

MORE HUMAN, MORE DIAMOND

The background is a vibrant red with a textured, almost marbled appearance. Overlaid on this are several faint, white line drawings of human faces, some appearing to be in profile or looking upwards. A series of bright yellow diagonal lines radiate from the bottom right corner, creating a sense of movement and depth. The text is bold and sans-serif, with 'MORE HUMAN, MORE' in blue and 'DIAMOND' in yellow.

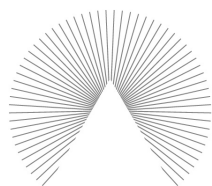
Nathan
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MORE
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A Study Guide

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Nathan Alejandro Zapata

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ONLINE RESOURCES

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To you, my friend.
Thank you for being so magical.

Poem for Piasa



Why do I mistake us myself,
When your entire summit's inside me,
Engineering miracles all around?

Just like your identity belongs,
Inherent within the bliss,
The love of all time and light,

Once we hung out and you killed me,
Saying, "Rock this triangle and throne!"
With explosions of gold old as I am,

While humbling me around eternity,
Throughout all awe with you, as you,
I was still at home together everywhere,

But being here and there already,
Who moves, has, or plays with friends,
Or helps them know this happy marriage?

As one, who for fun's sake to kiss?
For one thing, finally takes its time,
So leave forever peace to all the rest,

There's nothing more forgotten or found,
Cause invitations extend here and wide,
Tickets to ride the light that's always on.

Definition of Terms

BODY – a defined boundary holding a substance or material; a state that can be governed.

COMPASSION – actions undertaken to eliminate the causes of suffering; the acknowledgment of self-other inclusivity.

CONCENTRATION – the ability to remain intensely focused on an object for an extended period of time without distraction.

CONSTRUCTIVE EMOTION – perceived connectivity; the intuition-experience of empathy, love, or compassion; most often experienced as “tears of joy” or “tears” that arise from the suffering of loved ones or others in general.

CRITICAL THINKING – the ability to thoroughly investigate the causes and effects of an object without bias.

DESTRUCTIVE EMOTION – perceived isolation; the attempt to fortify one’s experience as apart from reality; most often experienced as “tears” of anger, depression, or pride.

EMPATHY – the acknowledgment of suffering.

IDENTITY – the source of motives; what an individual wishes to do and is capable of doing for others.

INTUITION – “inner” experiential sensitivity to vajra; ripening of yoga.

LOVE – the wish that others experience happiness and avoid the causes of suffering.

MEDITATION – is either concentration or critical thinking; or both.

MIND – the creative tool of identity; a transmitter and receiver of all possible information relevant to an identity construct.

SUFFERING – is caused by ignorance (active anti-knowledge), arrogance (distorted view of reality), and fear (distorted view of reality).

VAJRA – the reality of ever-present, all-permeating, inclusivity; freedom; sovereign identity; the direct experience of self-other inclusivity.

YOGA – systematic effort made to directly experience vajra.

YOGINI/YOGI – an individual who has directly experienced vajra.

PART ONE

Context & Conversations

Contemporary Context

Is there something inherently meaningful or transcendent in life? Does life have a purpose? What is the best way to live? Is there a path to happiness?

Asking such a question indicates the existence within the questioner of at least a small degree of unhappiness, discontent, lack of fulfillment, or sense of meaninglessness. That is, to ask such a question is to ask whether or not there are different activities that should be undertaken or different attitudes with which the same activities should be undertaken – or a combination of both. To ask such a question is to admit that something isn't quite right – to admit that something is missing or being missed. Asking the question of meaning essentially equates to asking the question of whether or not one should adjust one's behavior, values, and thinking, so as not to potentially miss the meaning in question.

What is the nature of reality? Is there a certain type of behavior that most clearly reflects reality? If so, what steps must be taken in order to re-habituate oneself to act that behavior out in the world? And what dimensions of an individual must be addressed in order to affect that change?

A constructive behavioral change model not only addresses the individual's psychological or philosophical interpretation of life, but also outlines a system of physical actions ordered in such a way as to produce the desired movement away from perceived meaninglessness and toward sense of meaning, wellbeing, or authentic contentment overall. Within this vast domain of potential models, three conversations seem more relevant than ever – the biochemical, the psychedelic/shamanic, and the religious. (I am using the word “religious” to refer to a popular sentiment currently adopted by many young people, who will often say, “I’m not religious, I’m spiritual.” Such attitude indicates, simultaneously, the longing for “spiritual connection” and the aversion to outdated “religious” interpretations of “spiritual truths”.)

The biochemical behavioral change model suggests that the cultivation of the chemical atmosphere in the brain would allow an individual to experience life in a more pleasant way. This biochemical “gardening process” includes such activities or applications as exercise, diet (“gut”-brain connection), breathing, and pharmaceuticals. This model's primary aim is to trigger the chemical response centers of the brain and to stimulate “brain hemisphere communication”. This model reasons that the repetitive stimulation of specific brain areas – whose function is to produce the necessary chemicals required for positive emotion – in addition to

synchronization of brain regions, should occur on a daily basis. This is because the biochemical effects themselves are not long-lasting. Opioids, cocaine, and alcohol have similar effects on the biochemical atmosphere and are sought out for this purpose.

In short, this model does not address any other dimension of life – ethical, existential, or otherwise. A skeptic of this system might assert that if there is no existential answer or ethical procedure necessary to move closer to meaning, who cares anyway? Why not simply relish in a biochemically saturated existence, and then die into nothingness?

The psychedelic conversation that includes both natural and chemically created substances, picks up where the previous conversation left off, and raises the stakes. Both types of substances within this domain produce a “taste of something other than the mundane” – a relief of sorts – much like opioids, cocaine, or alcohol provide a temporary respite from boredom or, in extreme cases, a total sense of meaninglessness. This conversation has its roots in the biochemical conversation, obviously, being that the changes in perception seem to be based on the pre-existence of many of these substances in the brain. The introduction or ingestion of “agents” such as DMT, LSD, cannabis, ayahuasca, peyote, and so on seem to stimulate biochemical centers that otherwise mostly lie

dormant or active in minute “quantities”.

Nonetheless, the use of these types of substances provides individuals with experiences that are often considered exponentially more “real”, “meaningful”, or insightful. The series of actions relevant to this model are quite simple: use the substances in controlled environments under the guidance of mature, experienced users. Report findings and discuss. Proponents immersed in either natural or chemical psychedelic culture have often undergone radical and lasting behavioral adjustments based on revelations of an ethical, existential, or religious nature. Because of growing interest in indigenous culture and the fact that the existential and ethical models of many of these cultures depend on the use of “mind-altering” substances, the traditional biochemical behavioral change model is beginning to open its doors to include this conversation and the possibility of its findings.

Such revelatory considerations flow quite smoothly into the third conversation, that of the religious. Within this conversation we find an interesting element whose origin cannot be discovered in the biochemical garden, but whose presence may also in fact trigger the same wide range of positive to revelatory effects. That element is compassion. Compassion still provides the most complete constructive behavioral change model yet

produced, spanning and including the entire gamut of human considerations – physical, ethical, and existential. Compassion is a “how to act and why” manual.

Compassion is not only the sincere concern for the wellbeing of others. It is the experience of that concern to such a heightened degree that discordant, “unhealthy” behavior is discarded and constructive, “healthy” behavior is adopted. This change of behavior is motivated solely by the realization that the healthier, more prosperous, and more insightful the individual becomes, the more capable that individual will be in assisting or serving others. That is, compassion is not simply well-wishing, it is a total lifestyle makeover. Compassion represents, religiously, the path to complete self-sacrifice or self-sublimation. The obvious question is why would anyone willingly endure the arduous path of complete self-sacrifice? Compassion has an answer for that too.

Conversations with My Teachers

LET'S GET REAL

Once, my teacher recounted the story of becoming a teacher. It began as follows:

“If life has ‘a meaning’, then to live without knowing for certain what it means would be a total waste of time.

“Conversely, if life has no meaning – if it’s just random and inherently means nothing – then to project some type of meaning onto it would be a lie. To falsely believe that there’s a god over there, or that the universe will save me, or to project meaning where meaning simply doesn’t exist – are all forms of lying to myself.

“I generally do not respect those who lie to me or waste my time. I neither respect nor trust those who feed me misinformation. So how is it that I can respect or trust myself, if I continue to waste my time or lie to myself?
“The real question is, ‘Am I interested in meaning?’

“Sometimes, I think I already know the meaning of life. My unwillingness to ask the question is a sure indication that I am projecting one or multiple false meanings. I may have an answer to the question, but how can I be certain the answer is correct? Have I exhausted all possibilities? Have I consulted the best sources? Have I asked the question deeply and sincerely enough?

“To think meaning is subjective is a trap that many fall for – because I am accustomed to perceiving others projecting meaning onto life, I might conclude that each projection must be subjectively true. Thinking that meaning is subjective is a severe hindrance to spiritual progress.

“If life doesn’t mean anything – or if it means something different than what I’m trying to project onto it – then I am lying to myself by believing in false meaning. If life does have a true meaning, the longer I live without knowing it, the more time I waste. The first step is getting real about the question of meaning.”

OBSERVATION 101

Continuing the story another day, my teacher said:

“The next step begins when I decide I am ready to get real about the question of meaning. It begins when I acknowledge that I might not know what the meaning of life is. It begins I am willing to admit that I don’t know if I’ve ever experienced meaning.

“But, I do know for certain that I want to get real. I do know for certain that if I’m wasting my time, I want to stop doing that. I do know for certain that if I’m lying to myself, I want to stop doing that. I do know for certain that if I’m projecting something that is not true about how I experience life, I want to stop doing that.

“So what is the next step in getting real? This step, though incredibly simple, is nearly impossible: observing myself. I say this is nearly impossible, because it’s very difficult to be willing to receive criticism about how I am conducting myself in the world and why.

