

VISION QUEST

STAGE 1 - TURN AROUND

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Inner Garden Vision Quest Stage 1 – Turn Around

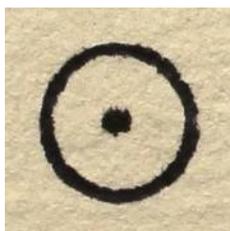
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“O yea who search for the path that leads to the secret,
Turn around, for the entire secret is within you”
(Ibn Arabi)

Aim of this lesson

Theory: Introduction to the Inner Tradition, some historical background on the origin and underground transmission of the tradition. Explanation of the basic mechanism involved in the two principal modes of practice called Trancework and Dreamwork. The potential for healing of these modes of practice, and their potential to alter reality, purify one’s perception, and esoterically become part of the ‘half hidden’. The significance of parallel or alternating states of consciousness. An outline of the dangers of the work and the do’s & don’ts for getting started.

Practice: Analysis of strengths and weaknesses, start of the journey in the meadow, autosuggestion and intention to remember dreams, meditation on the first symbol.

Theory

Introduction

We are born into the world with an operating system that is composed of 100 billion neurons, about the same number as there are stars in our galaxy. The moment we are born, these neurons immediately start to interweave and form meaningful patterns and groups that form the basic supporting structure of our reality. The evolution of the brain took place from the lower brain stem to the midbrain and then to the forebrain. In this Vision Quest, you are about to retrace the steps of evolution and discover one of the most profound ways in which we can shape reality. Vision Quest is a mission that has been practiced by alchemists, shamans and magicians through the ages. It is a mission that will lead to hidden planes of existence, with you becoming one of the ‘half hidden’ endowed with the ability to see that which is hidden to others.

This is a central theme in the Hermetic tradition - the way we define and shape our reality. We are aware of the ways we consciously shape our lives with our daily work and effort, and perhaps vaguely aware of the impact of our sub-conscious drives and limitations in this process. To explore and to search our world requires us to constantly project our mind forward in time in order to predict what lies ahead of us and thereby maximise the potential of our opportunities and experiences. Our most basic search concerns the pursuit of our specific needs for food, shelter and sex. We are motivated to keep moving, looking, hearing, feeling by those needs and throughout our search our mind is not just registering what happens in our immediate environment, but actively shaping what it sees, almost from the very beginning. Through our imaginative (predictive) faculties we move forward into the future predicting, projecting and intervening, and then again predicting, projecting and intervening again and again¹. The incoming information and energy is broken down for analysis bit by bit; and the outgoing information and energy is assembled bit by bit in sequences.

However, the role of the unconscious in this process remains largely unexplored. Although, as you will see later, it is precisely that part of us that interacts most directly with the canvas of the world around us. In this Quest you will get in touch with the core elements and mechanisms that act in this process, and uncover an inner faculty of intuition and wisdom, as well as a measure of

¹ Loye, D., *The Sphinx and the Rainbow*, (Shambhala, 1983), p.112.

positive influence on the outcome of manifestation in our daily life. Israel Regardie has eloquently summarized this as follows:

“The entire object of the Art is the uncovering of the inner faculty of insight and wisdom, the ‘essence of mind which is intrinsically pure’, and the removal of the veils intervening between the mind and diverting it from its hidden root. Fear and anxiety give rise in early life to automatisms and compulsive behavior, to what might be called a shrinkage of the sphere of consciousness. It sets up an involuntary habitual contraction of the ego instead of a full-hearted easy acceptance of whatever may come in life, be it joy or sorrow, pain or pleasure. Continued sufficiently long, this attitude develops into mental rigidity, into a closed and crystallized conscious outlook, complacent and narrow, in which all further growth is impossible. The result is that all spontaneity of intellect and feeling is thoroughly eliminated from the realm of possibility. Consciousness may become developed to a very high degree - to the point where it becomes clear, inventive, trenchant – it becomes so, however, at the expense of life itself. Such a development is at the expense of flexibility and elasticity. Its cost is the loss of all that the underlying and dynamic unconscious aspect of the psyche implies – warmth, depth of feeling, inspiration, and ease of life and living.”²

The two most dynamic states of consciousness through which we may alter our mindset and the ensuing reality is through imagination and dreams. Those who have understood the tremendous potential of these two modes of communication between the internal and the external worlds, have developed techniques to bring this communication within the grasp of the conscious. The work to perfect these forms of communication are called “Trancework” and “Dreamwork” respectively. Trancework (also abbreviated as T-work) departs from the conscious state and ventures into the unconscious. Dreamwork (also abbreviated D-work) departs from a certain vantage point in the unconscious which one then tries to illuminate by the conscious.

