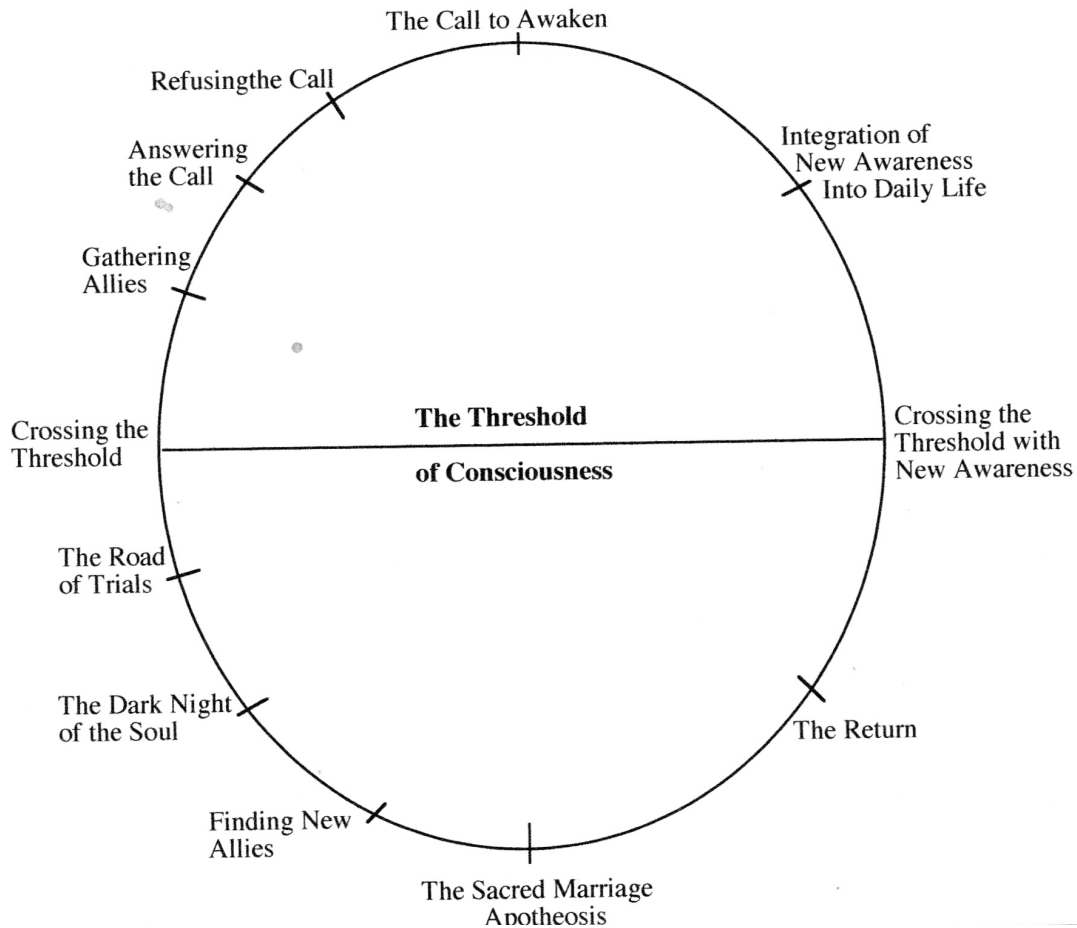


The Journey of Transformation
By
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The Journey of Transformation was created out of reading Joseph Campbell's book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. In this book, he shares his discovery of this journey imbedded in the myths and fairy tales of both Western and Eastern cultures. These were teaching stories that offered the listener a map to follow to transform his/her consciousness. Campbell brilliantly describes this journey as outlined above. I have described this journey below in a modern context.

