



David Bowie: The Search for the Self



INTRODUCTION

I'm not a prophet or a stone-age man, just a mortal with potential of a Superman'

David Bowie, Quicksand

David Bowie was a multi-faceted artist who explored the world of music and performance. His creative work traversed a profound path of personal growth and spiritual development.

In *The Way of Initiation*, Steiner tells us that mastery of the ego is at the heart of all human endeavour. He states that whether we are conscious of it or not, at this time in history, every one of us is engaged in this work.

To do this, one must come to know oneself, by shedding light on what is concealed in the subconscious mind. As we come to understand the subconscious energetic patterns operating within ourselves, those patterns will loosen their control over our conscious mind. As we bring ourselves into balance, we attune to perspectives through which we move closer to our higher selves.

David Bowie undertook this journey, using art and music as vehicles not just for stardom, but for a conscious exploration of the various aspects of his human self; he consciously set out on a personal odyssey of self-exploration.

The young Bowie was a voracious intellectual reader, interested in philosophy, literature, art and technology. He was drawn to the Kabbalah, Buddhism, and esoteric teachings which provided him with a framework for understanding the interplay between the spiritual and material realms.

His reading constantly reinforced for him the fact that in our time, the 20th and 21st centuries, we find ourselves in a spiritual vacuum, and that it is up to us to somehow find new ways to live authentically and with meaning. To understand what it is that lives within us. He was aware that this spiritual void very much affects young people, and that finding a new form of spiritual sustenance is imperative for humanity.

Through his artistry, David Bowie ventured into the realms of experimentation, utilising his work as a medium for embarking on a profound Spiritual Quest. Embracing a transformative path of self-discovery, his creative output aligned with his introspective journey and observations of both the individual and society.

This inner exploration not only facilitated Bowie's personal evolution but also enabled him to forge a profound artistic and musical impact on the world.



Age	Planetary influence	Biographical Summary
0		England Born in Brixton, 1947. Socially unconventional family for the time. Emotionally austere home life.
9	Lunar 0.5	The Crossing of the Rubicon saw Bowie display aptitude for dance and various instruments
11	Jupiter 1	Inspired by Little Richard
14	Saturn 0.5	School yard fight - one dilated pupil. Sets him aside from others with this distinctive look Given an education by his brother in music, literature, philosophy, Western esotericism and Eastern spirituality.
18	Lunar 1	At the time of his first lunar node, David changed his name from 'Jones' to 'Bowie' Hard lessons in love and loss. Considers taking the vows of a Buddhist monk.
22	Jupiter 2	Releases 'Space Oddity' at time of the moon landing. David's father dies suddenly and unexpectedly Meets Angela Barnett David and Angela have a son, Zowie
25 Fire Trial		Ziggy Stardust
27	Zero point	Los Angeles Cocaine addiction Living in a paranoid world of occult study and practice
29 Water Trial	Saturn 1	Incredible creative output Movie – The Man Who Fell to Earth Cocaine addiction, personal and financial problems.
31	Christ Baptism	Berlin Dedicates himself to overcoming his addiction with the help of Coco Schwab.
32		Switzerland David stopped taking on new personae and presented a stripped-down version of himself. He won his battle with addiction and took up an even more conscious exploration of his own humanness. Musical experimentation back in Berlin

Age	Planetary influence	Biographical Summary
35 Air Trial	Jupiter 3	A reformed man emerges Global superstardom
37	Lunar 2	Crisis of meaning: Bowie depressed and in an artistic vacuum.
42	Second Spring	Bowie reconnected with his muse and became artistically reinvigorated
43		New York During the mid-life crisis period, David met Iman, his future wife
45	Saturn 1.5	Proposed to Iman
47	Jupiter 4	Happily married Respected 'elder statesman' of the art world
50		Bowie Bonds – financial freedom
55		Daughter born
56	Lunar 3	His influence honoured : Voted #29 of top 100 Britons of all time
58	Saturn 2	Heart attack. Forced to slow down
59	Jupiter 5	Last live performance Grammy lifetime achievement award
60		Recouped rights to Bowie Bonds. Great financial wealth.
68		Lazarus musical
69		Released final album <i>Blackstar</i> on birthday. Died two days later.