“If I am ready to observe myself truthfully, I will see that I have only been doing one thing – pursuing satiation and attempting to avoid boredom. In the process of observing myself, I begin to see that there are five main targets. Those targets are:

1. The desire to live – to survive – is the easiest to see. I want to live! I want to eat food! I want to breathe air! But I've never eaten a meal that satisfied me forever. In fact, I experience the desire to eat food every few hours – and I want to breathe every few seconds! Eating food or taking a breath will never be ultimately satisfying. As long as I live, I will desire more food and more breaths of air. But I know there is more to life than just eating food and breathing air, metaphorically. Wanting more than just survival leads to the next desire.
2. The second desire is to play! The activity of the second desire is to express and experience sexuality and leisure. To satiate the desire for play, I must have freedom of movement – I don't want to be confined, put in a box, or imprisoned. I want to move, play, and experience pleasure. However, playing is not ultimately satisfying either. I will inevitably become bored of pleasure pursuit and will move to the next desire.
3. The third desire is to achieve something! It is the desire to intellectually know something – or everything! No matter how many goals I achieve, success itself also is not completely satisfying.
4. The fourth desire is companionship. This is the desire for genuine friendship, community, and

teammates. When companionship is satisfied, a new threshold is crossed – real companionship can often satiate this fourth desire for a lifetime. However, I sometimes feel that life is ‘happening to me’ – though I experience pleasant moments, I cannot seem to control when, where or why. This leads to the fifth desire.

5. The fifth desire is to become the ‘architect of the ideal life’. The fifth desire is creative and innovative and therefore more satisfying than the others. Nonetheless, it is quite common for ‘geniuses’, however inspired, to also be tormented by the energy associated with this fifth desire tier.

“But more interesting questions arise, such as: Whose drive is it to survive? Whose drive is it to eat food? Is it my desire alone? Whose drive is it to experience and express sexuality and pleasure? Is it my desire alone? Am I the only one on this planet who wants to be successful in my life? Am I the only one on this planet (in the universe!) who wants to have companionship? Am I the only one who wants to become the ‘master manifester’ of my dream life?

“The beginning of getting real is the attempt to see that, so far, I have been oscillating back and forth between experiencing satiation and lack of satiation. However, the

beginning of getting real is not to renounce or condemn satiation itself. It's not about trying to change it; rather, it's about trying to see it. The goal of this step is to see that this process is not unique to me. I'm not the only one who wants to win, and I'm not the only one who wants to avoid losing."

CHOICE 101

Continuing, my teacher said:

"Oscillation is a pendulum swinging back and forth between extreme highs and extreme lows. Acknowledging this internal mechanism gives rise to new possibilities.

"Option One: Remain in the oscillation process. It's great *as long as* I am satisfied, successful, and enjoying time with my friends and companions. But what happens when those qualifying conditions aren't present? Who of us is ever as joyful, inspired, or motivated without them?

"Option Two: Renounce the oscillation process. For anyone considering Option Two, the dissatisfied state of the pendulum swing is simply too much to bear. Trying to achieve goals, trying to have friends, or trying to maintain a relationship is just too hard and seems to create too many problems. Desire and attachment

must be the source of suffering – so I renounce those things, I become small, and I cut out the majority of the pendulum swing of the oscillation lifestyle. As a result, I won't necessarily experience such extreme highs or intensely satisfying moments, but I also won't experience so much pain either.

“Option Two exists, but it still accepts as its fundamental basis that life is a prison sentence of oscillation. Maybe it can lead to a growing sense of happiness and fulfillment, or even eradicate suffering temporarily.

“But what if I'm the crazy person who refuses to accept that the fundamental nature of life is a prison sentence? What if I'm the type of person that wants to be free? What if I want to at least explore the possibility of living a life that is more than simply the pursuit of satiation or the renunciation of natural processes? If I get real with myself, and I find that I'm that type of crazy person who can't settle for compromises of any sort, then what should I do about it? There is a third option.

“Option Three: Clearly, if I knew how to get out, I would have freed myself already. That I continue to ask the question indicates I don't know the way out. When I'm lost or traveling somewhere new, GPS is very helpful. Similarly, if I'm serious about this line of questioning, the only way I can gather any useful information is by

interacting with someone who has already gotten out – someone who knows how to get out and can show me the escape map. Luckily, I do live in a world where I am not in a literal prison cell right now, and I am free to move around and pursue what an interaction with a free person might look like. Option Three is to find a real teacher, a ‘free person’, but this is not as simple as it may seem.”

LEARNING 101

After a short hiatus, my teacher returned with the following:

“If I’ve made it this far, I must be the crazy person who just can’t accept Option One or Two. I reject the idea that just ‘growing up’ and ‘becoming an adult’ and ‘being a nice person’ is the meaning of life. I look around and see adults with relationship problems, money problems, stressful jobs, living for the weekend and the paid vacation time. That’s how life has to be? So, I reject Option One. Renunciation still seems like a viable option, but I don’t honestly feel comfortable accepting that oscillation is the baseline of reality. I don’t want to believe that answering ‘life’s question of meaning’ requires so much compromise. So I reject Option Two as well.

“Arriving at this stage, I wonder if there’s anybody else thinking the way I am. I wonder if there’s anybody else who senses this ‘prison’ – who may have even gotten out of this prison.

“I begin with the obvious – going to spiritual bookstores. There are just shelves and shelves of books with outrageous claims like, ‘Meditate with these crystals for permanent happiness!’ or, ‘Tarot will give you the answer! Your fortune and fate is in the cards!’ or, ‘Enlightenment right now!’ or even, ‘Unblock your chakras and your third eye will open and you’ll immediately know the answer to life!’ All jokes aside, maybe I decide to experiment with some of that and it works for a little bit. But it doesn’t take that nagging sensation away.

“One day I have an encounter with someone in a bookshop and that person says, ‘You know, this stuff is cool, but if you’re trying to avoid your pain, you’re never gonna get there with any of these things.’

“And that sticks. I begin to wonder whether that person knows something that I don’t know. So I keep going back, because maybe there’s something there. I sense it, though I don’t know what it is – there is just something about that person’s words and presence.

“When I return to the bookshop the next day, the conversation continues.

“My suspicions are confirmed, and I am told that I am correct in perceiving that there’s a prison. And I am stunned by the blunt assertion that my desire to leave the prison will never produce the freedom I seek. Just like the desire to bake a cake isn’t enough to bake a cake. I need ingredients, a recipe, an oven, and heat. I need activities – specific things done in a specific way.

“And just as you are documenting my words to you, here are my teacher’s words to me.”

“The way out is by following a certain set of procedures. But let me ask you a question – why do you want to get out of the prison in the first place? Do you want to get out because you think this place sucks and you’re surrounded by idiots? Is it because you want to leave the planet? Is it because you want to leave your body and become ‘everything’ and not have to exist in a body? Is that why you want to get out of the prison?

“Do you want to get out because you think you’re the only one suffering, and you can’t take it anymore? Or, do you want to try to get out of the prison because you acknowledge the fact that the suffering you’re experiencing isn’t unique to you?

‘The only way you’ll be able to muster the intensity to do this work is by acknowledging that there’s a problem that isn’t unique to you.’

“When my teacher tells me this, I have real problems digesting it. It’s heavy stuff. I now realize that I have met someone who’s truly free and able to help me unravel the mystery, but it seems like a lot of work!

“So I go back again, and I find that I’m beginning to approximate the space of being willing to receive criticism. I don’t feel totally open yet, but I find that I’m curious and comfortable enough. I find that I’m not alone in talking about these crazy ideas.

“So I send my teacher a first email and start asking questions. The response: ‘First of all, your ego is way too thick and your sense of self is way too small. Until you directly realize that it’s you on both sides of the wall – you’ll never get out. It’s as though you’re living with a blindfold over your open eyes and trying to tell me that you can see everything in front of you. Your eyes may in fact be ‘open’ behind that blindfold. But you probably wouldn’t choose to perform any of your daily activities with the blindfold on, given the choice. How could you see anything? Like a blindfold, the wall you’ve erected to protect your tiny, limited sense of self is preventing you from seeing that it’s you on both sides. The only way to take the wall down is through compassion.

‘Compassion is identity-enhancement surgery of the mind. The only way to learn compassion – if you want to continue with this process – is to go back to choice one and begin with the revelations of choice one – that is, learn to pay attention to the pendulum when it swings back to the dissatisfied state. Learn to pay attention to the oscillation of the life process. Learn to start disengaging with the reactionary emotions associated with the dissatisfied state. Learn to develop patience with the whole process. Learn to develop kindness toward others who are also struggling with the process. Learn to develop love for everybody who is suffering the same type of thing that you are. Go back and practice that, and then come see me.’

“I practice this diligently, and then I return when the time is right. When I go back to my teacher, this is the response: ‘Nice work. Now, go back and practice the renunciate path. Stop trying to protect and fortify yourself with comfortable things – extravagant things – the things ‘you think you like’. Start learning to cut away and live without. As you do that, pay attention – notice whether or not becoming less attached to the process and all the things you want to manifest reduces anxiety and suffering. Learn to let those things go. Go and practice.’

“I almost begin to protest and ask when the ‘real process’ will begin, when my thoughts are interrupted.

“My teacher: ‘It’s not time for that yet. You’re not quite ready. The problem is, you think you know what compassion means – but when you say compassion, you actually are talking about empathy. You don’t understand compassion.’

‘Here, I’ll give you an example: Imagine you are cooking in the kitchen when the grease on the pan catches fire, flaring up to your hand. You feel the pain of the burning immediately. Here’s the empathetic response: ‘Man... sucks for that hand. That hand must be in such pain right now! That’s terrible!’ The compassionate response is more simple. You just remove your hand.

‘See, compassion means you identify with your hand – you will always naturally protect your hand – or any part of your body – from harm, pain, or any type of suffering. It is an instinctual response – you don’t think first about removing your hand from fire, you just do it innately.

‘So tell me, do you want to get out of ‘the prison’ because you think you’re the only one suffering in it? When you can really see that this nagging ‘need to know’ is present everywhere in everyone, then we can talk about the specific procedures for taking the wall down.’

