiation

Wandering in the Wilderness
 Meeting the Mentor
 Approaching the Innermost Cave
 Allies and Guides
 Tests and Trials
 Tricksters

The Ordeal

The Final Battle

The Reward

The Road Back

The Return

Falling Back

Freedom to Live

THE HERO'S JOURNEY

(from *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*)

World of Common Day

Call to Adventure
 Refusal of the Call
 Crossing the First Threshold

Supernatural Aid
 Belly of the Whale

Road of Trials

Meeting with the Goddess
 Woman as Temptress
 Atonement with the Father
 Apotheosis
 The Ultimate Boon

Refusal of the Return
 The Magic Flight
 Rescue from Without
 Crossing the Return Threshold

Master of Two Worlds
 Freedom to Live



THE WARRIOR'S JOURNEY ROAD MAP

The road map itself is a continuous journey, a cycle of change which takes the central character of the story from the '*ordinary world*' of everyday into a '*special world*' where life is vastly different from that with which the hero

is familiar. Through a process of setting out (the departure), descent into the special world (initiation and ordeal), and a series of adventures, the hero eventually makes his way back (the road back) to begin the journey all over again with renewed zest and vigour, having learned much from his travels.

The road map depicted on page 8 is only a skeletal framework depicting the stages of my own personal journey. It does not have to be mirrored precisely should you decide to plot your own. Not all stages of the journey need to appear systematically at the point in which they are listed above. The order in which each stage appears here is only one of several possibilities. For example, one may meet the mentor before crossing the threshold, and as a result, the journey may turn out to be vastly different. In whichever way the journey is plotted, no two will be identical. The only thing that is really important is the journey itself.

The story of the mythological hero and the story of the spiritual warrior are the same. (The two words *warrior* and *hero* are used interchangeably throughout this book.) Despite the infinite variety of mythical stories in our global cultures, they all have one thing in common: There is always a journey. The journey may be an outward one to a strange and unfamiliar place – a forest, a city, a labyrinth or a cave – which sets the centre stage for many trials and challenges that the hero has to overcome. Yet the journey is also inward, into the depths of one's own heart or psyche, where one is irrevocably transformed in some way – sadness becomes joy, confusion becomes understanding, frustration becomes willing acceptance and anger becomes love.

The stages of the hero's journey can be found in every one of our lives, not just in the lives of mythological heroes. Maybe we are starting a new job, overcoming an illness, recovering from a divorce, moving to a new town or city, facing challenges in a relationship with a partner or a boss or writing a book; whatever situation we find ourselves in, there is always a journey to be undertaken and always a great degree of courage and tenacity (demonstrated by all mythological heroes) to complete it. The different stages of the journey emerge naturally, even when we're not aware of them; it's part of the mystery of dream and myth. I am convinced that the knowledge given to us by this most ancient guide will always be useful wherever we are, helping us to figure out where we are, and giving us the courage to again gather up the reins of our trusty steed and take the next brave step onward.

NOTE: It is also relevant to mention another book that has served as an inspiration in writing my own story, that being *The Writer's Journey* by Christopher Vogler, who is one of Hollywood's premier story consultants. For people wishing to write their own books or even simply plot their own 'hero's journey', his book is well worth a read.



The work of finding traces of hidden knowledge, or even hints of its existence, resembles the work of archaeologists looking for traces of some forgotten ancient civilisation, and finding them buried beneath several strata of cemeteries left by people who have since lived in that place, separated possibly by thousands of years, each unaware of the others existence. . . .

Man is conscious of being surrounded by the 'wall of the unknown', but at the same time believes that he can get through the wall as others have gone through it. But he cannot imagine, or imagines very vaguely, what there may be behind this wall. He does not know what he would like to find there or what it means to possess such knowledge. . . .

People clamour so loudly and so often about the unlimited possibilities of knowledge but in actual fact all the unlimited possibilities of knowledge are limited by the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste, plus the capacity of reasoning and comparing beyond which a man can never go. We do not take sufficient account of this circumstance and this is why we are at a loss to define the difference between ordinary knowledge, hidden knowledge and possible knowledge. . . .

In this incapacity of man to imagine what exists beyond the wall of the known and the possible lies his chief tragedy, and in this is the reason why so much remains hidden from him and why there are so many questions to which he will never find the answer. In the history of human knowledge there are many attempts to define the history of 'possible' knowledge. But there is no attempt to find out what these limits would mean and where it would lead us. . . .

