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# ESSAY

## THE MONOMYTH GOES TO LAW SCHOOL

THOMAS C. GALLIGAN, JR.\*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Joseph Campbell said that “myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation.”<sup>1</sup> Accepting that there are such energies and that myth can help transfuse my consciousness with whatever force those energies may have, perhaps by looking at myth I can learn something about my society, myself, and even my work places. Consequently, it occurs to me that the mythological perspective may shed some light on the place where I work—a law school.

In *Finnegan’s Wake*, James Joyce coined the term “monomyth.”<sup>2</sup> In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*,<sup>3</sup> Joseph Campbell used the word to describe the paradigm of the hero<sup>4</sup> myth and showed that hero myths from a wide range of cultures fit this monomyth model. The monomyth is characterized by “separa-

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<sup>1</sup> JOSEPH CAMPBELL, *THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES* 3 (2d ed. 1968).

<sup>2</sup> JAMES JOYCE, *FINNEGAN’S WAKE* 581 (1939).

<sup>3</sup> CAMPBELL, *supra* note 1, at 30.

<sup>4</sup> I have used the word hero, as Campbell did. I have not used “heroine” or “hero or heroine” for stylistic reasons. The spirit behind the word hero is gender-neutral, and I use the word in that spirit. However, one should note that Campbell’s heroes are all males. See ROBERT A. SEGAL, *JOSEPH CAMPBELL: AN INTRODUCTION* 34 (rev. ed. 1990).

tion—initiation—[and] return.”<sup>5</sup> That is, the

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.<sup>6</sup>

This journey is symbolic; it is a psychological or spiritual journey—an inward trek on which the traveller learns about himself and his relationship to the world.<sup>7</sup> It is a journey on which the traveller discovers, or frees, some unknown part of himself, a journey on which the traveller comes to terms with (accepts) his place in the order of things. If this all sounds a tad too touchy/feely or amorphous, you are probably not alone. But, just for the fun of it, I shall consider law students and law school from the monomyth angle.

In the law student I have my hero. The student is the one who will separate him or herself from the world; he or she will go to law school, the magic place. Certainly, going to law school is not cutting one's self off from the world. Granted, it's not a monastery, but attending law school entails an intellectual separation from one's pre-law school existence. Law school *is* a world unto itself. Mythologically, the three years one spends at law school are the initiation into the world of lawyers and the profession of lawyering. Finally, graduation and the beginning of practice are the return. Let me now consider my hero's journey in more detail.

## II. THE CALL TO ADVENTURE

The first step in the monomyth is the call to adventure. Campbell saw it as a call to respond to a spiritual or psychological force. It is a call to come to terms with life, a call to grow and mature, a call to see the transcendent in a world of forms. As such, Campbell seemed to cast some aspersions on those who seek only material rewards here on earth. In the course of doing so, he took a shot at lawyers. He stated,

In the United States there is even a pathos of inverted emphasis: the goal is not to grow old, but to remain young; not to mature

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<sup>5</sup> CAMPBELL, *supra* note 1, at 30.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 1-46.

away from Mother, but to cleave to her. And so, while husbands are worshipping at their boyhood shrines, being the lawyers, merchants, or masterminds their parents wanted them to be, their wives . . . are still on the search for love . . .<sup>8</sup>

I shall ignore the point of the sentence about love and satisfying others' goals and focus on the reference to lawyers. Did Campbell mean to imply that lawyers cannot be heroes? If so, I choose not to agree with him. Maybe I need to believe this in order to justify what I do for a living; but, I truly am convinced that lawyers can be heroes. Law orders our society; concomitantly, our law represents both the order we have chosen to impose upon ourselves and the extent of that order. Lawyers help implement this law. Much good has been done in the name of law. Certainly much bad has also been done in the name of law; but, these are moral statements. Mythologically, good and bad are an essential part of the whole; without bad there would be no good. In any event, as I see it, the call to law is a call to a noble profession, if I may be so trite. In the words of Walt Whitman, "And there is no trade or employment but the young man following it may become a hero."<sup>9</sup>

But from where does this call to law come? For different people it comes from different sources. First, for many lawyers the call comes from some innate desire to improve the plight of the world. This is indeed a noble, if grandiose, goal.

Second, for others the call comes from having lawyers as parents. I fall into this category. For us, being a lawyer may represent many things. It may be part of what we perceive to be the order of things, part of our being. The call comes from the cradle. I am only half kidding when I tell people that as a child I learned about the Socratic method around the dinner table. Or perhaps we children

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<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 11-12.

<sup>9</sup> WALT WHITMAN, *LEAVES OF GRASS* (1855). I must admit that I found the line in another Campbell essay, Joseph Campbell, *Myths to Live By* 258 (1972), thus causing me to believe that Campbell felt that if the heart were in the right place, anyone could be a hero, no matter what his or her profession. Actually, Professor Robert Segal has noted that Campbell's hero quest occurs in the second half of life. SEGAL, *supra* note 4, at 42-43. The hero is "trying to find a purpose in life beyond professional and even marital fulfillment." *Id.* at 42. In this vein, Campbell's heroes are Jungian. *Id.* The quest for a career, according to Segal, is characteristic of the first half of life. *Id.* at 34. Segal cites Erik Erikson as a proponent of the belief that finding a career psychologically solidifies one's place in society. *Id.* Thus law students, searching for careers, may not be Campbellian heroes; however, many of my students are not in the first half of life. And, many are not *just* looking for careers. In fact, it is my point that viewing one's career as *just* a career may serve to insulate (isolate) us from ourselves.

of attorneys follow parents' footsteps to please them—to win their approval. This is potentially self-threatening stuff.