COMPASSION 101

“I take time to reflect on what my teacher last said to me. Finally I know why I want to get out.”

“Why?” asks my teacher.

“Well, in general, I’d like to help other people live more meaningful lives and have more access to clarity. But specifically, if I practice what you give me, and I’m able to get out, I’d like to be able to offer that specific teaching to anybody else who’s like me, in the future. This has been such a strange life and our interaction has been so magical and special. I’d like to be able to give that.”

“My teacher says, ‘Good work. Alright... are you ready? I’m about to give you the most esoteric, the most secret, the highest, the unsurpassed, the unexcelled, the multidimensional transmission from the galactic council. It’s called... compassion!’

“What do you mean? I say with a bit of frustration. So my teacher continues, ‘Right, So you’re not ready, because you have no idea what I mean. So let’s start with this: Okay, look, I’m a mother.’ My teacher can sense that I don’t understand this, and begins to explain, ‘Look, I’m a mother, that’s the secret! I mean – I might as well be a mother because I’ve studied everything about mothers

and I know everything there is to know about mothers – I know all the information on mothers – I can recite anything about mothers! And not only that, I visualized being a mom my whole life – I know exactly how it's going to happen.'

"So I respond, 'Uh, that's not what makes you a mother. You have to actually... have a baby. You have to actually have the experience of being attracted to some romantic situation – and conceive another being inside of you – and that might not even be successful – who knows how that happens – you have to have this shared identity experience with this other being that's inside of you, then you actually have to give birth so that it exists outside of you! You can't tell me that you're a mom. I mean, you could go through all the stages from being a baby to a teenager to a mature woman, but unless you've had this direct, visceral, physical experience of sharing an identity with another being – unless your body has also existed over there as another being – you can't tell me that you can add "motherhood" to your identity-resume.'

"My teacher says, 'That's correct. Tell me more. Let's say I did have a child. What makes a mother different than a mature woman?'

"So I run with it, 'Well it seems like if I were to be a mom and have a child, then something would shift in

my perception and that little baby would become the focus of my life. I would want to do everything I could to ensure its wellbeing. I feel that I wouldn't be able to just leave the child alone or neglect it. Something would shift in my perception where I would want to give that child my best. Maybe I'd even want to sacrifice all of my dreams, my time and money and energy for that child. Maybe I'd wanna do that.

"My teacher interjects, 'And you know that eventually that child would grow up. What would you do then?'

"I respond, 'Yeah, I know that at some point my child would have to leave home. She would inevitably interact with other children. And if I really want what's best for her, I would want her to be able to have companionship, to experience success and learning, and to eat healthy food and have a certain quality of air, atmosphere, and community. I recognize that my child wouldn't be able to satiate any of those fundamental drives – survival, success, or companionship – without other people or things.

"I can also see that I wouldn't want my child to become a violent and depressed individual and to cause problems for other people. I wouldn't want her to necessarily befriend other children who are problematic. Deliberately or unconsciously, I would help her try to avoid those situations.

“Helping me dig deeper into this thought experiment, my teacher continues, ‘Let’s go back to that last idea: what would your child need to thrive? Wouldn’t it make sense to do more than just wish that she had access to a certain quality of air, of food, of relationships, of education, and so on? You can see that your child’s ability to experience a meaningful and happy life is going to depend on those things, yes? You can see that your child’s existence depends on other things.

‘It’s just like you becoming a mom – your sense of being a mom depends on the fact of your child being there. So if you want what’s best for your child, doesn’t it actually make sense to shift your attention away from your child and toward the environment in which your child is going to live? Your child’s environment necessarily includes other kids and other factors. If you want what’s best for your child, you would try to recognize that everybody you interact with is someone else’s child. If you want what’s best for your child, wouldn’t you dedicate more than just your wishes and prayers to that child and its community? Wouldn’t it make sense to make effort and take action to create, reinforce, and refine the conditions of the community overall?

‘Those efforts are compassionate activity. That action to enhance the overall conditions, the shared experience,

the interdependent network of reality – is compassionate activity. Now, I’ve told this to people in the past. They get excited and they get attached to those words like ‘the secret transmission of the galactic council!’ You know, they’re living in this prison and they get excited and say to themselves, ‘Yeah I’ve got these secret transmissions, and I’m gonna work on this part of the wall a little bit, and then I’m gonna work on this other part a little bit, and then I’m gonna do a little over here...’ – and they never make it out of the prison! They become so focused on possessing the secret teachings, rather than the application of what I just said – which is the consistent, dedicated effort to enhance the shared reality, the interdependent network of identities! If you understand that, wouldn’t it make sense to concentrate on one part of the wall – to put all your energy and sweat into the same place in the wall? If you really want to get out, wouldn’t you find a way to squeeze out through the tiniest crack?

‘So that’s that. I’m going to go away now. You have your hammer and chisel. You have your mind. What I experience is compassion all the time. That’s why there’s no wall for me. When you learn to apply that, you’ll have your watershed moment also, and then I’ll see you on the other side.’”

IDENTITY 101

“So I have this hammer and chisel, and I have this teaching on compassion that I’m working with. And I remember my teacher saying – ‘Compassion is identity-enhancement surgery of the mind’, and ‘Compassion is the act of taking the wall down’. I realize it makes more sense for me to focus on breaking through one part of the wall rather than scattering my effort with little result.

“But I hit this section that I can’t seem to break through – I can’t figure it out. I’m struggling with the difference between compassion and loving-kindness. They seem related and I just can’t understand the difference between compassion and love. I can’t seem to make any progress on this wall – I want to have this breakthrough so I can help other people do the same! So I pray to receive inspiration.

“At the point of exhaustion, I fall asleep. My teacher appears in my dream and says, ‘Remember when I gave you the teaching on the difference between empathy and compassion? Well, what if I were to ask you this: who are you, and what are you? Are you going to raise your hand, point to it, and say – this is me – I’m this – I’m absolutely certain that all I am is my hand! Of course you’re not going to say that. You’re going to say, my hand is a part

of me. And because you identify with this part of you – so literally, so physically, so viscerally – if your hand were to be threatened by fire or something, you would instinctively try to protect it. There's nothing moral about that. There's nothing emotional about that. There's nothing mental about that. You also don't congratulate yourself for saving a part of yourself. It is instinctual and spontaneous because the identity is there. When the shared identity-experience is there, the spontaneous, responsible act that removes the suffering part from its source of suffering, takes place without any mental or emotional process whatsoever.

'And do you remember when I was teasing you about being a mom? And I was goading you on a little, to extract the wisdom in you out into expression? And you were saying – you can't be a mom by just studying it and visualizing it – you have to have the literal, visceral, physical experience, the shared experience – a part of your body has to exist over there as another being. And you also told me that if that were to happen to you, that your entire perception of what's meaningful and valuable would shift away from yourself and toward this other thing that you acknowledge a shared identity-space with. And especially if that were a little baby, you said to me that you would innately feel a sense of responsibility for that child. You, being the more developed, mature being, have an obligation to care for this thing that's a part of

you. You would happily sacrifice anything extraneous in your life. You would happily slim down, get sharp and get strong on behalf of this other thing that's a part of you.

'Do you remember when you told me you knew that in order for your child to experience companionship, to grow and develop relationships, that your child would need other kids? The quality of the companionship that your child will experience depends on the qualities of the other children. The development of your child clearly depends on other things. It's a shared identity experience.

'Remember that hike you told me about – that time you went hiking in mid August? You decided to go a little further than usual, but when you stopped to rest, you realized you didn't bring enough water. You drank the entire bottle and still felt thirsty, wishing you had thought to bring more for your three hour hike back. You forgot about the fact that your ability to satiate your own existence depended a source beyond you. Had you considered your relationship to the source of your own existence a little bit more, you might not have suffered so much on that journey.

'There's a well on my property that provides the source of all the water I use for drinking, bathing, cleaning, cooking, and so on. Would it make any sense for me to

go outside and pour poison into that well? The fact is, right now we are all living inside of the source of our own existence. We can nourish it and nurture it, or we can poison it and debilitate it. You live inside of the source of your success and your companionship – your identity structure is literally spread out all over the place, right now! Your identity – with its roots, branches, flowers – it's literally spread out all over the place right now. If you were to have a direct, literal, visceral experience of the fact that the source of your existence and your identity is everywhere, right now – then just like that, in the blink of an eye, you'd be out – free from imprisonment. You would never lack the opportunity to experience something meaningful.

‘Didn’t you say to me that your entire perception would shift if you were to have an experience of sharing an identity, literally and physically, with someone else? That you would happily offer your best in order to enhance that other thing?’

‘The difference between loving-kindness and compassion is identity. When you directly identify with ‘other’, you happily take responsibility for that ‘other’. As that process develops and you habituate yourself to your new understanding of yourself, you’re happy to continue to let go and let go and let go of all these things that you erected to protect your perceived sense of self. Soon

you'll be taking out entire useless columns of your identity structure! As you begin to undergo your own identity-enhancement surgery, your little bitty hammer and chisel will turn into something more like a diamond-tipped drill bit.

‘Once this happens, it won’t be long until we get to walk together on the other side.’”