In all myths and fairy tales of all times, we find the idea of 'magic, witchcraft and sorcery', which as we come nearer to our own period take the form of 'spirituality' and 'occultism'. But even people who believe in these words understand very little about what they really mean and in what respect the knowledge of a 'magician' or an 'occultist' differs from the knowledge of an ordinary man and therefore all attempts to create mystical knowledge end in failure.

P. D. Ouspensky (1878–1947)

The New Model of the Universe

THE VALUE OF THE MYTH

Myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation. It provides the symbols that carry the human spirit forward in counteraction to those other common human fantasies that tie it back. It may be that the very high incidence of neuroticism among ourselves follows the decline of such effective spiritual aid.

Joseph Campbell (1904–1987)

The Hero with a Thousand Faces



Myths and legends, regardless of their origin, may seem like childhood fantasies to some – a collection of weird and interesting stories that serve merely as good entertainment. To others, they open a fascinating doorway into a world of heroes and heroines, the triumph of good over evil and man’s eternal struggle for identity and wisdom, telling tales of conflict, difficulty, sadness, confusion and the strength of the human spirit. If we learn to interpret their message, myths hold the power to help us uncover who we really are by connecting us authentically with our truest sense of identity and our deepest longings, each story stirring up something deep within us, sparking a sense of wonder and curiosity.

Whilst I agree that not all mythological heroes will be fighting with a Board of Directors, losing a small fortune in the stock market, or figuring out their next career move, their quests contain many symbolic representations of situations and events that stir up similar emotions of anxiety, fear, frustration, anger, humiliation, joy and passion. By interrogating these myths, we can uncover a valuable road map for change containing a deeper and more meaningful truth. The 21st century map makes the assumption that our careers will define us, and that material wealth, talent and hard work alone will help us overcome any

obstacles in our path. Because we might at times win certain victories over the forces that conspire to derail us, we often naively believe that we can sail on unencumbered from one success to another, eventually arriving in the land where peace, recognition, and safety preside. Unfortunately, life's not like that. The obstacles we face are not outside of us, they lie within. Careers do not define us, neither do material wealth or our standing in society, and the Kingdom of Nirvana doesn't exist. So when we eventually realize that the current map is flawed in some way, we find ourselves floundering, confused, lost and afraid. At times like these, myths, fairy tales and legends can act as our own built-in navigation system, providing us with a more realistic and honest representation of what we are experiencing.

In the ancients' view, the mythic past was deeply rooted in historic times where oral tradition was combined with history concealing an ancient wisdom within. For example, many of the Celtic myths were integrated into the early versions of the Grail Legends, and carried across Europe by Anglo-Norman storytellers through the courts of France, England and Germany. Perhaps the Grail Legends themselves were written to protect this great spiritual and cultural heritage when sorely threatened by the Roman Empire and the Catholic Church. The 12th century in Europe was a turbulent time after the return of the Crusaders to the Holy Land, seeing a cross-fertilisation of Christian and Eastern/Islamic (Sufi) traditions, which the church fervently sought to eradicate. In its view, Europe had become 'infected' by the ways of the 'infidels' and it persecuted any 'heretical' system whose beliefs conflicted with its own, seeing the elimination of many pre-Christian traditions (for example, the Knights Templar, the Albigensia and Cathari) which maybe held more realistic and meaningful versions of truth.

However, the greatest of these myths have survived because the truths they tell span the ages. The heroic protagonists were seen as a link between the 'age of origins' and the every-day mortal world. Many of the stories were crucial to social stability, providing an explanation for the current state of affairs and driving many moral and personal decisions during times of great upheaval. Deep down within, we recognize that these stories are as relevant today as they have always been, reflecting situations faced by ordinary folk whose situations bear a striking resemblance to our own. Perhaps this is why we find ourselves inundated with so many movie remakes of myth-type stories: *The Chronicles of Narnia*; *Beowulf*; *The Clash of the Titans*; *Achilles*; *The Lord of the Rings*; *The Hobbit*; and *Alice in Wonderland*.