Third, some lawyers no doubt just stumble into law school. I think a lot of people in my generation fit into this category. We went to college, majored in political science, history, English, economics, or American studies. We were either not very good at math or science or not very interested in them. When we graduated from college we did not see a lot of career options. We could not go to medical school and did not really want to sell anything; but, we wanted a career, a "good" career. Law school was open to all of us and we flocked to it. Granted, this seems a cynical view of the seventies' law school experience; but, in monomyth terms, it is not uncommon for the hero to blunder into the adventure.<sup>10</sup> The blunder may "reveal[] an unsuspected world, and the individual is drawn into a relationship with forces that are not rightly understood."<sup>11</sup> Such blunderers may become great heroes.

Fourth, there are those called not by the lure to do great things for their fellow man, not by some great cause in which they believe, not by confusion about their place in the world, but by the hope for reward—power, position, and pecuniary gain.

I am sure my groups are not exhaustive. There is undoubtedly

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<sup>10</sup> CAMPBELL, *supra* note 1, at 51. Interestingly, after finishing the early drafts of this piece and assuming my generation of lawyers was the first lost generation of lawyers, I read William Percy's ruminations on how he chose the law:

This year of travel after college was supposed to have afforded me a breathing-spell during which I could judiciously select my future means of livelihood. I agreed uneagerly with Father that a man should earn his keep, and Father was willing to give me an education in any profession I might choose or set me up in business. No man could have asked more; it was a magnificent opportunity. I found myself not only bewildered but uninterested. In my day people didn't flat-footedly choose to be teachers or scholars, scientists or preachers, much less hermits or saints. I had no penchant for any business, no talent for any art. Weighing my abilities, I had to confess they were of no commercial value and, to be honest, were, so far as I could judge, non-existent. The necessity of earning a living plus a desire to live plus the failure to discover in myself any quality convertible into cash—here was a combination sufficient to fling one tail-spinning into the deepest inferiority complex. . . . So I did not choose the law, it chose me. . . . I was not more unfit for the law than for anything else I could think of. . . . On leaving college if we had some inkling of our own aptitudes we would plan our lives more usefully and more happily. . . . I notice today that college graduates continue to be distressfully disoriented and, remembering, I grieve for their waste and pain. Yet down wrong turnings too there's plentiful adventure.

WILLIAM ALEXANDER PERCY, *LANTERNS ON THE LEVIES: RECOLLECTIONS OF A PLANTER'S SON* 113-14 (1941).

<sup>11</sup> CAMPBELL, *supra* note 1, at 51.

great overlap among them. Furthermore, as with any grouping, each group becomes, in a way, a caricature; however, these groups will suffice for present purposes. Let me begin the next portion of my discussion with the fourth group.

In this fourth group, the reward seekers, I see that there may indeed be some point to Campbell's earlier quoted slight of attorneys. As a teacher, I sometimes let my mind wander and imagine that a significant part of my law school classes are in school because they want others to look up to them or because they want to be rich or both. I roll that around in my mouth for awhile and see how I like the taste. I do not particularly. Mythologically, when I think of this group, I see Midas turning all he touched to gold and, consequently, never feeling anything he touched. Using other people, or anything, solely for one's own personal benefit is a tiring, hopeless effort. It is a scary way to live; achieving without feeling places one under constant spiritual strain. But, I fear, this group is too caught up in its insatiable desires to worry about its own spirit. I wonder whether I, as a law professor, have a duty to point this out somehow? Could I? I do not claim to be able to recognize such things in my students. My eyes do not see through people and for that I am thankful. I am kept busy enough with myself. Consequently I do not believe that I can do much about this fourth group. I note, however, that law school's traditional system of rewards equates the individual with his or her performance on a series of examinations. It encourages students to think, "I am what I get." It is a rather juvenile system that symbolically does not send the student forth into the profession but back to the elementary school report card. I have no prescription but note that a few three- or four-hour tests do not seem like a satisfactory way to measure someone's ability to deal with the problems of society.

Turning to the children of lawyers, the second group, and the searchers, the third group, I think that many in these groups get the "real" call while at law school. Something inside them clicks; they get in touch with an intellectual power that they never knew they had. They begin to see a part of what it means to be a lawyer. They feel like they belong. However, others in both these groups never really get the call. They find that law school just is not for them. But I bet most of them stay.

Why do they stay? I suppose it has something to do with a fear of failure, a fear of admitting to their spouses, their parent(s), or themselves that they made a wrong decision. Who knows? It

may also have to do with the treadmill effect. Many people, ignorant of what to expect, decide to go to law school. They get on the law school treadmill. Later, they feel they cannot slow it down sufficiently to get off. They cannot slow it down enough to even think about getting off. And, we educators certainly do not do much to give them a chance to let it slow down.

Additionally, the way higher education is funded discourages withdrawal. By the time someone decides law school is not for him or her, he or she may have spent (and borrowed) thousands of dollars. A decision to withdraw may incur the wrath of a wealthy parent or trigger the obligation to begin repaying a debt. All one withdrawing would have to show for the expense would be the knowledge law was not for him or her. While I view this as a worthwhile bit of information, others may object that the cost is *too high*.