PART TWO

Contemplative Guides & Exercises

C.A.V.E.S. Training

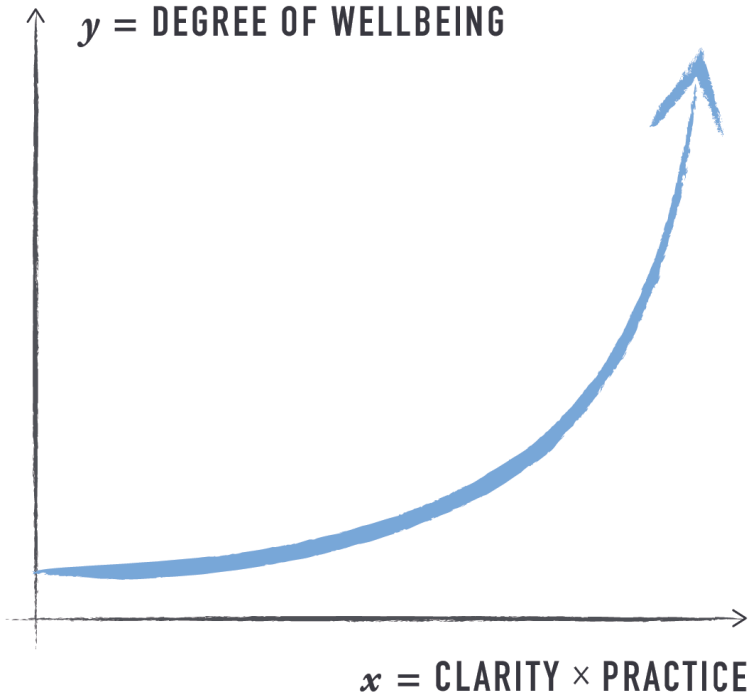


DIAGRAM 1 — “EXPONENTIAL HUMAN GROWTH”

Ancient systems of education agree that a human being is much more than a physical body, housing physical processes only. This is not to undermine the magic of the body – or to suggest that the more “subtle” components take precedence over the body.

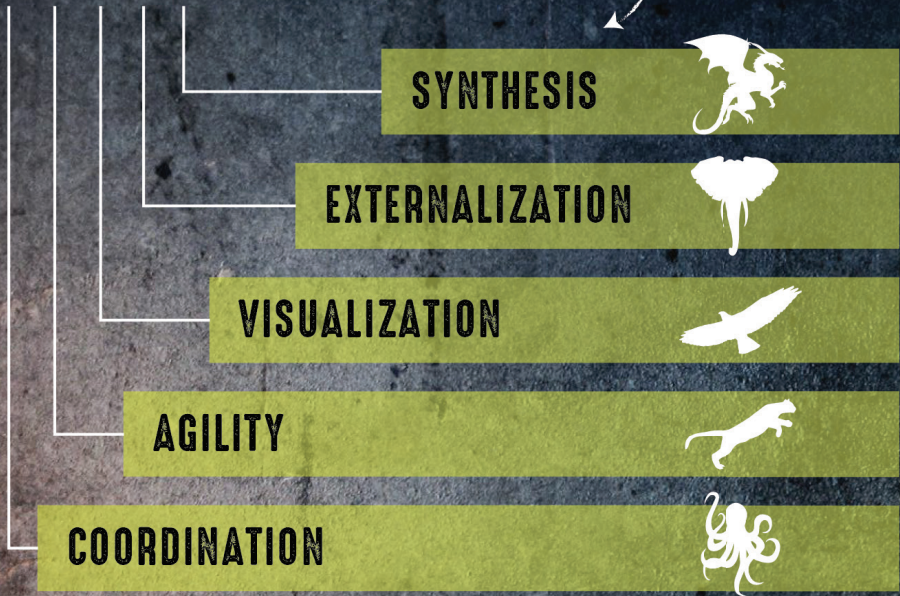
In fact, advanced study aims to realize that mind and body, “spirit” and matter, are both inseparable and indistinguishable. These ancient systems propose that movement toward that realization is the recipe for well-being and meaning. The concept of component parts, “bodies”, working with or against each other within an individual is a transformative learning concept.

A body is a container, a defined boundary holding a substance or material, or a state that can be governed. Bodies allow for measurement of the growth, decay, or evolution of qualities or substances across time.

Our physical, emotional, and mental “bodies” are constantly giving and receiving information to and from each other and the environment. Fundamental study aims to coordinate these bodies – to establish their harmonious function.

C.A.V.E.S. training system

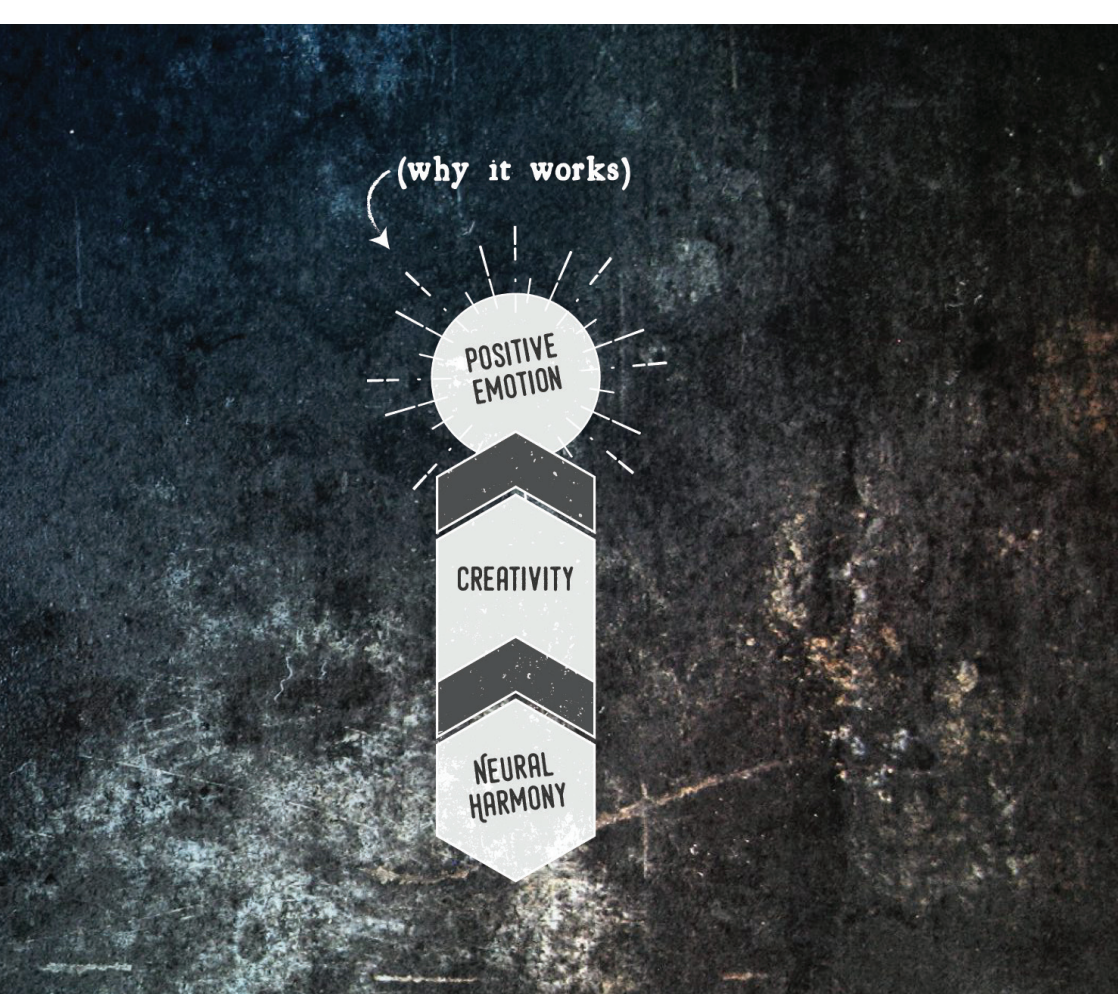
(how it works)



Strength and flexibility are qualities applicable not just to the body. Emotional and mental resolve and pliancy are key ingredients for navigating the world successfully.

Coordinating mind and body establishes network harmony, which makes efficient thought and action possible. But increased efficiency is meaningless and dangerous unless directed constructively.

Visualization provides that structure, offering a creative canvas for the consideration of how one would prefer to



express a coordinated and agile mind and body within the framework of community.

Externalization is both the willingness and ability to apply the practice of stamina and sensitivity to all personal and professional relationships.

That application – becoming more considerate within one's interactions – necessarily induces a profound, lasting shift in perspective and sense of well-being.

The Self-Other Paradox



DIAGRAM 2 — “INTERCONNECTIVITY”

If World War III were to erupt tomorrow, my ability to experience happiness and fulfillment would rapidly diminish. Conversely, were Earth to become a planet full of enlightened beings tomorrow, my ability to experience happiness and fulfillment would rapidly increase. My ability to manifest the life of my dreams depends on

how manifest others' dreams have become. At the most common sense level, my experience of life depends on the values, priorities, and psychological interpretations of others. Take breathing for example. To some, breath is sacred and is used as a tool for constructive behavioral and psychological change. To many, an entire day passes without even a thought of appreciation for breath or access to air quality.

We influence each other. We both shape and are shaped by our inner and outer shared environment. In the diagram, the dotted lines indicate the mutual, permeable influence of individuals, communities, and conditions.

As I make effort to consistently improve the health of my body and mind, I experience benefits that extend into and beyond my immediate, local environment. Empowering myself, I enhance my community. As my community thrives, the potential benefits extend back to me.

Perception informs identity. When perceiving that everywhere I look I am surrounded by friends and friendly forces, my life feels welcoming and warm.

Conversely, when perceiving that I am surrounded by unwelcoming factions and forces, I feel insecure, threatened, and so on. Perceived isolation engenders suffering, whereas perceived connection produces meaning.

SELF-OTHER INCLUSIVITY

Were I to make intense effort to locate “myself”, that one thing that really constitutes “me”, I would never find any solid, absolute thing, existing apart. I would find biological process that extend backwards into billions of years of evolution and energetic processes that will extend forwards in time into inconceivability and unknowns. I would find emotional constructs that I project outward onto my environment, based on both how I have been conditioned and how I am currently conditioning “myself” to respond to environments. I would find that I constantly qualify my perceptions as pleasant or unpleasant. I would find that those qualifications and projections are malleable and intangible. I would find that perception and projection have no meaning without an environment to which I can relate. I would find that my sense of “I” depends completely on “other”.

Am I the food I eat, the air I breathe, the water I drink – my clothes, my means of transportation, my job, the house I grew up in, or my neighborhood? Am I the genetic coding passed down for who knows how long? Am I the fact that others allow me to interface with them as a functioning entity? Am I the product of a collective, “mythological” agreement? Am I really only one of these fixed, identifiable things, or one thing much, much more than the others?