Interestingly, Andrew Harvey found a very similar map of the journey of transformation in the poetry of Rumi and in his book, *The Way of Passion*, Harvey quotes Rumi's poem:

I burn away; laugh, my ashes are alive
I die a thousand times;
My ashes dance back---
A thousand new faces

Harvey explains the journey of transformation in Rumi's terms, "When you consent to dance and burn away, you become the creation-destruction and creation in one-

and your ashes dance back with a thousand new faces." In Rumi's map of the journey of transformation the stages are purification, expansion and union.

The Call to Awaken

This call usually comes as the result of an external event or some inner awareness that asks you to examine your life and the direction it is heading. This call can appear as an opportunity to do something new or as an obstacle that prevents you from living the way you have been. It can come at any time in your life and offer you a fork in the road where you can choose a new direction or pattern for your life. It can be precipitated by an illness or accident that interrupts your usual routine and gives you to reflect on your life. The call also can come from losing a job or finding a new job that requires a move. It also can come from reading a book, seeing movie or play, from the loss of a loved one or the breaking up of a relationship.

Refusing the Call

You may decide not to answer the call to awaken, At least not at first. Perhaps fear dominates your thinking and you decide this is not the right time to make changes. It is easy to find reasons to avoid the call to awaken. Perhaps you are in line for a promotion, or you decide to build a house or buy a car or boat. Whatever the reason, you may feel unable to breakout of your roles and responsibilities. Don't worry. If you refuse the call, it will come again and again, ringing louder and louder each time.

Some people spend a lifetime being stuck at this step of the journey. They receive the call, refuse to answer it and go back to business as usual. As the calls keep coming and getting little louder, you may find life getting more and more intense until you realize what is happening. Perhaps a family member gets sick; you get passed over for a deserved promotion or get fired from your job. If you don't pay attention to the inner call, something from the outside may force you to answer the call.

Answering a False Call

You may think you are answering the call but instead answer a false call by agreeing to do something that asks you to ignore your own needs and feelings, such as Rescuing others. You may believe you are doing what is expected of you, but you are really setting yourself up to be a Victim again. Perhaps old loyalty debts pull at you, asking you give up your own needs. You may become the chair of a committee at church, run for public office, or take a job you didn't want or even marry someone who you know will not support your spiritual growth. Only later do you realize you have answered a false call.

Answering the Call to Awaken

This usually involves some kind of risk, such as trying something entirely new, discovering your own inertia or identifying your family patterns. Answering the call can be very difficult if you have refused it many times and you may feel backed into a corner. In either case, this decision usually involves a conscious choice to open yourself to new growth and awarenesses. This decision is irreversible, although you may not realize it until much later that you cannot go back to being unconscious anymore.

Gathering Allies

At first, the new challenges related to answering the call to awaken can seem overwhelming. It is often necessary to gather allies to support you to take the next steps on your journey. The word *ally* comes from the Greek word meaning "silly or fool," so you may see your allies as silly or foolish in the beginning. Allies may also find you, rather than having to look for them. Books may fall off the shelf into your hands in a bookstore, someone may give you a book to read or a tape to listen to, or you may have a chance meeting with an interesting stranger. You may also consciously seek allies by joining a class, a support group or getting into therapy.

These allies help us realize that we are on the right track and encourage us to become more awake.

Crossing the Threshold of Consciousness

When we have gathered enough allies, we must risk crossing the threshold of consciousness into the unknown. This has been described in some myths as a crucifixion or dismemberment. This usually requires a leap of faith, to do battle with your inner demons or fears that tell you are doing the wrong thing. There are usually a number of different thresholds to cross before you can take the leap of faith into the unknown. The first is the *silliness threshold* that involves the fear of looking foolish to others. Another is the *sanity threshold*, or fearing you might go crazy if you leap into the void or that you will fall into a "black hole" and never return.

The *knowledge threshold* involves a fear of discovering something new that might invalidate the way of see yourself or the world. The *trust threshold* reflects your vulnerability and a fear of being hurt. You may also experience a *love threshold*, where you fear that you will lose the love of friends and family if you cross the threshold. Finally, you may find a *survival threshold* looming in front of you, fearing death or abandonment.