Another reason why many may stay in school is the money and prestige many members of our profession enjoy. Unfortunately, this throws a lot of fine young people into that "power/money hungry" fourth group. Even though they do not enjoy what they are doing, even though it does not appeal to anything that is part of them, they see that they can earn a respectable living as a lawyer, so they stay. Why is that sad? Because then they are not working for themselves, but rather for those who see material wealth and position in society as critically important. What do such people do for personal reward? What do they think when they spend almost half of each day doing something that they were not cut out for? From a teacher's perspective, is it like grading all the time? Equally disturbing, people who become lawyers for the material reward have not responded to some other call. They have not followed their own star. As such, they must, at least to some extent, be out of touch with some part of themselves. Maybe it is the impossibility of existing in this personal limbo that has contributed to the growing number of lawyers leaving the practice. If so, more power to them.<sup>12</sup>

All of this leads me to a few thoughts on law school attrition. Traditionally, attrition weeded out students who were not able to cut the mustard academically, or, at least, many who did not have

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<sup>12</sup> I actually believe that many who still feel the call as lawyers are leaving practice because many who lawyer for the money (power) of it stay in the practice. That subject is beyond me now.

the stamina or desire to cut it. Attrition probably kept a lot of people who were not designed to be lawyers out of the profession—people who were not following *their* bliss. I believe that people who are unhappy at what they are doing generally will not do very well at it. Following this rough rule of thumb, the unhappy law student will not perform very well on examinations. If displacement from one's center (being, self, etc.) can cause unhappiness, one might expect the displaced law student to suffer academically. However, now that we have more demanding entrance requirements and a kinder, gentler approach to grading, perhaps we allow more students to get through, more students who are just lawyering for careers. Thus, there is a risk that some in the second and third groups will unhappily join the fourth.

How about the first group? Well, I have no doubt that many in the first group, the do-gooders who heard a noble voice calling before they entered law school realize they dialed a wrong number. But I bet that most of them stay in law school too. Problems may abound even for those who stay in it not for the power but for the "good" they can do for the world. You see, the world-savers who are out to help others are not working for (as) themselves. Although they're not just in it for the money, they're still working for someone (something) else.

This sounds sad, but it need not be because there are those who get the call—they click. The problem is that along with those responding to such a call are the many who merely float through the law school experience for ends often unclear to themselves. Campbell often told his own students that it was up to them to follow their bliss.<sup>13</sup> The expression itself cheers me up. When I get to know a law student who I think is following his or her bliss, I am pleased; I love to talk to him or her. Unfortunately, I feel many are here, just here; they are not following their bliss. I think that fact makes law school a little more confusing place for all concerned, including professors.

### III. THE GUIDE

"For those who have not refused the call, the first encounter of the hero-journey is with a protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the

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<sup>13</sup> See *infra* text accompanying note 39.



dragon forces he is about to pass."<sup>14</sup> This person serves as a guide. Who is this guide for our law school heroes? It may be a lawyer parent or lawyer friend whose advice suddenly makes more sense than it ever made before and whose counsel is now sought rather than rejected or merely tolerated.<sup>15</sup>

For most though, I would venture that the first person who looks like he or she might provide some protection and guidance is a law professor. Maybe it is the teacher of the student's first class. For me it was the speaker at my law school's orientation who discussed (mythologized) the law school experience. The discussion induced panic.

The orientation was held in the chapel of the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. The principal speaker talked about the Socratic method, but his real message had to do with how law school was going to change us all, especially the way we thought. I felt quite threatened by that message. First of all, I was not one hundred percent sure then that law school was for me. I was there because I had not yet written a great novel, would never throw a no-hitter in a World Series (as Ring Lardner would say), and did not play guitar well enough to be a rock star. Besides, my father was a lawyer, and law school seemed like the thing to do (maybe). Second, although cognizant of a few minor faults, I pretty much liked myself the way I was. I had a girlfriend (now my wife) with whom I was in love; I liked reading and listening to music; and, I loved baseball. I was not sure I wanted to mess around with this combination. Moreover, from the speaker's tone it was he and his colleagues who were going to change me. They were going to light some candle in my brain. The idea was unsettling; when it comes to overhauling my life I like to do my own mechanical work. Anyway, there I was—a Catholic—in this Methodist chapel, sitting amongst all these eager faces, and the guy at the podium was preaching about changing me. I decided right then and there that if anyone, absolutely anyone, started to chant, I was on my way back to New Jersey. Although the chanting never came, I must admit to uneasily recalling Kafka's "Metamorphosis" and hoping that I would not wake up at the end of three years like Gregor

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<sup>14</sup> CAMPBELL, *supra* note 1, at 69.

<sup>15</sup> I was lucky to have two such mentors: my father and Fred Hokanson, the father of a friend. Fred lived in the town where I went to law school. He saw me through my first few days of law school with stories of his own (myths (?)), friendly advice, debate, good food, and, of course, questions.

Samsa lying on my erstwhile back, unable to roll over.

Needless to say, law school did change me; but I am still worried by my interpretation of that orientation speech. My professors did not change me; they guided me. I changed myself. My teachers were all important to my becoming the lawyer and the person I have become; but, like all heroes, I went on the journey alone. What then is the role of the guide?

Campbell said the guide "represents . . . the benign, protecting power of destiny."<sup>16</sup> It is a "protective power [that] is always and ever present within the sanctuary of the heart."<sup>17</sup> In this light then, orientation provided an opportunity not to intimidate but to welcome, not to scare, but to initiate, not to perform, but to model. It provided an opportunity not to badger me in preparation for the next day's class but to challenge me and to get me to take note of the personal journey I was about to undertake.