Is there any historical evidence to suppose there really was a Grail to be achieved? Or is the legend only a delightful literary device created by Troubadours and Conteurs to entertain the courts of Europe as they gently dozed off after stuffed aurochs and roasted boar? In searching for the answers to such mysteries we must step into an enchanted and mythical world which appears to endlessly expand in complexity and beauty wherever we look. Somewhere in the interwoven strands of this medieval tapestry there is a radical and compelling message which is as fresh and alive today as it was in the twelfth century.

Malcolm Godwin

The Holy Grail



From a very young age, I've always had a fascination with myths and fairy tales. From tales of kings, queens, enchanted castles, wizards and magicians, to gallant knights on a quest for the Holy Grail, each one captured my imagination and permeated my dreams, whipping up my optimism for a better life. Bedtime was always a rich and exciting prospect, particularly at my grandmother's house, which was awash with interesting trinkets and books, as I snuggled under the thick, quilted eiderdowns and begged her to read me another story of mystical places, fabulous creatures, the miraculous and unbelievable.

This fascination continued well into adult life. I grew up in the UK with a father who had a keen interest in history and historical architecture, so as a young adult, I often spent weekends and public holidays frequenting the historical sites of the British Isles. While my parents were wandering off somewhere with the guidebook, my imagination would run riot atop the towers of a ruined castle, as I fancied myself there in a long flowing dress, waiting for my brave knight to return on his black stallion to rescue me from my teenage suffering. I would imagine that I heard the clash of steel on steel, the thundering of hooves and the sounds of yesteryear as I stood quietly alone, with only the breeze for company. Soaking up the atmosphere in its entirety, I would painstakingly piece together in my mind the layout of the castle as it would have been in its time and fully picture myself there. I was certain that I must have known this kind of life, feeling so wild, carefree and untamed. I believed myself to be lost in time, a stranger in the 1970s. Times past were no doubt my true home.

I lost contact with mythology during my 'corporate episode', but rediscovered it during my own quest for identity and purpose, this time with a

rekindled fascination and greater degree of appreciation as I started to understand why they resonated with me so deeply. This time I did not think of them merely as interesting tales or outdated beliefs from a defunct religion. I discovered that many of the poets and storytellers throughout history were not only wordsmiths but scientists and men of God. Like me, they strived hard to explore the nature of their inner world, to understand and devour the mysteries that have long since been lost to our Western civilisation. Many wrote their secrets in the myths, sagas, legends and fairy tales of our time, veiling them in secrecy, hiding them from the profane, but opening them up to those who have ‘eyes to see’. This is why they resonate with us so deeply. There is truth hidden within, truth which can be seen in this allegorical Egyptian tale of the Seven Veils of Isis.

There was in Egyptian times in the Nile Valley a magnificent temple dedicated to the Goddess Isis at Sais. It was one of the most famous in all antiquity. In the vestibule was a statue of Isis, which was covered by seven veils, and an inscription which said, ‘Isis am I, I am all that was, that is, and that shall be, and no one of mortals has ever lifted my veil.’ In ancient times, these seven veils represented seven great mysteries that had to be penetrated by the sincere seeker. Only after one had successfully lifted all of the veils in the correct order, could he or she look upon the beauty of Isis. There is a tale told of one seeker, who crept into the temple alone late one night, impatient for a glimpse of the naked goddess. He lifted all seven veils, gazed at her beauty and instantly knew everything there was to know about creation. But he paid a heavy price, with his impatience; he wasn’t ready to absorb the magnitude of what he discovered and immediately went blind.

The veils are symbolic of seven steps, or seven stages, that stood in the path of the seeker before he could fully realise truth. They served a twofold purpose: first, they hid the beauty of Isis – the truth – from the profane: but secondly, they exposed her beauty to the sincere seeker only if he penetrated the mysteries correctly and in the appropriate order. Not all are ready for truth and too much too soon can have a devastating effect.

These veils of truth can be found in the fables, fairy tales, myths, legends, sagas, allegories and parables we find in today’s literature. When we take time to look more closely, we might be surprised to find that they are not just entertaining stories for children, they can enlighten those who have ‘eyes to see’ and serve a powerful purpose for young and old alike. When we take time to understand their hidden meaning, we can begin to unlock the secrets of our own true nature, which is so carefully concealed from us. The seven veils can be seen to represent seven *categories* of folklore, which I will refer to throughout this book to illustrate certain points or stages in the journey.