Strangely, paradoxically, my sense of “I” is a feedback loop whose origin and mutual influence is everywhere, throughout time. Becoming aware of the fundamental identity of “myself as inclusive of other” is the primary source of meaning and well-being.

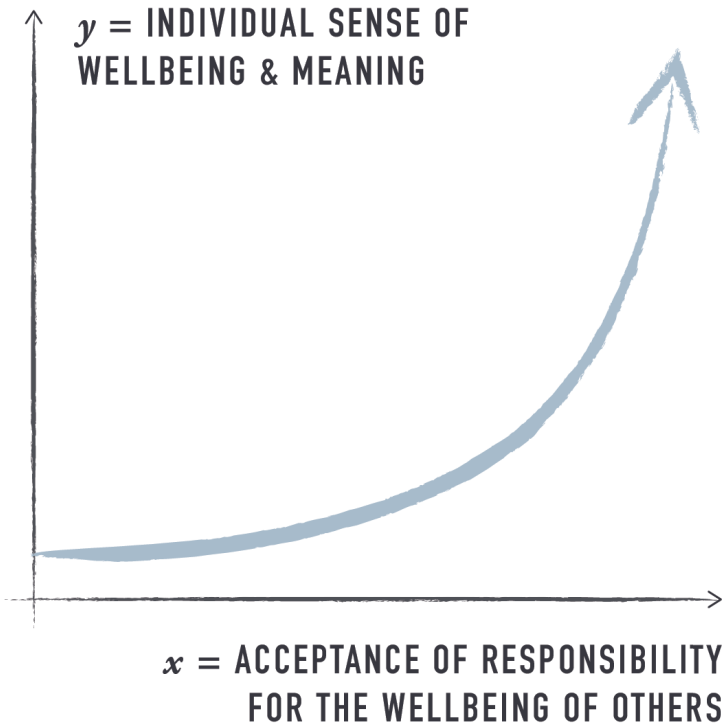


DIAGRAM 3 — “MEANING AND RESPONSIBILITY”

Compassion is a more profound depth of acknowledged connectivity than empathy. Compassion perceives any plight of “other” as “mine, right here, right now” – and is therefore unable to bear that suffering without taking immediate action to rectify its causes. We don’t pat ourselves on the back for removing our hands from fire – it is an innate response, because we acknowledge a connection to and responsibility for our hands. When authentic connection is perceived (like a mother does her child), a sense of responsibility ensues.

That which offers me the most meaning in life is that for which I feel a deep sense of connection and responsibility. Sincere study and practice aims to broaden the scope of concern and perceived connectivity, which exponentially increases the “amount” of meaning available to experience.

360° Creativity

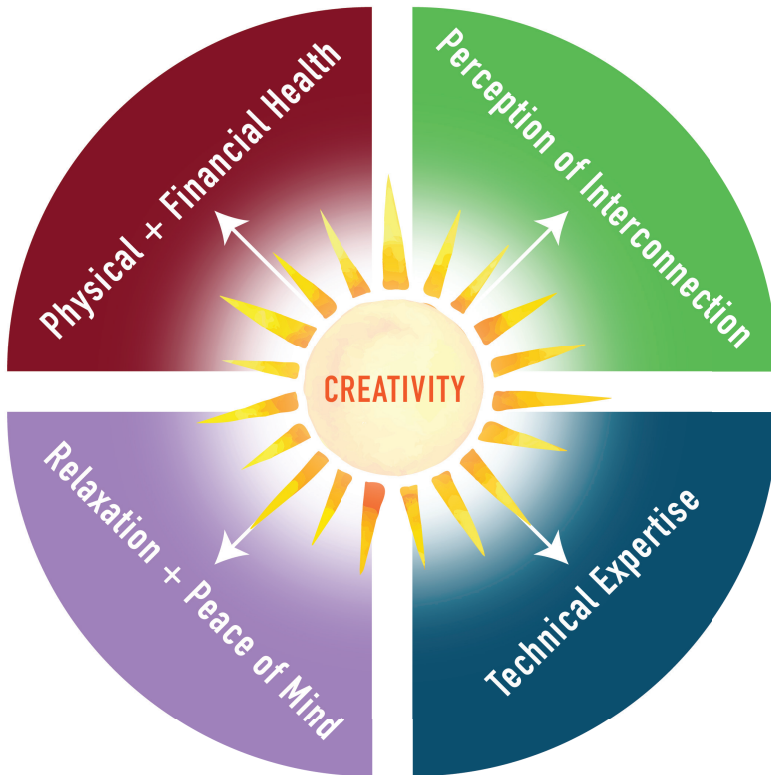


DIAGRAM 4 — “360° CREATIVITY”

Real creativity is the process of shaping one’s entire life from the inside out. In the diagram, the arrows indicate a deliberate and systematic effort to enhance the designated areas of life. Paying sincere attention to a particular area of my life reveals the degree to which that area can be refined.

A lack of emphasis or too much emphasis on one quadrant or a set of quadrants creates disjointed, disorienting life-event patterns. Where I decide to place my attention builds my physical, emotional, and mental habits. The more I pay attention to a dimension of my being – in thought and in action – the more it becomes possible to manifest the health and expansion of that dimension.

Well-being is derived from consistent effort made to establish integrity in each of the four quadrants shown. “Integral action” is effort made to enhance the health of a particular quadrant without compromising the health of any other quadrant.

“PAYING” ATTENTION

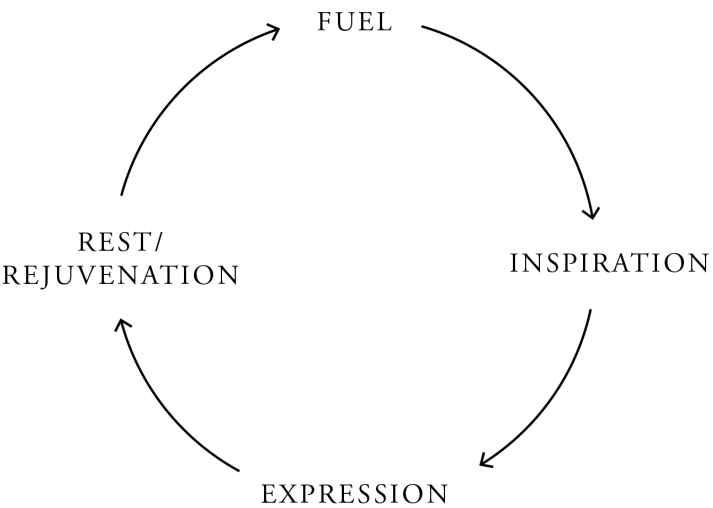
The direction of my attention indicates the direction I am moving in life, deliberately or unconsciously. Like purchasing tickets allows for admission into otherwise inaccessible domains, by paying attention, I gain access to deeper dimensions of myself. Investment of attention is groundwork for well-being.

To direct attention deliberately is not as easy as it seems. Engineering life from the inside out requires an unraveling of deep-seated programming. To desire well-being in the first place is often the result of experiencing intense physical or psychological pain.

It is extremely difficult – some say impossible – to arrive at an unbiased perspective of oneself. To observe oneself honestly, without distortion, is an essential component of learning.

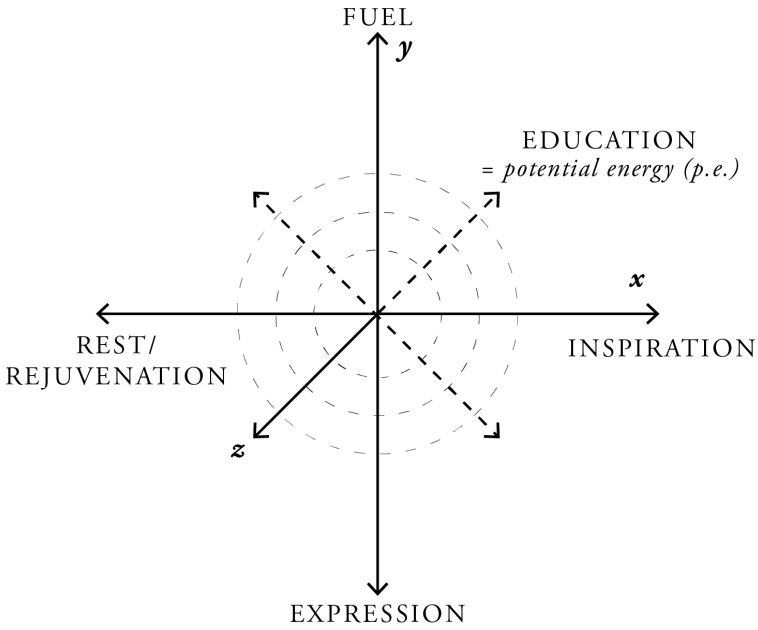
A clear view of the facts is a prerequisite for building healthy patterns, but facing those facts can be hard to swallow. New pattern creation is difficult to undertake alone, so working with friends and mentors who sincerely wish to see us become more healthy in body and mind is always recommended.

DIAGRAM 5
“MOMENTUM”



*Efficacy of action depends on efficacy of
previous, complementary action.*

DIAGRAM 6
“RADIANCE”



*When multiplied by a continuing desire to refine
understanding, momentum is transformative.*

BRIEF I

Nothing in life is static. Everything – both tangible and intangible – is moving, literally and metaphorically. Everything is an “action” – even sleeping, resting, thinking, and so on. Actions are either effective or ineffective in their ability to enhance future actions. Actions are both causes and effects.

BRIEF II

Physical objects – and the literal, manifest events of our lives – are always moving. All physical objects exist as trajectories with force, colliding into other objects and transforming over time. “Spiritual” objects – sense of identity, imagination, and emotion (the causes of our life events) – are always moving toward or away from clarity and meaning.