Whenever one mentions law school orientations, I think of Karl Llewellyn's lectures to incoming law students that are collected in *The Bramble Bush*.<sup>18</sup> One of the passages in the book reminds me of the speech I heard at my own law school orientation. Llewellyn said,

The first year [of law school] . . . aims to drill into you the more essential techniques of handling cases. It lays a foundation simultaneously for law school and law practice. It aims, in the old phrase, to get you to "thinking like a lawyer". The hardest job of the first year is to lop off your common sense, to knock your ethics into temporary anesthesia. Your view of social policy, your sense of justice—to knock these out of you along with woozy thinking, along with ideas all fuzzed along their edges. You are to acquire ability to think precisely, to analyze coldly, to work within a body of materials that is given, to see, and see only, and manipulate, the machinery of the law. It is not easy thus to turn human beings into lawyers.<sup>19</sup>

Certainly, as an educator, I must teach the skills of lawyering; but, have I desensitized my students to their value systems, to their human emotions? More on this later. For now, should I, as a guide, choose language like Llewellyn's to introduce my heroes to their hoped-for careers? My friend Ben Shieber, who took the course in

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<sup>16</sup> CAMPBELL, *supra* note 1, at 71.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.* at 72.

<sup>18</sup> KARL LLEWELLYN, *THE BRAMBLE BUSH* (1930).

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* at 116.

contracts from Llewellyn at Columbia, tells another story of a Llewellyn introduction to law, an introduction with an Eastern flair.

When Llewellyn entered the class room on the first day of class, he paused. Then he told the students that in Asia elephants are used as pack animals. These elephants are often asked to cross long, flimsily constructed, wooden bridges. Should the bridge collapse under the elephant's weight, the cargo and carrier would be lost. The elephants and their human guides would fall to their deaths below. Before embarking, the elephants walk to the edge of the bridge. There, they gingerly place one foot on the span. If the bridge will support their weight, they proceed and safely arrive at the other side. If the bridge will not support their weight, the elephants will not proceed. You see, these elephants know, after placing one foot on the bridge, whether it will support their weight or not. They just know. Llewellyn called this "elephant feel." It is, to use another of Llewellyn's favorite terms, a hunch. I am convinced it is the purpose of law school to develop in the law student that ability to hunch about the law—to hunch not about suspension bridges in romantic lands, but to hunch about the law. Certainly there is no way to teach such a thing. A hunch like that must ultimately come from inside. The most that the teacher can ever do is guide, or elicit.

#### IV. THE CROSSING OF THE THRESHOLD

The next step in the monomyth is the hero's arrival at and crossing of the threshold into the land of adventure. This threshold represents the boundary between the known and the unknown, in mythical terms—the supernatural. Although law school is certainly not supernatural, no doubt many of my students appreciate it as the unknown, especially as they begin the journey. I doubt that this feeling changes very much during their first semester. Personally, I had an overwhelming sense of relief when I opened my first law school exam in December 1978 and discovered that it was in English, that I could comprehend the questions, and that there were no flashing lights, no mists of fog, and no other mysteries involved; after all the build-up, it was just a test.

The threshold that the hero must cross into the land of adventure often is guarded by some type of creature, perhaps an ogre.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> CAMPBELL, *supra* note 1, at 77-82.

Or, it is blocked by some physical barrier, like the Symplegades. The Symplegades are rocks that crashed together; Jason and the Argonauts had to sail between these rocks in order to get to their land of adventure.<sup>21</sup> Although this creature or thing may seem horrible or dangerous, symbolically it represents the pairs of opposites with which we are faced in the manifest world: good and evil, day and night, man and woman, plaintiff and defendant.<sup>22</sup> Once beyond, the hero is in the land beyond duality, the land beyond opposites—he or she is in the land of the gods. Psychologically, the hero is in the deepest part of the unconscious. Law school surely does not take one beyond the material world; I, for one, however, certainly felt as if my world had been turned upside down. I had to rethink everything. Even after one week of law school, I could not be sure that what I had thought was bad was bad and what I had thought was good was good. I had to take a look at how I thought. I had to explain myself, even to myself.

Moreover, as Campbell pointed out, the threshold is a place where the overeager, but unprepared, may meet disaster; however, the truly ready will rise above the terrors and pass through.<sup>23</sup> Here I am reminded of the law professor/student dialogue. How often do I deal with those early eager volunteers as the ogre deals with a potential human meal? I often, with ten to twenty minutes of adept, sharp, insightful questioning deflate their ostensible sack of courage and confidence until I have them looking up to tie their shoes. However, in every class I teach there are usually those who sit back, do not say much, and, when called on, proceed to teach me a little about torts. Or, there are others who impress me little, and then I smile when I see how high their grades are at the end of the semester. These are the ready.

In terms of the monomyth, first-year teachers represent the guardian at the gate. As such, I take up both sides of the opposites' coin. I try to span the bridge across duality with ease. Questioning from one "side," I attempt to jump adroitly to the other to inquire further, only to return again before my points are grasped, correctly or incorrectly, rightly or wrongly. I create trauma and initial confusion, all in the hope of later providing some enlightenment. I believe that what Campbell said of the mythological forces at the

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<sup>21</sup> *Id.* at 30, 89.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.* at 89.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.* at 83-88.

threshold is true of law professors: "[T]he powers that watch at the boundary are dangerous; to deal with them is risky; yet for anyone with competence and courage the danger fades."<sup>24</sup>

Campbell viewed this land beyond the threshold as a place where rebirth took place. He put this idea across in a section of *The Hero* called "The Belly of the Whale."<sup>25</sup> There he referred to spiritual (re)birth. Although law school cannot make such noble claims, I feel, as a former student and as a practicing pedagogue, that I underwent and now see law school as a place for intellectual (re)birth. Like any birth, it is a traumatic experience. Moreover, like any birth, it is probably advisable to treat the newborn with some care. Maybe it is necessary to spank it on the behind, but the spanking probably hurts less (although it still must seem pretty ambiguous) when followed with a caress (for anyone in doubt, I'm speaking metaphorically here).