Nature Karma	Affinity Karma	Direction Karma	★
<p>☾ <u>Theme of Moon years</u></p> <p><i>Born into both extremes of human expression: emotionally cold home life in vibrant Brixton</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ectomorph • Graceful • Respiratory Type – exceptional as a child <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prominent nose. 	<p>♁ <u>Theme of consciousness soul years</u></p> <p><i>Spiritual searching Alienation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reformed image • Global success • Creative void 	<p>♂ <u>Theme of Mars years</u></p> <p><i>reinvigoration of artistic impulse Marriage</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking to understand Higher Self • Synthesis of logical and creative thinking 	<p>♅ <u>Uranus</u></p> <p><i>Respected elder statesman</i></p> <p>Life achievements recognised</p> <p>Musical theatre ‘Lazarus’ – achieved unrealised ambition</p> <p>Used his death for his greatest performance.</p>
<p>☿ <u>Theme of Mercury years</u></p> <p><i>learning to use the art as self-expression. Sure of stardom.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiet and extremely shy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilful • Eccentric • Intellectual • Artistic • Musical 	<p>♁ <u>Theme of mind soul years</u></p> <p><i>Addiction Dystopian themes Recovery</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep immersion into exploration of society and the self <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate, poetic, mysterious. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Gentleman. 	<p>♃ <u>Theme of Jupiter years</u></p> <p><i>Financial security Artistic freedom</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spirituality • Religion and technology • Voyage of the Soul 	
<p>♀ <u>Theme of Venus years</u></p> <p><i>searching for artistic direction. Education</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual seeker • Well mannered • Determined • Promiscuous • Self-indulgent • Imaginative 	<p>♁ <u>Theme of sentient soul years</u></p> <p><i>superstardom and exploring psyche through personae</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driven, optimistic, constantly engaging in the new. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intent on experiencing all there is. • Choleric Sanguine. 	<p>♄ <u>Theme of Saturn years</u></p> <p><i>Forced to take stock Domestic Life Philanthropy</i></p> <p><u>Karmic Mission:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To know and overcome the self, to achieve mastery. • To create his own goals and values and influence societal change. 	

Primary Temperament – Choleric

David's extraordinarily strong Will did not waver in order to achieve the heights he did.
An Adventurous Hero.

At the age of 16, he determined to use his life to have the greatest adventure that was possible. There was never any doubt in his mind that his destiny was to become famous.

He pushed through the shyness he had to overcome, in order to satisfy his ego demands.

He enjoyed being on stage, and the focus of adoring crowds. He was known to go after what he wanted in a politely aggressive manner.

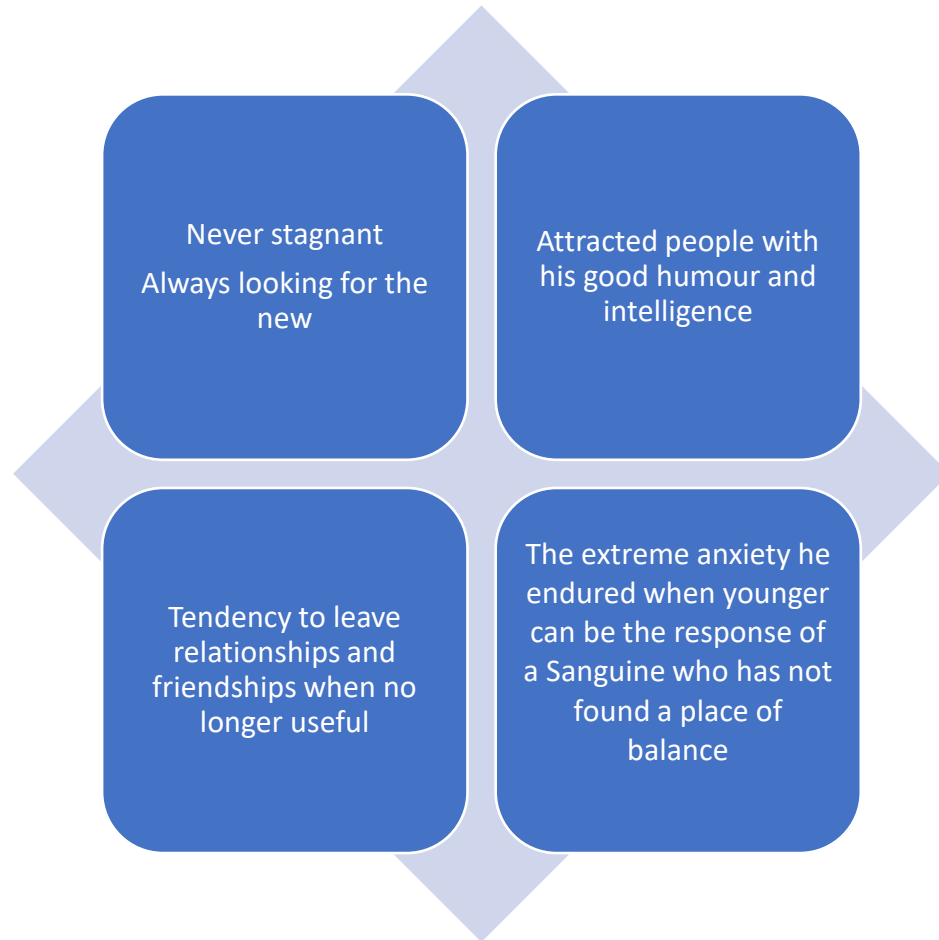
His choleric drive is what kept him abreast of the cultural wave.