FABLES

We use the word *fabulous* all the time these days. However, the original use of the word came from a *fable* – a story containing a ‘fabulous creature’ – a unicorn, a phoenix, a sphinx, a lion or a griffin, who was the wise keeper of a deep secret. The mythical lion Aslan in *The Chronicles of Narnia* is one such creature. Fables are traditionally stories of animals that are endowed with human qualities. Such stories highlight human failings, weaknesses and limitations, which are portrayed as an interplay between animals instead of people. Many writers throughout history have adopted a fable to illustrate this principle. For example: the Greek slave, Aesop, wrote ‘The Tortoise and the Hare’ and ‘The Fox and the Crow’; North American tales such as ‘Uncle Remus’ and ‘Br’er Rabbit’ are considered to be fables, together with the German tale of ‘Reynard the Fox’. In the 1920s, Rupert Bear first appeared in the British tabloid *The Daily Express*, and his fantastic adventures became a hot children’s favourite.

FAIRY TALES

Did you ever wonder why tales like ‘Snow White’, ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’, ‘Cinderella’ and ‘Beauty and the Beast’, just to mention a few, were so fascinating to you as a child? This is because fairy tales speak of the spiritual path and the different stages of the journey undertaken by the seeker. Each tale is steeped in symbolism, focusing on one single aspect of the journey, or gives details of the entire passage taken by the seeker towards enlightenment. ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’ is one such example. Whilst the storyteller speaks of fairies, gnomes, monsters, dragons, witches, magic and enchantment, these are depicted in veiled terms as the encounters that the ‘initiate’, or seeker, young or old, faces on his path. Perhaps this is why fairy tales are still read by so many children today.

MYTHOLOGY

Every culture has a form of mythology, whether it be the Greek, Roman, Celtic or Nordic myths (the Icelandic *eddas*), or the myths of China, Japan, Persia, India and Egypt. Myths tell of times past when gods, goddesses and humans dwelt together or were in contact with each other. They tell of rivalry, disputes, triumphs and failures. Again, these myths speak of the spiritual path in a veiled way. For example, the Greek hero myths speak of heroes like Hercules, Perseus, or Jason and his Argonauts who go in search of a Golden Fleece, or a Gorgons head, or some sort of magical talisman, symbolic of a quest for truth.

LEGENDS

These are based on *true* stories and events surrounding semi-historic figures that may once have actually lived. Their exploits are exaggerated to heroic levels to illustrate principles of the spiritual path. Examples are the legends of Charlemagne the Great, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan', and the legends of Prester John, which tell the tale of a Christian patriarch, or king. Exaggeration gave the writers the opportunity to graft many principles relating to the spiritual path onto the story to illustrate a particular point. It is well known today that the Celtic oral traditions of King Artaius and Queen Gwenhwyvar were told through the historical figures of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere. Merlin was Myddrin, Mordred was Medrawt, Gallahad was Gwalchaved, Sir Kay was Kai.

EPIC POETRY

Epic poems depict 'tales of times past' which are told in prose, sometimes Pagan, sometimes Christian and sometimes Viking. They tell stories of humans and their trials and tribulations. The Völsunga sagas of Iceland and Norway, in the poetic and prose *eddas*, depict the tales of Viking families. Among the more notable adaptations of this text are Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, more commonly known as Wagner's *Ring*, consisting of four epic operas.

The dozen or so versions of the Grail Legends, pagan, Christian and alchemical are also epic poems. The legends first appeared in the 12th century from the French poet, Chretien De Troyes, and were further embellished by the German *Minnesingers* (a poet or wandering minstrel) Wolfram von Eschenbach, and the British cleric, Geoffrey of Monmouth.

The 'Bhagavad Gita' is a 700-verse Hindu scripture, part of the epic poem, *The Mahabarrata*, depicting the tale of Lord Krishna and the Pandava prince, Arjuna.

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* from Mesopotamia is another, which originated from many Sumerian legends. The story revolves around a relationship between Gilgamesh and his close male companion, Enkidu, a 'wild man' created by the gods as Gilgamesh's equal to distract him from oppressing the citizens of Uruk. Within these tales, one will find a plethora of references to the spiritual journey.

ALLEGORIES

These are stories with a hidden meaning. They speak of one thing and mean another. *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, and Dante's *Divine Comedy* are examples.