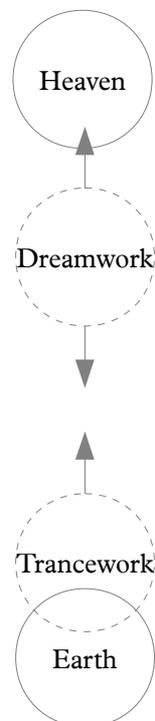


Figure 1: Relation of Trancework and Dreamwork

² Regardie, I., *The Philosopher’s Stone*, (Rider & CO., 1938), p.16.

Trancework

In our Western culture the rational mind is valued above other modes of consciousness. The conscious mind likes to be in control. However, the conscious mind is limited to the single thing it focuses on, whereas the unconscious regulates all kinds of processes at once. Consciousness is a recent evolutionary acquisition, and its function is rather labile and limited. The unconscious on the other hand, is seen as an "...intelligent, complex level of mental functioning which appears to retain certain ego functions possessed by the conscious mind..."³ while at the same time it is not affected by some other functions of the ego. Through trancework we can utilize and activate the potential of that unconscious (and subconscious). The study of trance involves a "turnaround", where instead of a progressive exploration of the world with the conscious, the student turns his/her attention inward, to the secret within. The methods to induce trance follow the same principles as that of other altered states of consciousness like meditation, sensory deprivation, etc. In principle, two steps can be discerned: 1) attention is fixated; 2) the narrow frame of reference is shattered, shifted and transformed.

Trance can help to temporarily free the unconscious from the limitations of the conscious, make beneficial links and associations, and can offer possibilities for healing and learning. Think of it as a secretary's computer workstation. During trance, the operator (which is the conscious mind) is temporarily logged off, which allows the software (unconsciousness) to be upgraded or tweaked. Normally software is obtained from an outside source such as an app store, but in our analogy we would say that the software is largely programmed by our experiences in society and its cultural standards or attitudes. But by logging off the operator for a moment, the program can be optimized at its inner core. Once this is done, the conscious can take over again and the whole system works more efficiently for both the operator, and the system. Trance is the mediator between the software and the operator.

Trance is something that is part of everyday life. Everyone is occasionally absorbed in a moment of contemplation or inner pre-occupation or day-dreaming. Under trance the individuality can flourish; it is the essence of creativity and personality development. In that light, Milton Erickson also uses the term "metacommunication"⁴. The unconscious is closest to our true nature, and thus to God. As M.D. Yapko put it in his book *Trancework*: "The strength of doing Trancework comes from undefinable sources within each human being. Whether these are termed 'unconscious', 'inner wisdom', 'the God within' or some other equally ambiguous name, there is a remarkable potential in each person that surfaces during those states of absorption called 'trance' that one can readily appreciate"⁵. It is important at this point to realize that the unconscious exists both on the level of the personal and the collective. In both these levels, sub-units of consciousness can be discerned. These are called 'agents' or 'intelligences'. The most important archetypes or agents of the collective unconscious govern the intelligences in our personal unconscious. This is an important aspect of the hierarchy of the inner world to remember.