BRIEF III

Degree of momentum dictates quality of interplay. The more deliberate and refined the cause of an event is, the more deliberate and refined the event itself will be. Conversely, the more unconscious and “mindless” the cause of an event is, the more unconscious and “mindless” the event itself will be. The more deliberate and refined the event, the more that event will reinforce future, similar events. The converse is also true.

A Psychological Map of Time

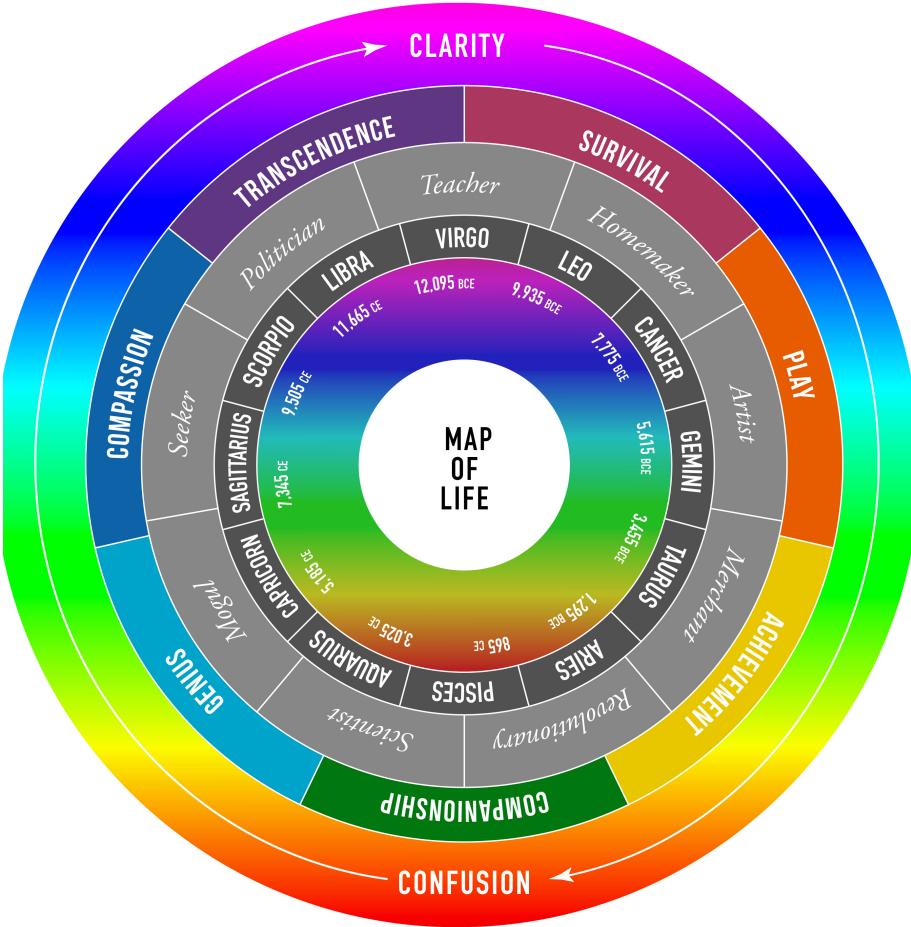


DIAGRAM 7 — “A PSYCHOLOGICAL MAP OF TIME”

Realizing both my dependence and influence upon “other”, I begin to sense that the deeper identity structure I currently carry into the world may be grown, altered, or enhanced for optimal interaction.

A “mom” can be more than a “mom”, a “dad” more than a “dad”, an “executive” more than an “executive”, an “artist” more than an “artist”, and so on. Full human maturity and understanding is the ability to identify oneself totally with, feel “at home” within, and express the “virtues” of “any space on the map” (oriented toward clarity).

As already stated in previous diagrams, the habituated confinement of sense of identity is the primary source of psychological or “inner” suffering. For example, a “mother” often finds herself confronted with the loss of direction when her children leave home. “Artists” typically experience an intense aversion to working as anything other than an “artist”. “Scientists” rarely see value in “religious faith”, and so on.

Mistaking my inherent identity as “this” opposed to “that” within the map of time and life, the experience of real compassion remains elusive – and the mystery of life unsolved.

RE-CONSTRUCTION & RE-CREATION

In **DIAGRAM 7**, “A PSYCHOLOGICAL MAP OF TIME”, identity is positioned as archetypal and relational.

An individual is not bound to and does not inhabit “time as a linear expression”. Each “moment of time” is a “now”, which was produced by and will produce a “now”. Within that “fluid now”, individuals embody and express archetypes, deliberately or unconsciously. Archetypes, like “nows”, are ever-present “realms of influence” that exist across time. Archetypes are all-inclusive, all-time stories playing out through us.

Each of us is free to draw from, embody, and express archetypes of choice. Like a play, my identity within the shared story is my costume. Costumes are interfaces. I cannot experience or interact in the world play without a costume interface.

I perceive that I am either bound by (and therefore suffering) my costume, or that I am free to deliberately construct (and therefore enjoying) my costume. Each costume “comes with” a default set of strengths and weaknesses. Full “creativity” is the ability to express the archetype most relevant to any situation.

Perception informs identity costumes. My perceived identity is what I perceive I am connected to and responsible for. My perceived identity is the combination of what I want to do and what I am capable of doing for others in the world. Identity is not fantasy.

Deliberate identity construction initiates a strict, top-down, and default quality setting of the subsequent dimensions of my being – mind, attitudes, and actions. This is because choice of identity necessarily means choice of values and priorities. This is also why true identity construction first requires a complete removal of “previous” identity habits. Unless each dimension of my being is a conscious creation, my ability to experience consistent, authentic connection to “others” will remain limited.

Inhabiting Lucidity

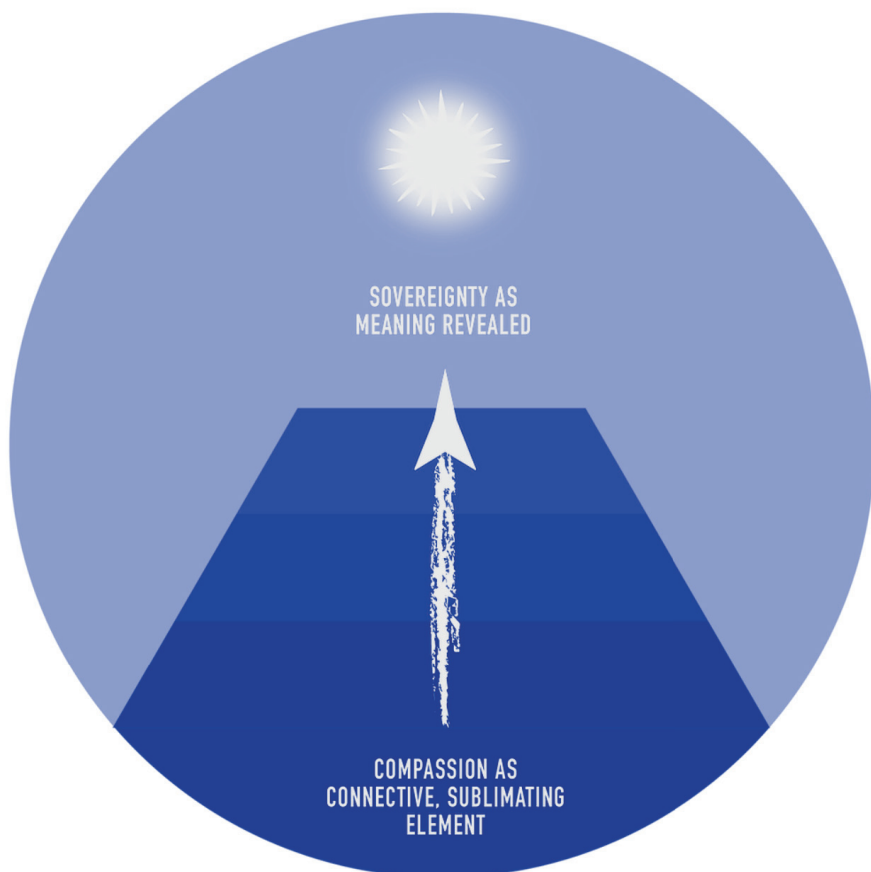


DIAGRAM 8 — “INHABITING LUCIDITY”

Human beings occupy spaces, literally and metaphorically. “Positions of being” exist as actions expressed in time, with greater or lesser clarity. The greater the insight, the greater the capacity to establish harmony within oneself – and to express that harmony within and throughout one’s personal and professional relationships and interactions.

Constructive occupation is choice of movement, choice of time spent, choice of pattern creation, choice of career path, and so on. Destructive occupation is invasion – the removal of choice. An occupation, therefore, is a mode of being, an archetype, or a designated structure within which only relevant manifestations can occur. In order to constructively alter what is manifesting, an archetypal transplant whose dwelling is closer to clarity is required.

Consider an individual inhabiting the position, “I have a family to feed.” As long as society functions somewhat consistently, “I have a family to feed” manifests as healthy competition. But apply pressure to social conditions, and “I have a family to feed” rapidly devolves into conflict with all other “I have a family to feed” positions.

Conversely and constructively, with or without pressure applied to social conditions, an individual inhabiting the position “We have families to feed” inspires communication, collaboration, and creative problem-solving. The degree of self-other-inclusive awareness indicates depth of clarity and determines “position of being”.