In the allegorical romance, *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*, Christian is invited to a castle full of miracles in order to assist in the 'chymical wedding' of the king and the queen.

Goethe tells the complex story of Faust, who is a scientific empiricist forced to confront questions of good and evil, God and the devil, sexuality and mortality. 'The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily' is another allegorical tale by the same author. *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Lord of the Rings* can be considered allegories because they each offer a concentrated depiction of the spiritual seeker's journey.

PARABLES

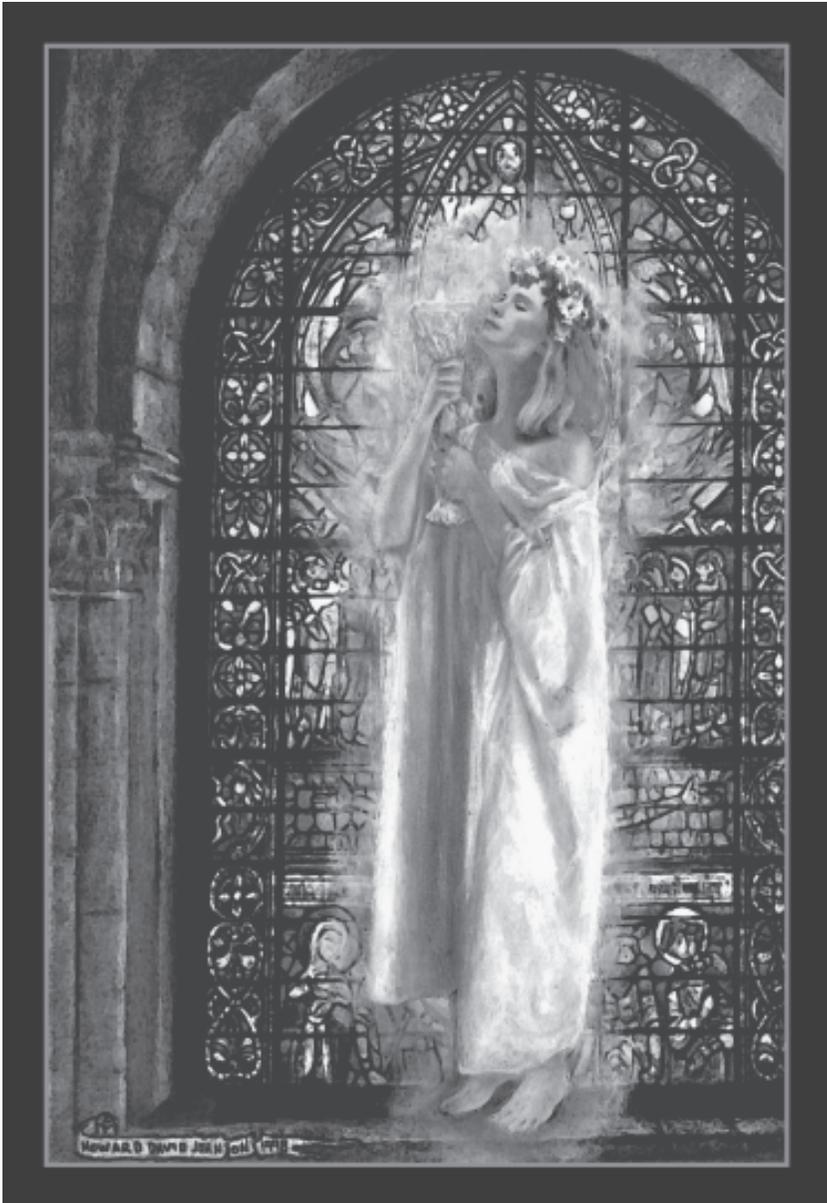
There are many examples of religious stories with a deeper meaning in the scriptures of the world. Jesus spoke in parables in the Bible. Rama Krishna, when asked by one of his followers what God was like, was purported to have told the parable of the 'little salt doll', a doll made of rock salt. She went through the country asking people what the sea was like, but nobody could explain. So eventually she went to find the sea herself. Upon walking into the sea, however, she melted completely and never came out again. Only then did she know what the sea was like. She had to give of herself to truly understand, as is the case with so many things in life. The meaning of the parable is that we can only truly understand God when we merge with him totally. One has to experience it.