Vision Quest builds on a formula that has been transmitted by Philosophers through the ages, mostly from mouth to ear. It is unclear where the tradition originated. One of the older records of the tradition is found in the Temple of Luxor in Egypt, which was built in 1400 BCE. In Egypt and India, as well as later in the Gothic period of Christian cathedrals, the temple was a book revealing an esoteric teaching. *The Temple of Man* reveals that the Egyptians at that time were deeply involved in the study of the mechanism of the mind and its anatomy. On the basis of the research of Schwaller de Lubicz, we can conclude that the temple reveals a deep knowledge of the anatomy of the cerebral organs and their function⁶. Through Trancework and Dreamwork, we will get a closer understanding of ourselves and the world around us. This will involve a form of inner healing as well as the potential to heal others or to shape the reality around us as we tune in to the creative interaction between the intelligences of the collective unconscious of the 'manifested' world as we perceive it.

Elements of this tradition have surfaced in writing as well, for example the 16th Century alchemist, physician and philosopher Gerhard Dorn has left a number of books that are evidence

3 Erickson, M., Rossi, E., Rossi, M., *Hypnotic Realities: the Induction of Clinical Hypnosis and Forms of Indirect Suggestion* (New York: Irvington Publishers, 1976) p.13.

4 Ibid, p.68.

5 Yapko, M.D. *Trancework: An Introduction to the Practice of Clinical Hypnosis (2nd ed.)*, (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1990), p. xxi.

6 Schwaller de Lubicz, R.A., *Le temple dans l'homme* (Cairo: IFAO 1949).

of of a journey deep into the mysteries of the inner planes.

“This castle of inner truth will destroy many people; it is a cheap thing, mostly despised and even hated. But one should not hate it, but rather love it; it is the greatest treasure, it is loving to everybody and hostile to everybody. You can find it everywhere and practically nobody has ever found it. Change yourself, the heavenly wisdom says, from dead philosophical stones into living philosophical stones, because I am the true medicine and I change everything which cannot exist into something eternal. Why are you possessed by madness? Through yourself but not from you, is everything which you need and which you wrongly seek outside.”⁷

Some aspects of Dorn's work, referring to what we have called Intelligences, will be dealt with in Stage 3, when we get into a concept that has more recently been called “The Society of Mind”. Another three centuries back in history, there was Ibn Arabi, whose vast surviving body of work contains profound visions of the Inner Temple:

“I am the ripe garden and the plenitude of harvest. Now raise my veils and read what the inscription within me contain! And what you look for carefully at in me, place it in your book and preach it to those you love!”⁸

More recently, elements of this tradition has trickled down to the academic world and the field of psychology. Carl Happich elaborated a method in the first half of the 20th century⁹, which utilized a number of predetermined scenes such as a meadow, a mountain, and a picturesque chapel, as points of departure for both diagnostic and therapeutic purposes. The participant would report their experiences from this prescribed visualisation afterwards to the guide. The main goal was spiritual integration. Research into shamanism in the far corners of the world confirms the universal formula that is preserved in the Inner Work practices by priests and shamans¹⁰.

There are a number of other works that bear witness of a tradition that has been transmitted largely underground, but of which elements have surfaced from time to time in its original form.

The above is mentioned in order to give a preliminary frame of reference about the history of this almost forgotten tradition. In the Western stream of that tradition, the broader science of this field has been labeled as Hermeticism, which encompasses the entire mixture of Hermetic literature, qabalah, alchemy, astrology, and magic. The name stems from the god Hermes Trismegistus. He was seen as:

“... an Egyptian sage of remote antiquity whose knowledge of both the material and the spiritual world and their interrelationship were of great help to get some control of the vicissitudes of life and to bring the soul into harmony with its divine origin. Though his name shows that the Greeks saw some correspondences between this sage and their own god Hermes, the figure of Hermes Trismegistus was in reality firmly rooted in the religious soil of Egypt. Already in the 5th century B.C., Herodotus identified the Greek Hermes with the Egyptian god Thot ...”¹¹.

How far the tradition goes back is not clear. Alchemy has been practiced since ancient times; according to legend by the Lemurians at first, who later carried it into India. Some dare trace it aeons back, even to what in Hindu time-units would be the beginning of the present kalpa.