The Road of Trials

After the decision to cross the threshold into the unknown is made, you are immediately faced with the road of trials. These tests of your courage and commitment force you to rely on your newly acquired internal resources to handle the tests you encounter. There is no time to look back, to consult your notes, to think it over or talk to a trusted friend. The decisions must be made quickly and decisively.

The Dark Night of the Soul

Sometime during the road of trials, you may have to endure the dark night of the soul when the bottom literally drops out of your world. This might involve the death of a loved one, the end of a career, a betrayal in a close relationship, a serious illness or an accident that tests you beyond anything you have ever experienced. If you enter this stage fully you usually emerge from this experience feeling much stronger and more integrated.

Gathering New Allies

The kind of life-altering events around a dark night of the soul often help you attract new allies. The friends from before your shift in consciousness will probably seem shallow and unable to understand your despair. This step gives you an opportunity to go deeper into yourself to seek the meaning of your Dark Night of the Soul experiences. Some people return to therapy, travel, find new soul-partners or develop new interests and activities.

The Sacred Marriage

This very special step in your journey begins when you begin reclaiming your projections. It helps you develop a sense of inner unity between your masculine and feminine parts that helps you integrate your power and your love. It is described as the willingness to go on "internal power" and to consciously direct your life, instead of worrying about the opinions and reactions of others. It is also described as the "psychological birth," or the birth of the individuated individual. In many sacred traditions, this step was ritualized and celebrated as a major step toward deeper consciousness.

The Apotheosis

This step involves casting off the False Self that you developed earlier in life in order to please others so that your Higher Self and lower Self can merge into your True Self. At this point, you have dealt sufficiently with your residue of developmental trauma and can feel compassion for yourself and your parents. This is a time of inner healing, a time to move out of old Victim or Rescuer roles and build healthy

relationships with friends and loved ones. It is truly moving into the dimension of life where your heart opens fully and you feel the flow of deep feelings of love and compassion.

The Return to Consciousness

The transformational journey often seems complete at this stage, but actually this is only the halfway point. This in some traditions is described as a resurrection. Your task in the next stage of your journey is to be able to take all that you have learned during your inner journey and integrate it into your everyday life. In other words, to "get on with it." This is not an easy task, for the everyday world still contains all the traps and family patterns that can lull you back to sleep again or pull you off center.

There are also unexpected costs to you for gaining access to your depths. Your friends and loved ones may not understand your experience or you may be tested and criticized by your peers about your new beliefs and visions for yourself. They may work very hard to get you to return to the old Drama Triangle dynamics. You also may find that the outer world that was once very comfortable to you now is experienced as very common, ordinary, dull and banal. You may even wish to retreat into the comfort and safety of your rich inner world. To put it simply, it becomes incredibly more difficult to live in the everyday outer world after having lived fully in your inner depths.

You must bring the knowledge from your inner depths back to the everyday world and learn how to integrate your inner and outer worlds. Crossing back over the threshold of consciousness into the outer world can activate some of the same fears that you had when you "crossed the threshold" the first time and took your leap of faith into the unknown. You may fear that people will think you are weird or silly for wanting to pray, spend an hour or more a day in meditation, write in a journal or do other strange daily spiritual practices. You may also fear that the split between your inner and outer worlds will drive you crazy or if you go into the outer world, you will lose contact with your inner world again.

Becoming The Master of Both Your Worlds

The last step on the circular journey is to become the master of both your inner and outer worlds. This means developing a "passport" that allows you travel back and forth over the threshold between them. At this stage of the journey you can enter your rich inner world, harvest your riches and bring them with you back into your everyday world. It means being able to navigate the interdependent world between oneness and separateness, free of major splits in your consciousness and the projections that go with these splits and free of your developmental trauma and the traps of the Drama Triangle.

This circular journey can be seen as one large life journey or as many smaller journeys that occur in your lifetime. As Rumi suggests, you may have to die a thousand times in order to reach the end of this glorious journey of transformation.