## V. THE ROAD OF TRIALS

Campbell entitled the next stage of the monomyth "The Road of Trials."<sup>26</sup> It is exactly what the name implies. It is a continuation of the trial that began at the crossing of the threshold. Once beyond, some heroes are guided by the force, person, or thing they met before they crossed the threshold, i.e., the guide. Others come in contact for the first time here with the supporting power that aids them on their journey.<sup>27</sup> Essentially it is here that much of the work of transformation is done.

In the context of the law school hero this land of trials is law school itself. The work of transformation that was begun, or glimpsed, or feared, at the orientation or on the first day of class continues in the classroom; it takes root. This land of trials is the day-to-day experience of attending class, reading cases and statutes, thinking about what was read, talking about it, and intellectually reshaping it. As a law professor, I am one of the guides on this marvelous journey, and that is a weighty responsibility. Trouble lies in wait for the law student at every turn; I make much of that trouble. Here then is the dilemma hinted at in the previous section. What kind of guide am I? Am I benign? Am I terrible?

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<sup>24</sup> *Id.* at 82.

<sup>25</sup> *Id.* at 90-94.

<sup>26</sup> *Id.* at 97.

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

What is my responsibility?

These are hard questions to answer. In trying to find personal answers we guides must remember what we're doing. I am not here just to scuttle people through school. I am trying to teach my students to develop a skill, an intellectual talent that may be hidden inside them. They must make the discovery themselves. I can only hint and model. I cannot give it to them before they are ready. If so, like the Grail King, they will be unprepared to deal with their weighty new responsibility. They must be prepared. They must understand the difficulty of developing and applying law to a changing, unpredictable, inconsistent world. The world is both horrible and calm. People are both nasty and nice. Values are in flux. It is my job to present these dualities; to show my students that law school is a microcosm of the legal world, which exists and functions in the broader "real" world. This should be an eye-opening experience. It should challenge; and, I believe, it should challenge in every way.

Those who cross the mythological threshold before they are prepared are in for rough sailing. The forces with which they are about to deal are indeed powerful, too powerful for the unprepared. The same is true for the law student. As a law professor, I humble. I challenge ideas students have developed over time. I challenge thought processes. I challenge the intellectual ego. Is that bad? Is it my business?

The law student is facing a change, like it or not. He or she is entering a new profession which will make new demands on his intellect, his time, and even his personality. One of the prerequisites to meaningful change is the ability to detach from the former self. If I like myself too much the way I am, it will be hard for me to change; if I zealously guard the person I *am*, it is unlikely I will *become* the person I might be. Having my views questioned and challenged is healthy. That is one of the things law professors do for law students—that's what I do. I hope I am not cruel in this process; after all I am merely another human. Kali may laugh at destruction; I do not take it so lightly. Moreover, I know that I can only challenge another to see differently if I remain open to new views and ideas myself.

This thought brings me around to values. Many students complain that law school knocks the values out of them, like some old stuffing. After one month or so of the Socratic method they do not feel that their value systems or feelings are relevant or worthwhile.

Others complain that their professors seek to convince them of the proper values law ought to further and how it should do so.

I feel that what I do is not value-desensitizing but rather value-channelling. I do not aim to knock the values out of my students. I try to let them know that I am teaching them new skills that can help them effectuate their values. Certainly some of them change their values and that is fine; but it seems to me that I am helping them articulate and examine the values within.

I am not out to change them; I am out to help them change a part of themselves. This road of trials is indeed a difficult time. It is frustrating. For the ready it may involve a series of ever larger, but often painful, successes. For those who are not ready, it often means an early end to law school. For those who knocked at the wrong door and realize it, the end of this road should be a happy end to lawyering.

Then, for those who stay, for those who get the call and respond, that day comes usually sometime in the first year. The student sits back and realizes that there are no answers. The student, the hero, begins to develop a tolerance for uncertainty. Now the student begins to read his or her materials looking for the questions that the teacher will ask. It becomes easier to pull out and synthesize the information. The student begins reading the gaps. Class becomes a little more pleasurable. There are fewer panicky internal dialogues beginning with, "I never thought of that." This is progress. This new tolerance for uncertainty is enlightening; it is the meeting with that new part of the self that is a lawyer. In mythological terms it represents tapping into the power that is at the center of things. This is contact with lawyering. I believe that this point is the birth of the lawyer's intellect. The person will never be the same again.

The hero is not yet a lawyer, but he or she has had a glimpse of it; the road of trials continues. The student reads more, studies more, writes more, and questions more. The student begins to realize that there really are no answers. The student accepts this uncertainty. It is just the way it is.

## VI. AT-ONE-MENT

The next step in the monomyth is atonement (at-one-ment)<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Id.* at 130.

with the father.<sup>29</sup> After, or as part of, the road of trials the hero is confronted with, or again confronted with, the father, usually in the father's terrible form. By confronting the father, submitting to him, getting by him, or killing him, the hero learns that the father, in his terrible form, is merely another side of the mother. From the mother the hero entered the physical world. Now with the father's help the hero has been reborn. The trials have changed the hero, and the terror of the father has given way to the benevolent life giving side of the father. In fact, the mother and father are one—in a spiritual sense.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, the father and the hero are as one, thus the hyphenation of atonement as at-one-ment. Mystical!

