

## From Vision to Reality – the journey of a thousand miles...

*Hence always rid yourself of desires in order to observe its secrets;  
But always allow yourself to have desires in order to observe its manifestations.*

~ Lao Tzu

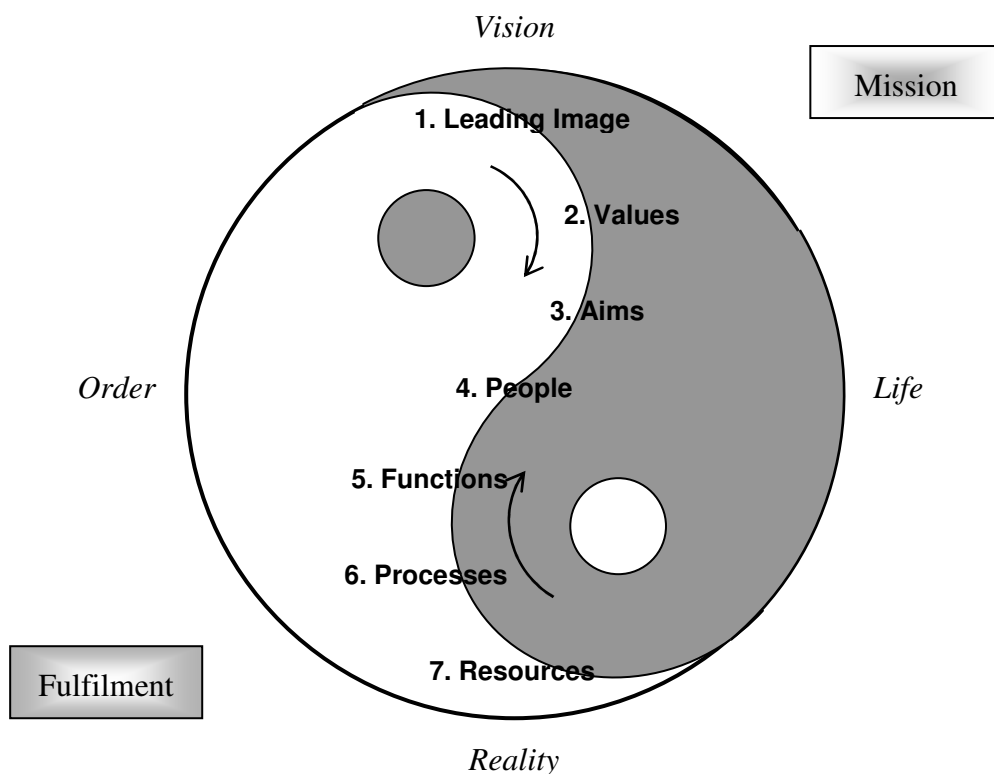
*The human being can only develop in the creative process through engagement with material. He is, after all, not an absolutely spiritual being. He is embodied...*

~ Joseph Beuys

The dynamic form of the Tao provides the field for what is presented here, not as a specific symbol of belief but as a representation of the interpenetration of vision and reality, and of the reconciliation of opposites through a third element that manifests through movement. In this sense, it is a 'religious' (*re-ligare* = to bind together again) symbol of integration.



The pathway outlined here in relation to this symbol has been developed from the work of Bernard Lievegoed and his colleagues. It has been my choice to use the Tao as a field-form opening up between the polarities of *Vision* and *Reality*, and between *Order* and *Life* – that is, between the tendency to impose formal structures, and the tendency to spontaneously live out our impulses. This polarity is also identifiable in Taoist terms as *ch'iang* and *jou* (*ch'iang* = strong, forceful; *jou* = supple, yielding). The seven steps on this pathway can be represented as follows:



The *Vision* appears in the field out of the 'depths of the heights'. It is always individualised through the minds of particular people. Rising from below to meet this impulse, both testing its validity and giving it substance through the earth's resistance, is *Reality*. In this initial encounter, through forming the *leading image*, *values*, and *aims* (as overall direction), a sense for *Mission* develops. This Mission will either engage *people* or it leaves them cold. Its *Fulfilment* comes about as a result of the community of committed individuals shaping effective *functions* (organisational forms), *processes*, and the utilisation of *resources*.