7 Dorn, G., *Speculative Philosophy (Volume I of the Theatrum Chemicum)*, 1602.

8 Ibn Arabi, *Futūhāt al-Makkiyya*, 1329, Vol. 1.

9 Happich, C., *Anleitung zur Meditation*, (Darmstadt: Rother, 1938).

10 C.f. Merkur, D., *Becoming Half Hidden: Shamanism and Initiation Among the Inuit*, 2nd (revised) edition, (London: Garland Publishing, 1992).

11 Hanegraaff, W.J., Faivre, A., van den Broek, R., Brach, J.P., *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (Leiden: Brill 2005).

Fragments of books under authorship of the great Rāmacandra¹² have survived to this very day. Through the rise and fall of many races, alchemy found its way through history in lighter and darker periods, having one of its golden ages 125,000 years ago in Lemuria, practised by the lesser gods and the most advanced men of that race. Before Lemuria sank beneath the waters of the Pacific, it was carried into India, where it has been practised until today. The Atlanteans, however, also practised the Art. They carried it into Northern Africa with the submersion of Atlantis.

The Egyptians were the heir of this knowledge. With the fall of Indian culture in one of the more recent equinoctial cycles of evolution, the best of the race travelled westward and met the custodians of the Atlantean knowledge, and the knowledge of the two races was combined. Then finally, in the present cycle, when intellectual darkness settled on Europe towards the beginning of our current era and through the subsequent rule and censorship of the church, Arabia became the custodian of the Lamp of Hidden Wisdom.

In addition to the writings in stone that were left by the Egyptians, Arabian manuscripts probably provide the most 'original' of sources, and the Inner Garden Foundation gratefully draws upon that heritage, most notably with regard to the Inner Work. Today, the true nature of the Alchemical tradition is known by few. A steady stream of books is becoming available on the subject today, but one will often find they excel in superficiality or romantic superstitions. The discredit done to Alchemy in the last centuries has firmly marked the Art in a deleterious way. However, as mentioned, a turn towards the better is observed in the current Age of Aquarius, and its pioneers are ready to move onward, forward.

The Inner Garden Foundation is fortunate to be able to draw on the valuable resource of an ancient line of Alchemical transmission. Through the kind patronage of the Elder Brothers, the foundation has access to the Arabic teachings as they were before the dark ages of growing ignorance. We therefore honour the Masters of old, the Poor Knights of Christ and our Muslim Brothers of the House of Wisdom, the 'Bayt Al Hikmah'.

We advise against starting a literature study based on the above. 'Head knowledge' at this point will only form extra baggage that will more likely hinder than help you along the path. Soon enough you will be able to tap into the universal source that is accessed through the current of this initiatic tradition. You will then begin to realize the value of answers gained by introspection. It is much more satisfying to arrive at an answer through introspection and see it confirmed in books by past philosophers, than the other way around. None of above mentioned literature provides a comprehensive system, and none explain the crucial mechanisms of the 'reality machine'. This is also apparent in popular movies like *The Secret*. It does present an important truth in very general terms, but largely passes by the crucial mechanisms to arrive at the truth. It presents a "black box" so to say, and fails to address the common pitfalls. Through this Vision Quest you will arrive at a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that are involved. However, it will primarily be up to you to do the work and find out the principles of this Philosophy. We have only put into writing some essential points of departure. The rest will follow from your own work and private correspondence with your Guide, that way we stay true to the code of secrecy and the sacred rules of transmission of this tradition. Please note that "trancework" only approximates as a definition of the mental state that is involved. More accurately, several states and alternating states of consciousness are involved. In addition to the autohypnotic state of trance, with practice a parallel state of consciousness is cultivated which allows one to think critically about the visions, without resulting in auto-suggestions that cause the vision to change.

You will understand that a method of Inner Work that allows you to alter reality in a direct manner is not without danger. The method, when taught in its most raw and dangerous form, deliberately sets a course towards a mental crisis of the practitioner, which dissolves the consciousness into a state of chaos, and through which one would be able to 'reset' their individual mental system. This dissolving of inefficient structures and reunification as a more robust and powerful mental set-up is the Philosophical death and resurrection of the initiate. The purified state of mind then allows a much more direct understanding and control of reality. The movie *The Matrix* portrays some of these themes. Although this method in its raw form is very powerful, we do not recommend it, as it holds many dangers, depending on the quality of the Guide.