So what does at-one-ment with the father have to do with law school? Let me quote a passage from Campbell that strikes a nerve with me and go on from there:

For the ogre aspect of the father is a reflex of the victim's own ego—derived from the sensational nursery scene that has been left behind, but projected before; and the fixating idolatry of that pedagogical nonthing is itself the fault that keeps one steeped in a sense of sin, sealing the potentially adult spirit from a better balanced, more realistic view of the father, and therewith of the world. Atonement (at-one-ment) consists in no more than the abandonment of that self-generated double monster—the dragon thought to be God (superego) and the dragon thought to be Sin (repressed id). *But this requires an abandonment of the attachment to ego itself, and that is what is difficult.* One must have a faith that the father is merciful, and then a reliance on that mercy.<sup>31</sup>

The first part of the quote refers to the infant's fear of the father and, later, to its competition with him for the mother's affection and love. Does this desire to battle the father drive us through life? Let us accept that Freudian fact for the moment, albeit hypothetically. At least, let us assume that somewhere, whether from the cradle or from our society, we have a yen to compete with one another. We have a desire to come out on top. We want to be patted on the head and told we did well, whether that means that we won the race, earned the most money, painted the best picture, or made the best grades in law school. In mythological terms, we see the father as our competition. As I read the monomyth, coming to

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<sup>29</sup> *Id.* at 126.

<sup>30</sup> *Id.* at 162.

<sup>31</sup> *Id.* at 129-30 (emphasis added) (footnote omitted).



terms with the mercy of the father is realizing that the process—life—is not an endless competition to be won or lost. The father was not a challenger. Ultimately the father, like the mother, is a tender life-giver.

However, our ego is attached to the model of competition; it wants to win—it wants to be the best. At the same time it seems that the ego is attached to the person that we are, not to the person we might become. Thus, when we “fight” the father we are really fighting ourselves. Our egos are fighting what we cannot control. Remember my earlier reference to my law school orientation at which I experienced a fear of changing. I was fighting myself; I was not sure if I was willing to let myself evolve. I was afraid to let go of the ego I had. I still object to the way my options were presented to me, but the point still holds.

Let me turn now to law students and the Socratic method. Like it or not, as a teacher, I *am* ego shattering. I have read about, remember, and have seen law students who are near depression because they do not feel they know anything anymore. I follow any answer they give with a question. When I am hot on questioning, I answer every answer with a question and every question with a question. What students knew, and what they felt, what they believed may all seem to be up in the air after my questions. That is ego-shattering. I am questioning; I am pushing. They are changing.

Likewise, when I call on a student, when I talk with a student, I am doing battle with him or her. Personally, I tend to fight quietly but it is battle. How often have my students fought the process with indirect answers, humorous answers, or terse responses and averted eyes? No doubt the public nature of the performance had a lot to do with that. However, I think there is also a strong dose of “I won’t play this game” and “I won’t change” mixed in. A battle is being waged, a battle between change and no change, a battle between their desire to be reborn as lawyers and their yen to stay as they are (or do something else). As in life, they must fight this battle alone. Again, we teachers only guide.

Certainly, I must be careful that I do not let the unready pass the gates of law school into the world of lawyers. Tragedy follows when the unprepared attempt to fill the father’s shoes.<sup>32</sup> In the law

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<sup>32</sup> Campbell points to the Roman myth of Phaëthon for this proposition. Phaëthon was the mortal son of Phoebus, the god who drove the Sun across the sky. Unsure of his true origin, Phaëthon elicited a promise from his father that he would give the boy whatever proof Phaëthon wanted that he, Phoebus, was in fact Phaëthon’s father. Phaëthon asked to

school context, as I've noted, the unready must lead miserable lives, threatening both themselves and their clients. But what can I, as a teacher, really do? As I noted, from a spiritual perspective, the law student takes the journey from non-lawyer to lawyer alone. I for one would feel quite uncomfortable deciding whether my students are ready to be lawyers on anything other than an intellectual level. They must decide that for themselves, and for many that decision requires real-world exposure to the lawyer's world.

The ego-shattering aspect of law school merits a footnote addressed specifically to me as a law professor. True, I ego-shatter; I foster and guide intellectual growth—change; but do I substitute one ego for another? While I drive out the notion that the student knows the answer in order to get him or her to learn how to ask questions and to live with uncertainty, do I unduly preserve the competitive self-centered notions they had before they began the journey? I reward with grades. Like children I symbolically pat them on the heads if they do well. To the highest grades go the spoils—law review, scholarships, and the highest paying jobs. I am teaching people to be professionals in dealing with and solving other people's problems, yet I spur my students on with what I earlier called a relatively juvenile set of incentives and rewards. Not only are these incentives and rewards juvenile, but they are quite material. What should I do instead? I am not sure; but, do I overemphasize the material?

Additionally, I realize that as a teacher I am very powerful. Like it or not, I handle egos; I handle lives. I bruise egos;<sup>33</sup> I cannot avoid it. The bruise is a blow to the old pre-lawyer self. The purpose of the bruise is to stimulate new growth, new life—like the spanking a newborn receives? Do I occasionally bruise not to stimulate growth but just to bruise? Why? Does it make me feel good? Does it fill me with some kind of superiority? Does it let me vent my anger? At what? Am I consistent? Or, does my classroom de-

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drive the chariot of the sun. Despite Phoebus's protestations, Phaëthon set out. The result was disaster, and great parts of the earth were seared. To avoid the total destruction of the earth, Jove killed Phaëthon with a thunderbolt. *Id.* at 133-36.