"The name Bowie just appealed to me when I was younger. I was into a kind of heavy philosophy thing when I was 16 years old, and I wanted a truism about cutting through the lies and all that."

Secondary Temperament - Sanguine

David was an optimist whose enthusiasm enamored those around him.
A Philosophic Hedonistic Lover



I have always been a very curious and enthusiastic person. I just had to accept that I was a person with a very short attention span who moved from one thing to another quite rapidly. Then I got bored with the other.

Primary Soul type – The Moon

The gifts of the Moon graced David with an innate ability to absorb atmospheres and impressions.

A Reflective Preserver



Always keeping up with innovation in the arts, he remained a *Collector Preserver* over his entire lifetime.

A highly receptive, emotive and imaginative nature.

“I’m Pierrot, I’m Everyman. What I’m doing is Theatre and only Theatre... I’m using my face as a canvas and trying to paint the truth of our time on it.”



David tapped into the watery element of the unconscious, bringing forth the Lunar qualities which allowed him to reflect the Zeitgeist

His used various characters to express the Everyman; archetypes enlivened through his artistry.

Secondary Soul Type - Mercury

David was adaptable, creative and an intelligent communicator.
An Enlivening Innovator

Mercury's strong driving influence, combined with the insights the Moon provided, gave David the material that fed his characters.

He was able to change not just his appearance, but his entire outlook, with each of the characters he inhabited – a chameleon who constantly reinvented himself.

Bowie's warmth, lightness and humour were well known, as was his creative adaptability.

The ability to tune in to the cultural narrative with an open mind to understand different point of view falls under the influence of Mercury.

He was able to create a feeling of intimacy and understanding with his audience. A communicator of collective change.



Soul Trial

THE FIRE TRIAL

Steiner describes the Fire Trial as the process of purification by fire. The lesson of learning to bear sorrow and disappointment. The gaining of self-confidence, courage and fortitude.



Isolation and Alienation

Severe social anxiety
Took on characters to
overcome the fear of
performance

Devastated by the loss of
his girlfriend, Hermione,
he resolved to never let
his emotions rule him

His father died suddenly

Ziggy Stardust was
created.
Sudden overwhelming
fame.

Social Anxiety → 70's Rock God

David Bowie became an
utterly confident demi-god
on stage.

Soul Trial

THE WATER TRIAL

Steiner describes the characteristic of the Water Trial as that of finding no support in outward conditions. This must be repeated until the feet are found, granting poise and assurance. The challenge is that of discretion and self-restraint; feelings must be judged by the Intellect and controlled by the Will in order to practice equanimity.



ADDICTION

Bowie's cocaine addiction nearly destroyed him

The height of his addiction dovetailed with the height of his obsession with the occult.

His work became increasingly powerful, but he was breaking down.

Personal and financial troubles

Drew on inner strength to completely change his life

Reappeared, reformed. Now an intellectual, suit wearing authority figure



Hedonistic Rock Star → Respected authority figure

Embodied stable awareness.



Soul Trial

THE AIR TRIAL

Steiner's description of the Air Trial indicates that the Initiate must act on their own inner resources, as there is no firm ground on which to stand. The sense process must be permeated by the Soul element, allowing the Spirit to begin to materialise through the unification of Body and Soul



MAINSTREAM SUCCESS/CREATIVE DEADENING

Consciously turned to the mainstream – writing for an audience for the first time

Global superstardom

Lost sight of muse and artistic integrity to the inflated world he was building around himself