In this Vision Quest however we follow a more moderate and safe method that is closely

¹² According to Indian history Rāmacandra reigned at least 90,000 years ago.

approximated by the psychological diagnostic and therapeutic method of ‘creative visualization’. There is one important difference, however, and that is the existence of the initiatic element that comes with the specific symbols and images that are transmitted.

You are now more or less at a crossroad, like in *The Matrix*, where you will have to choose to take either the ‘red pill’ or the ‘blue pill’. Either you take the blue pill, put this lesson aside and decide not to start your personal Vision Quest, or you take the red, and embrace the opportunity of the Quest and depart on your journey of awakening with determination. However, once you take the red pill, there soon comes a point when there is no turning back and no easy way out, no matter how hard you may later wish to return to your previous state of blissful unawareness. The first step on the path of self discovery is to ask yourself whether you really wish to shoulder the burden of self-responsibility for self discovery. Some doors, once opened, can not be shut again.

Our method starts with the understanding that the unconscious is a fluid yet robust system, with sufficiently stable patterns inborn or ingrained over years of repetition and assimilation. Even without inducing a deliberate deep crisis, we can begin to dissolve and rectify unproductive conceptions. All that is needed is a controlled amount of stress on the system and an honesty to face that which is out of balance. Rather than working towards a single crisis to redefine the entire system, parts of the system can be gradually changed and improved. Especially in trance, there is a great potential to make effective changes, and the potential to glimpse, from the corner of the minds eye, the true nature of reality. It should be noted that change in the mental realm also follows the spagyric formula of “separate and unite”, and death and rebirth¹³. Without this, no form of initiation is accomplished. The separation of the pure from the gross involves an Herculean effort and is never without distress. Self-discrepancies motivate us to meet our personal goals and standards, but at a price: awareness of the ways in which we fall short is painful. Moreover, the quickening of the spirit can be painful almost to madness.

Dreamwork

When starting a powerful inner work method like Vision Quest, the monitoring of our dreams becomes extra important. Conflicts that we are unable to solve in our daily conscious will continue to digest in the unconscious and important clues to a particular solution will surface in our dreams. Dreams come from a source which is quite beyond our conscious control. They are “autonomous”, which means that they obey their own laws. The unconscious realm, has been in existence much longer than our consciousness. The collective unconscious is as old - or older - than mankind, whereas our personal consciousness is only as old as we are individually. Hence, the unconscious contains a greater store of universal wisdom; a knowledge superior to the conscious mind, which accumulates its experiences in but a lifetime. Deliberately and intentionally reliving and analysing your dream subordinates the ego to a psychic principle of greater importance, and this can be very insightful as well as painful.

According to popular conception, sleep and dreams function merely as rest and recuperation of the system. However, the fact is that dreams lay well beyond the field of current science and have only just begun to be researched¹⁴. One can see a parallel with electricity: the Greek Philosophers of Nature knew of it, but for thousands of years, no one regarded it as more than a curiosity. The scientific study of electricity, however, gave rise to remarkable developments. The Hermetic tradition teaches that self-healing can be performed in a state of deep reverie, trance, or states of consciousness similar to the creative state of dreaming. Your mental imagery can mobilize your inner powers. These powers have an immense potential in the healing process and the promotion of health, as well as being extremely helpful on the path of self-development.

In Vision Quest, the two main tools of the trade are Trancework and Dreamwork. You will gradually gain deeper knowledge and skills as you progress through the lessons and access different levels of dreaming. At this point, the only requirement is that you start keeping a journal of your dreams (see below).

Getting Started

The focus of Trancework is on the practical work and the individual experience. However, in

¹³ Eliade, M., *Rites and Symbols of Initiation (Birth and Rebirth)*, translated: W. Trask, (London: Harvill Press, 1958).