I am also reminded of Pinocchio, a popular character at my house, who acted like a human before he was prepared for the role and brought problems to many, most notably to himself and his "father." Only after enduring many ordeals was Pinocchio truly ready to live as a human.

<sup>33</sup> Pain at the point of initiation is common in many cultures in which initiation into the adult order is symbolized by some rite, such as, for the male, circumcision. *See id.* at 137-42.

meanor swing with my moods? I fear my inconsistency may blunt the point of the message I am trying to bring to my students.

After atonement, one sees the merciful side of the father. In fact, one wonders if the hero at this juncture does not look back and ask, "What was I ever afraid of?" I now look back at my own law professors fondly. But I do remember how my palms would sweat when I heard those same individuals call out my name and watched them look around the room preparing to find the face of the student they would soon be initiating.

## VII. APOTHEOSIS

The next step in the monomyth is apotheosis.<sup>34</sup> Webster defines the word as deification, the process of a human becoming a god.<sup>35</sup> Through the process, the hero realizes that not only were the father and the mother one, but that so to is the hero one with them.<sup>36</sup> Put differently, the spirit of the father—God, life, whatever one calls it—is in the hero and the hero is in that spirit. They, we, are all part of some whole. This spirit has been in the hero all along, and the purpose of the journey or ordeal was to find it.<sup>37</sup> As Campbell said, "[I]t is found (or rather, recollected) that the hero himself is that which he had come to find."<sup>38</sup> This is heavy stuff. Applying it to law school is not impossible though.

Students come to law school looking for a profession, a place in the world where they will feel that they belong. A job in which they will feel that they are following their bliss.<sup>39</sup> That's what the call is all about. If they discover that place, then they have found a part of themselves; they will feel fulfilled in their life's work. As John Bradshaw has written, relying on the work of Abraham Maslow, "Work and play merge for them"<sup>40</sup>—the lucky ones. They will feel at one in the world of lawyers and they will feel at one in the larger world as a lawyer. The world may swirl around them at times, but having found a part of themselves that revels in what

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<sup>34</sup> *Id.* at 149.

<sup>35</sup> WEBSTER'S NEW WORLD DICTIONARY 372 (2d college ed. 1984).

<sup>36</sup> See CAMPBELL, *supra* note 1, at 153, 162-63. The initiate learns that male and female are "two halves of a split pea." *Id.* at 163.

<sup>37</sup> See *id.* at 163.

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*

<sup>39</sup> JOSEPH CAMPBELL & BILL MOYERS, THE POWER OF MYTH 117-21, 155 (1988). To attain "bliss," one must find what makes one happy and stay with it, no matter what. *Id.* at 155.

<sup>40</sup> JOHN BRADSHAW, BRADSHAW ON THE FAMILY 237 (1988).

they do, they will be on the road to becoming happy beings. They will not be drained or defined by what they do, but they will be at peace with who they are. Can I, as a law professor, do this for someone? No way. But I can contemplate what it is I am taking part in. I guide; and, also I must warn—do not get too high and do not get too low. Remember Daedalus (the professor) and his son, Icarus (the student).<sup>41</sup>

### VIII. THE ULTIMATE BOON

Following apotheosis is the ultimate boon.<sup>42</sup> Myths are full of stories in which heroes receive boons: magic elixirs, freedom from some debt or curse, super weapons—these are just a few that come to mind.<sup>43</sup> One might view these boons as symbolic of some greater reward, such as being in touch with the ultimate power or with the true self. Campbell noted that many a hero has asked for “longer years to live, weapons with which to slay his neighbor, or the health of his child,”<sup>44</sup> rather than the “boon of perfect illumination.”<sup>45</sup> One gets the sense that the ultimate boon is a sense of realization of the gift of being, a contentment in the now because the now is the eternal. Mythologically, there is no difference between time and eternity once the hero has moved beyond the duality inherent in the material world.<sup>46</sup>

What ultimate boon can law school promise? Nothing to compare to the one of which Campbell wrote—or can it? Recall that I am using myths to provide some direction or comparison to life’s concrete problems. If I ask my students what they want from law school, they might sound a lot like the heroes with whom Campbell seemed so disappointed. The students might want good grades. They might want to make the law review. They might want to get good jobs. They might want to please their families. They might want to hold positions of power. They might want to help others and change the world. They might want to leave their mark. The

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<sup>41</sup> Icarus and his father Daedalus, an Athenian inventor, were imprisoned in the labyrinth at Minos and sought to flee by means of wings of feathers and wax. In the course of their flight, Icarus flew too near to the sun, whose heat melted the wax of his wings and caused Icarus to plunge into the sea to his death.

<sup>42</sup> CAMPBELL, *supra* note 1, at 172-92.

<sup>43</sup> See *id.* at 179-80, 185 (discussing various boons).

<sup>44</sup> *Id.* at 189.

<sup>45</sup> *Id.*

<sup>46</sup> See *id.*

ability to satisfy these desires is a boon. But is it law school's ultimate boon? Or, is the ultimate boon understanding something, perhaps something inexplicable about the way societies order themselves? Is the ultimate boon of law school just being a lawyer? Or, is it finding a place in the world where one belongs, where one feels content, where one's work is in harmony with one's spirit?

These are difficult questions to answer and whatever answers one comes up with are impossible to explain. They are neither rational nor moral; they are spiritual. Does that render them less important? Does that make them unworthy of consideration in a professional school? I think not. I think they are crucial to us all.