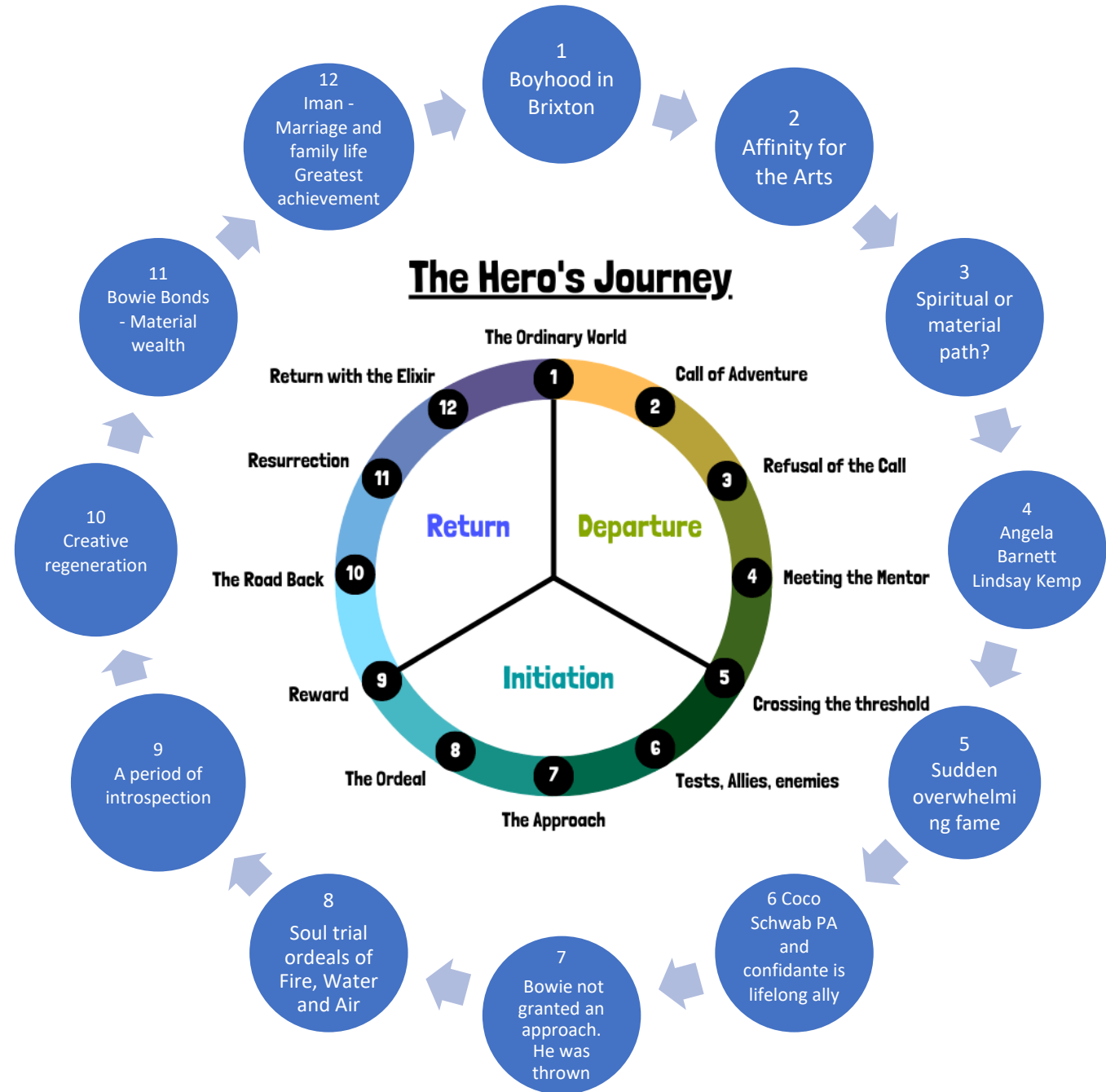
Creative void

David likened it to that of time standing still, ideas and inspiration suspended inaccessibly in the Air.

Depression

Realised the meaninglessness of fame

Destiny Moments and Turning Points



Keys and Themes

Isolation and Alienation

David experienced an emotionally cold childhood

Crippling shyness

Ironically, alienated from general humanity

"I feel that I've consistently written about the same subjects for 35... nearly 40 years. There's really been no room for change with me. It's all despondency, despair, fear, isolation, abandonment."

The Search for the Self

Open about the fact that his work was all about the quest to find out who he was at his core

Voracious intellectual reader

Explored elements of his psyche through his various characters and personae

"I turn myself to face me, but I've never caught a glimpse of how the others must see the faker – I'm much too fast to take that test" – Changes

Constant Absorption, Development and Change

Bowie's career was one of constant evolution and experimentation.

He was a 'collector' of ideas, thoughts, artistic expression, and used these to explore many mediums.