### *The Seven Steps*

Vision originates in the spirit, but initially in a kind of 'blind spot' – we cannot see its origins in the person of initiative until it is articulated. This is represented by that dark focal point of consciousness in the light 'head' of the Tao. And at the opposite pole, what becomes of it is apparent in matter and its ordering into resources, and is there illuminated by the reflective light of consciousness – here, ultimately 'seeing is believing'.

What is first conceived as vision is the light chosen to live by – everything stands beneath this star, which tells us *why* we are undertaking this particular challenge. As a true vision it is to be made perceptible, and it also bears an impulse – therefore it can be called a *leading image* (an evocative phrase coined by Mira Companions for Development).

The illuminating principles of the vision are then clothed in whatever *values* are formulated to guide behaviour and action – here are found all the attitudes that inspire the way to live and work, telling us *how* we intend to conduct ourselves. From our values we create policies and procedures. Values need to be manifest in action – it is important to not only articulate a particular value such as 'caring', for instance, but also to consider just what caring looks like as a behavioural phenomenon when practised – how will we know when we experience it?

The form and content of policy and procedure arise out of *aims* informed by consciously formed values. An aim is determined whenever the impulse present in the vision or leading image seeks to work into the substance of life. Our aim can be true when we know where we stand and then look to see exactly where we want to go – we then know *what* to do. Longer-term aims may be included in the Mission Statement; short-term objectives need to be set, undertaken and reviewed in an ongoing way that forms a conscious action-learning cycle

It would be possible to take this path alone – to this point. But here our relationships with other human beings stand in the middle of the path. How we live and work – and play – depends upon encounter, and what can develop out of this. *People* therefore are at the centre of the creative process, in themselves living in the dynamic field between impulse and resistance. We can identify the *carriers* (those who unite their lives with the Mission) – the *co-workers* (who contribute vitally towards the Fulfilment) – and the *supporters* (including the customers and clients, suppliers, etc, whose associated activities make the organisation viable). The cultivation of relations amongst these people is a social art-form.

In accord with the needs arising from this world of relationships, to serve what is held as the vision, values and aims, we design organisational forms – *functions* – through which they may be embodied. These structures have to make the fulfilment of our aims possible. The human body has various interdependent organs; an organisation similarly needs particular

organs in order to function well as an organism. Clear function descriptions and mandates can provide a basis for understanding the roles, responsibilities, activities and authority of individuals and groups in their co-functioning.

These organic forms must be inter-connected and enlivened by living *processes* – we have to communicate, to connect everything, to ensure that the principle of movement keeps each process mobile, flexible, responsive to need. The policies we have formulated have to provide procedures through which these processes now bring the impulse towards fruition. A sense for timing and rhythm is critical here – in every aspect of the organisation, information-processes, relationship-processes and work-processes have to mesh together towards results.

Out of all these processes the final shape of the product – the results, the accomplishment – is crystallised or precipitated into the world of *resources*. Here the resistance-forces of the physical world provide the test – has the provision of resources (the physical and material conditions, including the enabling fluid circulation of finances) been adequately attended to? Have they been utilised well? It is possible here to readily evaluate the reality of the enterprise in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

In each stage the carriers need to develop a kind of ‘zoom-lens’ consciousness – in both directions, in and out – through which the whole and the parts are constantly borne in mind. This is the real meaning of *attentiveness*. While characterised above as a sequential pathway, the nature of the Tao is that everything is related to everything, and the movement keeps turning back upon itself even while going forward. Each stage is reflected also in the others. For instance, already in the early stages of vision, resourcefulness leads to contemplation of resources; conversely, the outcomes will reflect the heavens – or not, as the case may be. If it has been a good journey, what becomes embodied in matter will *prove* its origins – and the substantiated, grounded idea will be perceptible as a tangible fulfilment of the mission.

### *The Journey of a Thousand Miles...*

These seven steps represent the essential stages of the journey. But if we consider any single step, we realise it is formed by many micro-movements. Rudolf Steiner referred to walking as a process of *statics and dynamics* – the inter-relationship of these gives rise to *equilibrium*. In an organisation we take each of the steps through the micro-movements of consciousness and action – and in undertaking these we develop attentiveness.

Attentiveness is *presence* – to live in both vision and reality. We decide on the way, we go on the way, we notice the way we are travelling...

*The Way never acts yet nothing is left undone.*

~ Lao Tzu

