

Quintessence : The 5th Way

A Practice of Intimacy with the Wild World.

Depth psychology has heralded a way of understanding ourselves in relationship to life ensouled here in the west that we haven't seen and explored for some time. Far from new, this approach to co-participatory relationship is a human birthright, cultivated and celebrated worldwide by in-tact, healthy cultures. As women who have chosen to walk the path of soul, we've simultaneously chosen to dance through the middle world in a way that includes and traverses underworld consciousness. Soul and the underworld are synonyms. The underworld is best accessed via the mytho-poetic imagination - the part of us that sees deeper, and is in communication with, all things unseen by the naked eye, unproven by the rational mind. This terrain is what Steven Buhner refers to as the metaphysical backdrop of the world. It's what James Hillman refers to as the soul of world, and Thomas Berry the dreaming of earth.

As we walk forward on our path, following our thread, we continue to intend to live, act, and choose based on our relationship with soul. As you know, this depth dimension is transpersonal. It's about you, and it's about more than you. Your gift, and your offering of the gift is a gift for the whole. It's about how we can best participate in the great creative project of our time. In many cultures, it is the medicine men and women - the shamans, who hold this position for their people. These are ones who remind their communities of the delicate balance of relationships that shape our worlds. They are the mediators and the bridges between the seen and the unseen. They encourage their people to honor their ancestors, to listen to the wild world, to look at things sideways as they are not always what they seem.

Today, this way of moving through the world is no longer the work of a few. It is the work of all of us as we evolve and change. As the world herself is demanding a greater participation and remembrance to counteract the forgetfulness so present in our world today.

Over the next few weeks, your task is to journey out onto the land as much as possible, and engage in the following practice that leads us into the dreaming of earth. I call this work, the quintessence or the 5th sacred way, which is itself a state of consciousness. As women who have dedicated themselves to service through the offering of the gift, you may wander and listen with a question or longing in mind. Remember, questions about you and your personal life are fine, but listen equally to what the Others have to say about their place, their concerns and their dreams for the whole. This is equal participatory relationship.

Here is how it works:

Shift your consciousness through focusing on your breath, or by burning sage, playing your instrument, singing, or exercising. Do this at least for 7 minutes which is enough time for the brain to shift frequencies.

Wander until someone catches your eye. Could be a whole landscape, or a mountain, or a single songbird, or even something “man-made” as these things too have soul and life. Ask permission to be in relationship - a conversation with that one. Then move through the following...

1. Full Presence Sensing - With your eyes soft focused on the other, begin to drop into your full sensory experience. Notice everything - how the wind feels, the sun, the ground under your feet, the light behind your eyes, the taste in your mouth, the state of your inner body, etc and so on. Give yourself time. Your only task is to feel fully - to become so present to the other via the wisdom of your body that all else falls away. There is no where to be. Nothing to ‘do’ but engage in full presence.

You may, at this point, enter into what David Abrams called direct, pre-reflective ‘knowing’. You may all of sudden know something about this other, and what this other is communicating to you. Plants often speak to us this way and our ancestors learned the medicinal qualities of the plants from the plants themselves. Pre-reflective means you’re not thinking it through or reflecting on it. You just simply know.

Full presence sensing can give rise to the next focus:

2. Full Bodied Feeling - The longer we're present in our bodies with another, the more that full presence can touch us emotionally. Notice what emotions are present as you're with the other, with your gaze and your presence so focused on them. What alights in you? What emotions? Can you make the most subtle part of your experience amplified? Be with what arises no matter the value judgement your mind may make. There is wisdom here - communication, an exchange. Is it your emotions you are feeling, or the Others?

3. Deep Imagination - Sensations and feelings give rise to images - often simultaneously. You begin to see things in your minds eye. Colors, shapes, characters, movement etc. Notice what is there in exchange between you. Remember, this isn't your mind making anything up. This is a communication. Treat it as such. Don't disregard what the other may be saying.

4. Heart-Centered Thinking - Finally, sensations, feelings, and images can become meaningful to our heart-minds. We can begin to make sense of what is being shared inter specially. This may land with an 'aha!' This is not effected, or really rationalized, but the minds too have their deep wisdom that we welcome here in this process of entering the world underneath the world we see.

The collapse of this 'system' as individual parts is the Quintessence - the 5th way that is as if we've slipped beyond the veils and entered into another state of consciousness entirely. From this place, when well-practiced, you can move through the world, in exchange with everything, in intimacy with all of life ensouled. Take time to feel the fullness of this way of moving and being. Let information arise and land and integrate.

When you're complete with this practice, offer gratitude through your breath, or a gift of song, or a bio-degradable offering. You may want to cross a threshold back into your everyday consciousness - the one that enables you to walk or drive home safely.

Practice this as much as you can. You may find your inspiration unbounded, your creativity free, and a greater, more fulfilling sense of place in a network of relationships. So mote it be!