Once heroes have the boon, one might say they're out about as far as they can get from where they started. Now it remains for them to return with the boon, where it "may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds."<sup>47</sup> From the law school perspective it's time for the student to graduate and go out into the world and the world of lawyers.

### IX. THE RETURN

Interestingly, some heroes refuse to return.<sup>48</sup> They find the land of the gods so incredibly peaceful or pleasant that they remain in the land of adventure—the magical place. In a strange sort of a way, I think that I have decided to return to the magic land. For whatever reason, I left the world of practicing lawyers and returned to the place of my education, my transformation, if you will. This is by no means a self-condemnation, either practically or mythologically; however, it does put me in a different light from the practicing lawyers to whom my students are exposed while clerking and later while working.

But what of those heroes who return to the world? Some do so willingly, even eagerly. Those heroes who have won the respect of the gods return "supported by all the powers of [their] . . . supernatural patron."<sup>49</sup> This, I dare say, is true of most of our law school graduates. Others take flight with the gods chasing them—recall Prometheus.<sup>50</sup> Happily, this is usually not the case with law stu-

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<sup>47</sup> *Id.* at 193.

<sup>48</sup> *See id.* at 193-96.

<sup>49</sup> *Id.* at 197.

<sup>50</sup> *See id.* at 182, 197.

dents. Libraries may chase them down for overdue books or unpaid fines, but the smart librarian usually undertakes that hunt before graduation. Other heroes must be rescued from without; someone has to come and pull them out,<sup>51</sup> back into the real world of emotion and feeling. Some get lost in the ivory tower of reason and have no great desire to be human again. This leads us into our last stage of the monomyth—recrossing the threshold.<sup>52</sup>

#### X. RECROSSING THE THRESHOLD/LIVING IN THE TWO WORLDS

The returning hero has a boon, a boon that mythologically can save the world.<sup>53</sup> The problem is that a large part of the world does not want to be saved. They look at the returning hero with eyes askance. They ask, "Who is this nut?" Some travellers are welcomed; some are scorned. Rip Van Winkle did not even know he had been away.<sup>54</sup> Returning to the world is a delicate task, but "[t]he returning hero, to complete his adventure, must survive the impact of the world."<sup>55</sup> The hero who survives this impact has a great gift for the world and for himself. He or she has the gift that has come from the depths, a kind of knowledge or awareness of the unknowable.<sup>56</sup> Paradoxically, the successfully returning hero knows that the world of the divine and the world to which he or she returns are one.<sup>57</sup> "The realm of the gods is a forgotten dimension of the world we know."<sup>58</sup>

So law students, now lawyers, leave law school and enter the world of lawyers; but, more importantly, from a spiritual perspective they return to the world from which they entered law school. Put differently, they go back to the world they left with the knowledge and skill they learned in law school. Metaphorically, this is the knowledge that came from the depths. Those that took the path of the hero have discovered a part of themselves, a part that was always there waiting to be tapped. They must now assimilate this new person into the old world. Actually this assimilation was

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<sup>51</sup> *Id.* at 207.

<sup>52</sup> *Id.* at 217.

<sup>53</sup> *See id.* at 218. The hero has a great need to refresh the world to which he returns with his "transcendental bliss." *Id.*

<sup>54</sup> *Id.* at 218-21.

<sup>55</sup> *Id.* at 226.

<sup>56</sup> *See id.* This knowledge will allow the hero to remain strong in the world, even "in the face of . . . sobering disillusionment." *Id.*

<sup>57</sup> *Id.* at 217.

<sup>58</sup> *Id.*

occurring all through law school as they dealt with parents, friends, spouses, and children whom they knew before. But at the conclusion of law school, this return is symbolically manifest.

Recrossing this threshold is challenging. How many will use their new found gift for argument to stymie others? How many will look down on those who cannot, or do not, employ the cold sword of logic as aptly as they? How many will have missed the point of law school and come out valueless and confused? Let me quote Llewellyn again. Please recall the earlier quote; Llewellyn was concerned about how hard it was to get students thinking like lawyers.<sup>59</sup> Pulling his legal realist tongue out of his cheek, (I like to think.) he continued as follows:

Neither is it safe. For a mere legal machine is a social danger. Indeed, a mere legal machine is not even a good lawyer. It lacks insight and judgment. It lacks the power to draw into hunching that body of intangibles that lie in social experience. Nonetheless, it is an almost impossible process to achieve the technique without sacrificing some humanity first. Hence, as rapidly as we may, we shall first cut under all attributes of *homo*, though the *sapiens* we shall then duly endeavor to develop will, we hope, regain the *homo*.<sup>60</sup>

There it is—Llewellyn and the monomyth. Law schools take people and train them as lawyers; the people change, and then these fine people go back to the world; they go back to *homo*.

It can only be hoped that they realize that this skill they have, this part of them that they have developed, is to be used by them for themselves and for the world. It is not just a way to win bread, to win respect, and to justify their existence. It is a part of who they are and only when they are comfortable with who they are can they truly be the lawyers the world hopes that they will be. The hero who has undertaken and survived the journey is the "Master of the Two Worlds."<sup>61</sup> The law students who successfully take the hero's journey through law school will be the masters of both the lawyer's world and the world beyond. For them, the two worlds are one.

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<sup>59</sup> See *supra* text accompanying note 19.

<sup>60</sup> LLEWELLYN, *supra* note 18, at 116-17.

<sup>61</sup> CAMPBELL, *supra* note 1, at 229.