For hundreds of years, Western civilization, although technologically advanced, has continued with little meaningful mystical or philosophical education. We have long forgotten how to think along abstract lines, and so mystical and mythical values are poorly understood. Shrewd in our economic dealings, we are completely out of touch in terms of who we are or why we are here. For those that are seeking wisdom and truth outside of Christianity and everyday materialism, this can pose a problem.

Those who study fairy tales, myths and fables, and their philosophical meaning, begin to close this gap, paying genuine attention to themselves and others, and to the world around them. Their curiosity awakens, they start to explore the underlying nature of things that they have, perhaps for many years, accepted without question. They read, they study, they ask more questions. If they continue this journey of discovery, they become increasingly adept at

seeing their lives differently, seeing what *is*, rather than what they want to see or have been told to see. They begin to awaken to life.

Myths and folklore serve as a path to help us uncover that which is hidden from us. A Socrates resides deep inside each and every one of us, if we care to find him. If we know where to look and how to decipher his message, we can become richer for the experience and a step closer to truth.



MYTHOLOGICAL SYMBOLISM TO BE FOUND IN FOLKLORE

In each category of folklore, there are common threads and principles that can be found to a greater or lesser degree, each depicting the unfolding of the spiritual path and always depicted in a *veiled* way. I have listed some of them below. Each tale will be different, with perhaps only a few principles appearing in one story while each point may be fully covered in others.

1. The story often starts with a disadvantaged, unrecognised, poor, unfairly treated, or abused individual, one who does not fit with the norms of society. He becomes the central character, the spiritual warrior, the mythological hero or heroine. In the biblical story of David and Goliath, David is a poor shepherd. Jack in the fairy tale 'Jack and the Beanstalk' is poor; there is no food in the house. Perseus, in the Greek myths of the same name, is an orphan living under the rule of an evil tyrant. The hero protagonists of the Grail Legends often lacked the knowledge of 'worldly ways', or possessed a naive innocence which often earned them the name, 'great fool'.

2. The hero has a dream, or sees a vision, or experiences a revelation, or receives a visitation or a letter, informing him of a quest. Perseus had a dream of the Goddess Athena before his quest; Christian Rosenkreutz in the Chymical Wedding, received a letter from an Angel who carried a golden trumpet; Jack met a curious little man who gave him five magical beans. The Grail Legends speak of an initiation through the Court of King Arthur, and joining the fellowship of the Round Table. In other versions of the legends, the Grail appears to the knights in a sunbeam accompanied by a loud clap and the smell of beautiful spiced fragrances, and the knights then each swear they will go on a quest to look upon the Grail's mystery.

3. The hero, often unwillingly, sets out alone on his quest and undergoes many adventures, dangers, hardships or tests. He meets unusual people. He undertakes tests of strength and courage. He might have to solve a riddle or navigate a maze. In the Greek myth, Theseus had to work his way through a maze to find the Minotaur; in the epic poem of the 'Baghavad Gita', Arjuna was asked by Krishna to pull the magnificent bow, Gandiva. Arthur, the future and true-born king of England, must pull the sword from the stone. Oedipus had to solve the riddle of the sphinx. Perceval failed to answer questions correctly when he first set eyes on the Grail and was forced to go on an arduous adventure before he succeeded in his quest.

4. The quest takes a specific period of time – often seven days, or a year and day. Arthur was sent on a quest by Morgan le Fay, a quest that lasted a year and day. The allegorical tale of the 'Chymical wedding' is divided into seven days, or seven journeys.

5. The hero acquires gifts, weapons, abilities and skills along the way. In the Greek myth, Perseus was given winged sandals, a shield and a cloak of invisibility. Gallahad receives a shield that only he is worthy of bearing. Along the way, after they have travelled a certain distance, heroes often talk to animals, or learn to fly; in the case of the Greek hero, Bellerophon, he tames a winged steed with the help of the gods. It means that, after one has been on the spiritual path for some time, he can acquire special powers, *i.e.*, psychism, out of body travel, being invisible to onlookers.

6. Along the journey, the hero will see evidence of magic or enchantment, spells and other wonders. Arthur experiences the magical protection of Merlin and the magical trickery of Merlin's arch-enemy, the evil enchantress, Morgan le Fay. For indeed, anyone who embarks on a spiritual path and follows it to its ultimate conclusion, will indeed encounter the miraculous and the unusual.