¹⁴ LaBerge, S., *Lucid Dreaming*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985).

each lesson we will provide some theory to help as a basis for each step of the journey and as food for thought and introspection. In this lesson, the theory precedes practice. However, in some lessons, the theory and additional keys will only be handed out after practice, in order for you to assimilate as much as possible from the inner realm, instead of from paper. You will see that your effectiveness to learn that way will increase as you progress. In order to do so, you will be taught the most effective techniques to enter trance, to ensure memory after trance, to awaken and contact the various intelligences that make up your personal conscious, and to avoid the pitfalls on the path that many Philosophers have travelled before you.

There is a natural resistance to change in each of us – the more life-changing our esoteric practice, the greater the resistance we need to overcome, and the more crafty our own mind devises reasons to justify to stop our journey. Hence, an experienced Guide to assist you is indispensable. In the words of Ibn Arabi: “Seeker Who Wishes to Find Salvation, the first thing you must do is to search out a master who will see your faults and show them to you. You may travel far and wide trying to escape yourself, but it is a master who will save you from slavery under the tyranny of your ego. Do it now, because whatever one has now is better than the best one imagines one will have tomorrow”. Ibn Arabi adds a few other important do’s & don’ts:

- Do not hide anything from your teacher, whether it be an idea or intention, be it good or bad.
- When he asks you for something or instructs you to do something, open your ears and use your mind to understand exactly what he wants.
- If you have to ask something from him, do not expect or insist upon an answer. You must tell him your dreams, but do not insist on an interpretation.

In order for your Guide to assist you as best as possible, it is best you send a small report or feedback after each step, and only continue with the next step after your Guide has given you the green light. Each exercise may need to be repeated many times, before you can move on to a next. You will need to discuss with your Guide how often you expect to be able to carry out the exercises and when he or she can expect reports from you. It is of the highest importance that you stay in regular contact with your guide, even in periods in which you feel you do not have anything to report or the natural ebb and flow of life has temporarily made it difficult for you to carry out your exercises in a regular fashion. Make sure any ambiguities are clarified before you start the next step. If for some reason you get a hold of more advanced lessons in this series, do not read them yet as this may be detrimental to your future development, and might prime you in an adverse manner.

Practice

Step 1a

Before starting, identify what stumbling blocks you may encounter and how you imagine overcoming them: your strengths and weaknesses.

Step 1b

Do not start this exercise (or any future exercise) when you are tired. Find a quiet place, and make sure you can complete the exercise without being interrupted. So unplug the phone, disconnect the doorbell if possible, turn off any music or television, etc. Keep a pencil and paper ready to make notes. Relax, calm your breathing and close your eyes.

Visualize being in a grass meadow. This is where your journey starts. Pay attention to anything you see, smell, hear or feel. The time you spend is up to you, but as a first guideline you could spend something in the range between 10 minutes and half an hour. When you have finished the visualization, note the details in a short logbook, and send them to your Guide. No detail is insignificant. While doing this exercise, do not try to interpret or intellectualize your vision; just let

it unfold. Do not direct the vision in any way or try to guess the meaning of images during meditation. The subconscious will produce images and feelings naturally. Also, do not let the simplicity of this first exercise fool you into the idea that your Vision Quest will be a breeze. The journey has only just started.

Step 1c

In the waking stage before falling asleep, remind yourself that you want to remember your dreams when you wake up. Make sure you have pen and paper or a voice-recording device within reach. Record your dreams immediately after waking up, whether it is in the morning or during the night. Get into the habit to ask yourself every time that you wake up: “What was I dreaming?”. This must be your first thought upon awakening, otherwise you will forget some or all of your dream due to interference from other thoughts. You must not give up too quickly if nothing is recalled at first, but persist patiently in the effort to remember. Make sure to keep your notes or recordings as a journal for future perusal. Dreams that may seem meaningless at first, may prove to contain critical elements of wisdom in a later stage.

Step 1d

Imagine being in the meadow again. You find a piece of paper, and drawn on its surface is the symbol of a point in the centre of a circle. Focus on the symbol and take note of whatever comes to mind. Note your findings; any images or thoughts that present themselves. By names and images all powers are awakened and reawakened.



“Wherever you turn, there is the face of God”
(Ibn Arabi)

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