He constantly challenged societal norms.

"I don't have stylistic loyalty. That's why people perceive me changing all the time. But there is a real continuity in my subject matter.

Metamorphosis of Themes

The themes of isolation, self-exploration and constant change informed Bowie's work as he undertook his quest of self-discovery



*"I don't make changes to confuse anyone.
I'm just searching.
That's what causes me to change.
I'm just searching for myself."*

Isolation → Balance

Following the major soul trials of the first half of his life, David was able to overcome his ego and shine light on the darkest recesses of his ego. Seeing past the illusion of success allowed him to move toward a state of Balance.

Quest for Self- discovery

Bowie's work was informed by the essence of that which is found in both Western and Eastern spiritual traditions and transpersonal psychology.

Key to this is the overcoming of the subconscious.

Human, Know Thyself!

In his mid 40's, David stated he had arrived at a place of balance and was enjoying happiness



Karmic Demands

Saturn, the Karmic taskmaster, bestowed lessons around ego, overindulgence in pleasure and power. Bowie overcame these and transformed into a stable and respected authority figure.



Ego

Isolation
Love and loss
Stratospheric fame

Loss of self

FIRE



Unbridled Pleasure

Addiction

Loss of control

WATER



Power

Global superstar
Lost touch with his creative higher self
Depression

Loss of connection

AIR

“I couldn’t decide whether I was writing the characters or whether the characters were writing me”

Mission

**Bowie's Life Mission was to show us it is possible to be a 'mortal with potential of a Superman' .
He lived his life purposefully and deliberately, experiencing freedom, terror, loneliness, joy and ultimately, peace.**

It was his dual mission to:

Undertake the very individual and personal work of an initiate/adept into the Higher Mysteries.

**"I think and read about it (spirituality) obsessively.
It all tends to become the content of my songs"**

Help disrupt the foundations of societal and cultural beliefs, so that eventually a new form may rise from the ashes of the old.

**"I like the idea that I'm in there changing the plan of what society and culture look like, sound like.
I did change things; I knew I would. It feels great, and very rewarding."**

Bowie brought together a fusion of Eastern and Western philosophy.

Bowie applied himself to the teachings of Western Esotericism in order to free the self *and* engaged with the Buddhist concept of anatta/ 'no-self', in which the self is not a thing, but a process.

Karmic Hypothesis

David Bowie was a **Spiritual Seeker and Explorer of the Human Condition**. He appears as an **Alchemical Initiate**, who successfully endured threshold trials to achieve self-mastery.



From a young age, David was open about the fact that he had no idea who he really was. At 16, he determined to '*have the greatest adventure possible any one person could ever have*' in the name of his quest to find out.

During much of his teenage and soul development years, Bowie delved deeply into the Kabbalah, Hermeticism, and Buddhist thought.

His themes of isolation and alienation reflect the fact that modern humanity finds ourselves cut off from the spiritual world. Finding a new form of spiritual sustenance is imperative for humanity.

His life and work reflect his incredible journey on his quest to unite with his Higher Self.

Final Thoughts

“The one continuum throughout my writing is a real simple, spiritual search...Everything I’ve written is about *“Who is my God? How does he show himself? What is my higher stage, my higher being?”*”

Bowie’s final album, Blackstar, holds further clues for this hypothesis.

The five-pointed star on the cover is a classic Hermetic/Gnostic symbol of 'human as microcosm'. It represents Earth, Fire, Water, Air and Spirit.

Blackstar is also known as Saturn, Lord of Karma.

He stands at the gates of Initiation ready to put all who approach to the test.

Esoteric tradition tells us that once these tests have been taken and passed, a higher state of consciousness is achieved.

This purification from karma benefits not just the individual, but all humanity.

***"Look up here, I'm in Heaven
I've got scars that can't be seen I've got drama can't be stolen
Everybody knows me now"***

David Bowie – Lazarus, Blackstar



**There slumber in every human being faculties by means of which one can
acquire for oneself a knowledge of higher worlds.
Mystics, Gnostics, Theosophists — all speak of a world of soul and spirit which
for them is just as real as the world we see with our physical eyes and touch
with our physical hands.”**

Rudolf Steiner, How to Know Higher Worlds – A Modern Path of Initiation

**Don't believe in yourself, don't deceive with belief
Knowledge comes with death's release
Aah-aah, aah-aah, aah-aah, aah-aah
I'm not a prophet or a stone-age man
Just a mortal with the potential of a superman
I'm living on...**

Quicksand, from the Album 'Hunky Dory', 1971