STOP WORRYING, START LIVING

Jesus' disciples saw the dead being raised, men walking on water and water being turned into wine.

7. The hero might meet allies or guides, people who have information that will help him on his quest. Perseus meets three grey crones, old ladies or sisters that have information about the Gorgon, the monster that he must slay before he can return home. Arthur meets an ugly woman who holds the answer to a riddle he has to solve. In another of the Grail Legends, he meets with three damsels – Grail messengers – in a cart driven by three white harts.

8. The hero meets a mentor, an older person, wise sage, guru, magician, or prophet who teaches him, or points him in the right direction, or offers magical help. Merlin was Arthur's protector and greatly assisted him in winning many battles. He also assisted many of the knights on their quests for the Grail. The seer Phineas assisted Jason and the Argonauts on their quest for the Golden Fleece. The Goddess Athena assisted Odysseus.

9. The hero is tempted along the way by maidens, tricksters, wicked queens, witches, pleasures, fame, gold or treasures. All of these are designed to sway them from the quest. Sir Gawain on his quest for the Grail goes straight to the nearest pub and gets sidetracked by pretty maidens, all thoughts of the quest forgotten. During his twelve labours, Hercules meets with the Hesperides nymphs who invite him to play, but he moves on. The Sirens sang a song so sweet that it lured men to their deaths. Life is full of ups and downs, but when we set out on a spiritual quest, there are a thousand and one more distractions that will tempt us away from it.

10. At some point along the journey the hero meets with a fair maiden, a princess, a beautiful woman, the fairest in the land. But she is in trouble, threatened by a monster, imprisoned in a castle, under an ugly spell or in a deep sleep. In the Greek myth of Perseus, Andromeda was chained to a rock and about to be sacrificed to the Kraken, a ferocious sea monster. Sir Gallahad rescues seven maidens held captive by seven knights in the Castle of Maidens.

11. The hero of the story uses unorthodox and seemingly ineffective means to make his way along the path. In 'Jack and the Beanstalk', Jack used five magic beans; the biblical character David used five small, white rocks to slay the giant Goliath. Each of these is symbolic of how the truth is hidden in the most unlikely places.

12. The seeker has to go into battle with a terrifying monster – a dragon, an ogre, a giant, a gorgon, a kraken – all of them large, ugly, strong and terrifying. This depicts the battle that the hero has within himself, with his dark side – his own ego.

13. The hero takes part in games or competitions, tests of strength or skills. Even though he may think that the journey is over, he continues to be tested. In the Greek myth of Perseus, it took five different competitions after his quest was over for him to win the prize. Failure could mean falling back or losing what he has gained.

14. The hero eats of special fruit from a special tree, perhaps a golden apple, which symbolises the fruit of The Tree of Life that grew in the middle of the Garden of Eden. Jack captured the goose that laid the golden eggs. Or the hero might drink magic mead, an elixir of life, an ambrosia or nectar, the 'dancing water' that prolongs his life here on earth. In the Grail Legends, Sir Gawain is lead into a hall with twelve ancient knights who were all over 100 years of age, yet they seemed no more than 40.

INTRODUCTION

15. The hero will marry and be crowned king of a far-off land, along with his queen (twin soul). The far-off land is what we know as Heaven, or the Divine, where they live in perfect bliss forever. Or they are turned into constellations in the heavens – as were Perseus and Andromeda, immortalised as a star, comet, constellation or heavenly body.

16. The hero will often sail over the sea or a lake or cross over a bridge as he progresses. In the Arthurian legends, the bridge burnt behind Galahad as he raced across it and 'thrice above him, all the heavens burned.' In J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Bilbo Baggins sailed across the sea and was never seen again. In the same way, Ogier the Dane disappeared in a boat across the sea.

17. The rainbow is prevalent in many myths. In the Nordic myths, the Bifröst Bridge is a burning rainbow bridge that stretches between Midgard (the world of men) and Asgard, (the realm of the Gods.) The colours of the rainbow are the same as the colours seen in the inner vision of the mystic in various disciplines and exercises which raise consciousness. It also relates to the colour of the chakras in the human body. In the tale of Pandora's box, Hope was the fairy with the rainbow wings who came out of the box after all the ills of the world had been released.