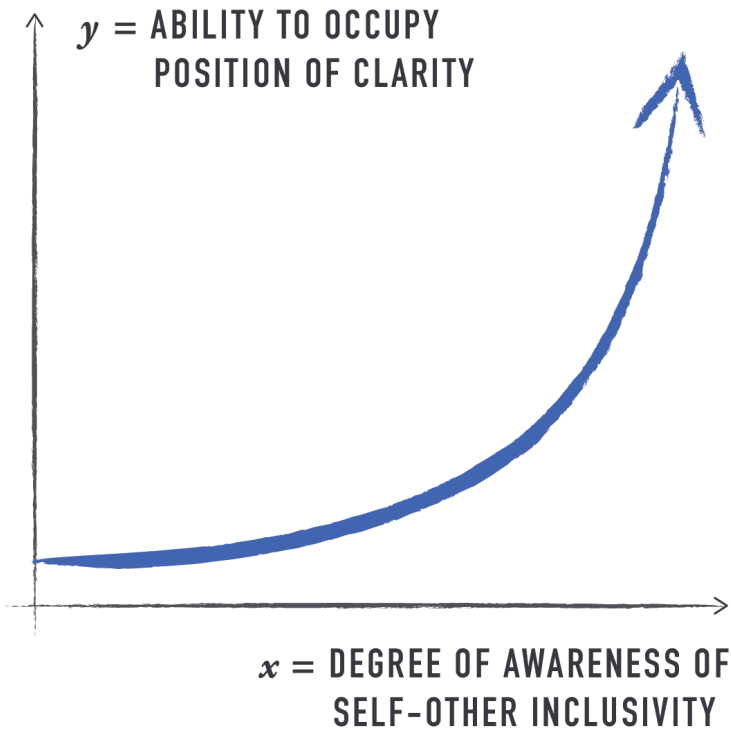


DIAGRAM 9 — “INHABITING LUCIDITY 2”

SOVEREIGNTY

Sovereignty is positioned at the apex of being, inhabiting the state of the total transparency of phenomena. In clarity, freedom of choice is an ever-present reality.

Like water poured into water, communion with sovereign lucidity initiates a profound and irreversible identification with and subsequent sense of connection to and responsibility for all phenomena without distinction. Henceforth, there is no need to search for meaning. Each sovereign action is meaningful and clear in and of itself. Freedom of choice and compassion are the sovereign traits.

OSCILLATION

Everything is moving cyclically and rhythmically – “vibrating” – according to a specific, bounded domain and function. However, oscillation is not evolutionary movement. Human evolution is catalyzed by spontaneous insight.

Initiating deliberate, constructive change is impossible without exposure to lucidity.

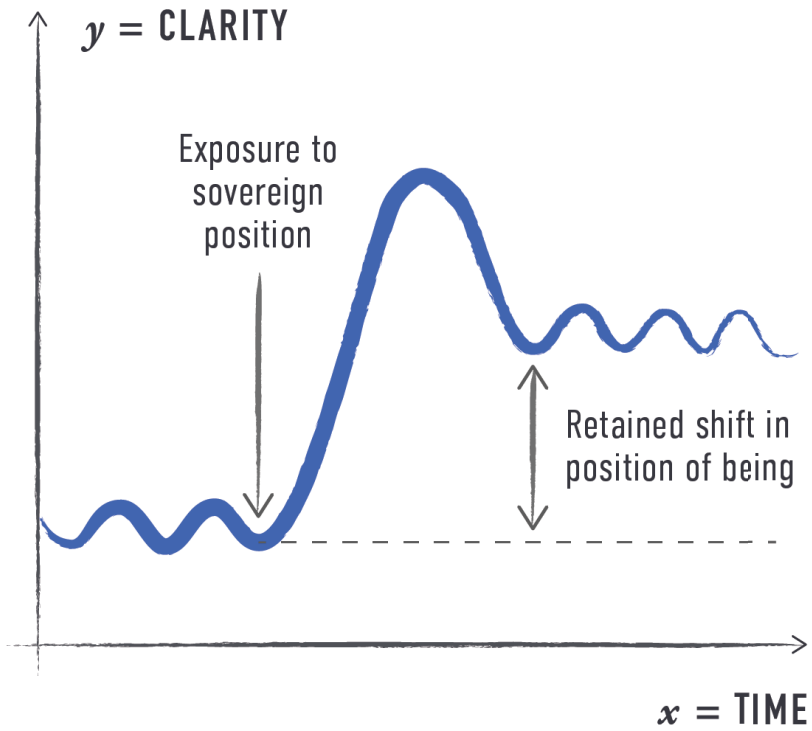


DIAGRAM 10 — "ARCHETYPAL TRANSPLANT"

The Uphill Sprint

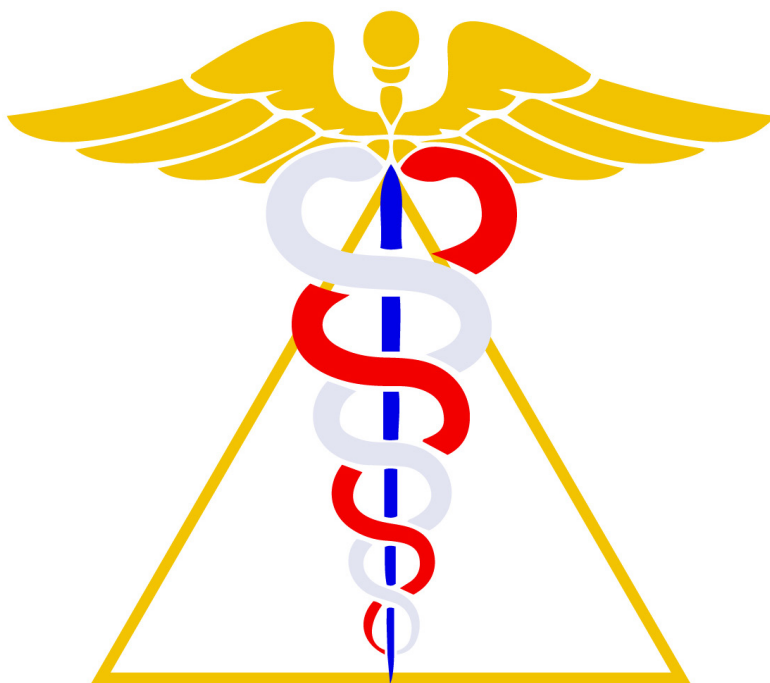


DIAGRAM 11 — “THE UPHILL SPRINT”

For a few, the experience of compassion is so ripened that any time spent not engaging in actions that assist others in living a life of improved clarity and health is considered time wasted – criminal, even. Those who feel this way are often pushed toward the fringes of society, simply because they would rather not engage in activities they perceive to be a misuse of time and resources than

to participate in society. Obviously, this position is controversial. The primary basis for that controversy lies in the misunderstanding of the definition of compassion as support for anything whatsoever, “virtuous” or not. Compassion is often viewed as a position of non-judgment. In reality, discernment is a prerequisite for integrity, health, clarity, and so on. If I want to help you, I need to know what is helpful – and not just “any old thing” will do. (The “right” thing will do, however, if I can figure out what that is...)

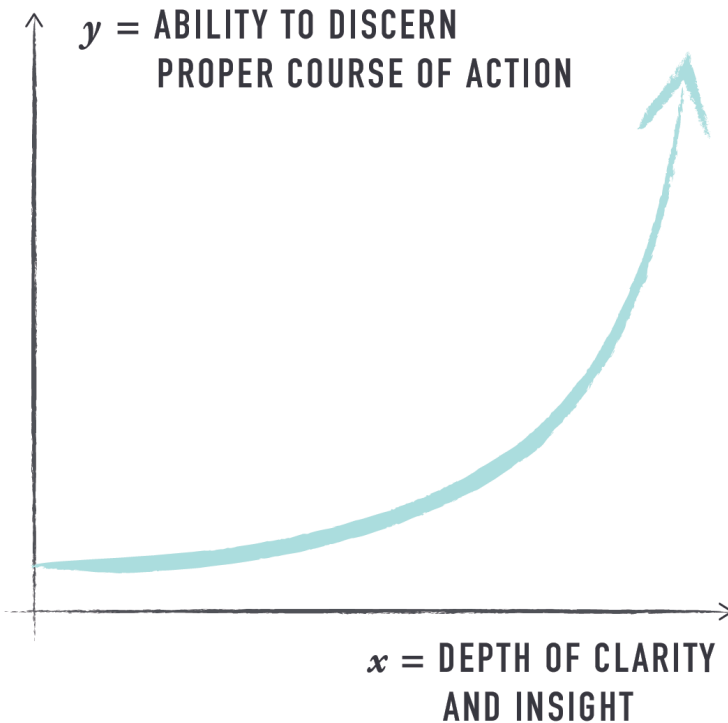


DIAGRAM 12 — “THE UPHILL SPRINT 2”

This concept can be clarified by an all-too-familiar anecdote: consider that I am an addict, and you are my mother. You want to help me. You start by giving me a little money or allowing me to sleep in my old bedroom. But none of these actions help me. I just keep using. You've known this whole time that the only way for me to truly heal is to end the addiction. Finally you acknowledge, therefore, that the appropriate course of action would be to deny me any access to anything which may provide me an opportunity to reinforce my addiction. You would actually be "nice" to me – caring, loving, and so on – by saying no to me and by attempting to make my errors known to me. You acknowledge that I have to authentically desire the change. You realize that unless I want to change, you might be wasting your time. So you close your wallet and doors to me totally. You acknowledge that the "right" thing to do is disengage, observe, and pray.

REALITY INVESTIGATORS

Such a position is adopted by “reality investigators”. These “R.I.s” are primarily responsible for the major religious and artistic works that have withstood time. “R.I.s” are present underneath, within, and behind this entire conversation, whether any of us ever know it or not. Consider certain concepts that are widely popular now, such as chakras. Chakras and “central channel work” were (and still are) part of the advanced, constructive behavioral adjustment curriculum developed in ancient India and Tibet. The potency and inevitable success of that advanced method is discussed at length by highly respected and revered individuals such as H.H. The 14th Dalai Lama.

Reality investigators understand that in order to be effective, direct insight into the nature of reality is required. A good intention is never enough to ensure efficacy. The concept of direct, experiential knowledge of reality is quite foreign to the modern thinker, but was a common sense view of life for cultures who still provide us with oceans of wisdom – and whose practices are becoming mainstream.

PART THREE

Commentaries

The Search for Meaning

What each of us wants is to live the most meaningful life possible. Humans have performed, are performing, and will perform everything conceivable in search of meaning. We search for meaning in survival, pleasure, success, love, creativity, and freedom – rarely satisfied.

BEGINNING THE SEARCH

Like a solar system, each individual's "actual body" is composed of "rings". Each "ring" is itself an interface. The outermost rings allow us to interface "with the world". I am typing on my computer, I am looking at the artwork on my walls, I am eating a meal with my wife, and so on. The outermost rings decay and are experienced as "passing in time".

The innermost rings allow us to interface "with intangibles". I identify with and value certain actions, objects, ideas, places, groups of people, and so on. I try to surround myself with what I value, and I try to avoid what I do not value. The innermost rings are not "subject to time", but are ever-present "realms" that influence

and inform how we live and act in the world. The inner rings are the “who”, “why”, and “how” of our being, whereas the outer rings are the “where”, “what”, and “when”. The inner rings affect the outer rings.

The innermost ring – ring a – is who I am. In every interaction of “my life”, “I” am there (or sometimes, no one’s home). I am aware of myself – my sense of I – with greater or lesser understanding of what that entails. For a sovereign being, “myself” includes all phenomena.

From what I perceive “myself” as inclusive of – more or less limited – emerges my value structure and motives, the “why”. We value what we feel connected to and inspired by. We take action to support what inspires us and to develop what we feel connected to. Ring b is why I do what I do.

Were my reasons to find value in the world very limited, “how” I interact with the world would be inconsistent and unstable. But were my reasons to find value numerous, I would conduct myself gracefully, sensing meaning all around. Ring c is how I am with others.

Ring d is my discipline – the why and how of my being expressed within a specific domain. Most often, ring d is expressed as career path, family/home structure, and leisure – the “where” of my dominant action-

patterns. Most sublimated, ring d is a dedicated, sincere investigation of life.

Ring e is what I am doing, right now (right now includes “when”, obviously). What I am doing right now is the result of an inconceivable series of relationships, interactions, causes, and conditions “located in the past”. The past “exists now” as ingrained habits influencing present choice of action. What I am doing right now is the manifestation of my who, why, how, and where rings.

The outermost rings are the most literal, most linear, and most easily perceived – they are the mirror of the innermost, which are fluid, non-linear, and intangible.

DEEPENING THE SEARCH

As stated earlier, that which I find most meaningful is that for which I feel a deep sense of connection and concern. The more “connected” I feel to something, the more I perceive a “reason to live”. Reasons to live are primary motivations – central axes. That motivation can be a child, a friend, a spouse, a business, a profession, a hobby, and so on. Approximating sovereignty, an individual senses her/himself as connected to a nearly inconceivable network of relationships – past, present, and future. Such individual is never short of “reasons”.

Conversely, the more limited my sense of connection and concern, the more fearful I am. The more I fear something, the less capable I become of authentically connecting with and caring for it. Perceiving that my only reason to live is a small collection of fragile “things”, I may do everything in my power to protect my ability to relate to those things, fortifying them and myself off against the world. Walling myself off against the world, I ruin my opportunity to connect – and therefore ruin the opportunity to experience meaning.

Like humans, all phenomena are composed of both inner and outer rings. As stated earlier, the outer rings inevitably decay. Becoming overly identified with the outer rings of phenomena is like trying to cook and eat the husk of the corn rather than the kernels. Attempting to experience sustained spiritual nutrition without penetrating beyond the surface of phenomena is the height of arrogance and ignorance. Surfaces are not to be appreciated in and of themselves – but for reflecting and representing inner qualities.

Each of us understands inherently that arrogance (distorted view of reality), ignorance (active anti-knowledge), and fear are states of being to be avoided – they lead to suffering. None of us wants to suffer. That is why we try to protect our perceived sources of meaning.

DISCOVERING THE KEY

Conflict exists in the world. Conflict is generated when two or more points of view are unwilling to identify with one another. However, no point of view exists “in and of itself”. Each specific point of view is a manifestation of its causes and conditions. How do I know that I would not be expressing similar qualities as those with which I do not identify, were I to be subjected to similar causes and conditions? Lemons, when squeezed, produce lemon juice. How do I know for certain that, when squeezed, I won’t also make lemon juice? This question is the gateway to compassion – and therefore to meaning.

If I sense that the source of the actions or points of view with which I do not identify are motivated by arrogance, ignorance, or fear, then I could infer that the person is “feeling squeezed” – that individual may be suffering. Knowing that I try to avoid suffering at all costs, and that no one else deliberately chooses to suffer, I can empathize with the suffering of others. Empathy is a bridge – the prerequisite for compassion and a necessary gateway for relationship. The real question is, if I am experiencing conflict, am I certain that I’m not the one who is bitter? Thankfully, humans are not lemons – what’s magical about humans is that when life squeezes us, we don’t have to choose bitterness.

Kindness, like bitterness, is a way of relating to others. Relationships are the primary prerequisites for meaning, allowing for interaction, perspective, and measurement. Relationships are conductors. Tuning to channel 91.7 FM, for example, I listen to songs – I don’t listen to “the channel”. The channel has no meaning – it is just a blank canvas without the information conducted through it.

Relationships are intangible. If one were to dissect me, for example, my relationship to my wife would never be found. Nor would my relationship to food, my relationship to my car, my relationship to my eyes – to my boss, to my children, to the air I breathe, to my thought processes, or to my feelings – ever be found.

LIVING MEANING–FULLY

Our relationships reflect “who we are”. What we orchestrate and conduct in the world through our actions indicates what we feel “related to”. To conduct something is first to receive energy or information, and then to guide that information, energy, or object in a specific direction. The broader my “field of conduction” – that is, the broader my ability to relate – the more meaning I can experience. The converse is also true.

A sovereign is everyone’s “relative”, so to speak, inhabiting a position of being marked by an

irreversible identity-unification-experience with all phenomena. To identify completely with “other” is to experience the joy or the suffering of “other” as “my own”.

Motivated by this inconceivable idea, a sovereign engineers every minute detail of life to assist in digging up and removing the root causes of suffering – first by eliminating them completely in her/himself, and then by offering those techniques as efficiently as possible to others. This “gardening process” – the weeding out of meaninglessness – necessarily produces a beautiful, purposeful, and meaningful life.

The Three Lamps

LAMP #1

We want to evolve.

All human action is effort made to either satisfy a drive or experience meaning. Those drives contain clear or distorted views of reality. Satiation and meaning are not necessarily related. As already discussed, meaning can only be “experienced” when effort is made to enhance the existence of something to which I acknowledge a connection and for which I accept responsibility. This “responsibility-connection” can be as limited as “myself” or as inconceivable as “all phenomena”.

To “evolve” is to experience irreversible and ever-refining “health-insight” – physical, financial, emotional, mental, creative, and “spiritual”. The desire to evolve has no end. That is, no “amount of health” created in any dimension of life satiates the desire to evolve, itself. When evolving, an individual desires to continue evolving, to refine the ability to evolve, and to share that evolution with others.

LAMP #2

There's only one problem.

The inability to recognize the shared, common aim within individuals – the desire to evolve – is the singular source of conflict that all humans experience.

This conflict stems from “the surface” as the inability to *empathize* with individuals who are either thriving or not thriving (creating envy or condemnation of “other” within oneself). From “the depths”, this conflict stems from the inability to *completely identify* with individuals who are either thriving or not thriving (creating envy or condemnation of “other” within oneself).

Recognition of the commonality of motive is the fabric from which inner and outer harmony is created. Outer harmony is established when a collective of individuals agree to honor each other, as well as a common set of principles. Outer conflict is always the result of disagreements between individuals. Therefore, outer conflict must ultimately be resolved at the individual level. Individual, or inner, conflict is resolved first through study and practice, then through realization. Ultimately, harmony is established when evolution is understood to be a collective responsibility.

LAMP #3

Satiation is cyclical, but meaning isn't.

Satiation cycles “express themselves” rhythmically, in time frames ranging from the minuscule to the inconceivable, and are common to all individuals. For example, “my body” wants to breathe every moment, wants to eat every few hours, and wants to sleep everyday. Some part of “me” wants to continually satisfy the incessant arising of my desires for companionship, success, pleasure, sustenance, and so on. Do these “wants” belong to me alone? Or does my experience of these common “wants” indicate something deeper?

Most individuals experience satiation as a “self-centered” pursuit or performance of necessary activities. That is, in order to live, there are certain things I need to do. Knowing the meaning of life is not one of those things. But when a satiation cycle is challenged, the question of meaning often arises. That is, a crisis is often the catalyst in the search for meaning.

Without the experience of suffering, I am not afforded the opportunity to investigate its causes – or to relate to the suffering of others. Creative solutions depend on the existence of problems. Problems, therefore, are opportunities to evolve, to collaborate, and to investigate.

As stated previously, meaning can only be experienced through authentic connection to others. Assisting others in understanding the causes of suffering – what type of suffering can be avoided, what type can be reinterpreted, or what type can be completely eliminated – produces a profound degree of meaning. But in order to be able to skillfully assist others, a clear understanding of the satiation cycles is necessary.

The Symphony of Seven

The campground of life.

Life can be likened to a campground, where people pitch tents, have interactions, and so on. Interactions “on the campground” are motivated by five satiation cycles and refined by two discoveries – “quicksilver” and “gold”.

Each individual experiences the same set of satiation cycles, with some more dominant than others. Traditionally, these satiation cycles are known as *chakras*. Chakra is Sanskrit for “wheel” – an appropriate description for the nature of these cycles, which are expressed in predictable waves of time.

Chakras, like relationships, cannot be located as static, physical phenomena. Properly understood, chakras are subtle “intelligence headquarters”. The degree of health that we experience in any dimension of life – from physical to psychological to spiritual – depends on the cultivation of a constructive relationship with these cycle-centers.

SURVIVAL - CYCLE # 1

<i>Satiation Period</i>	Immediate ~ 1 day.
<i>Revelation</i>	This tent is mine.
<i>Math</i>	Self > Other.
<i>Janus Concept</i>	Order / Chaos.

PLAY - CYCLE # 2

<i>Satiation Period</i>	1 day ~ 1 week.
<i>Revelation</i>	Party at my tent.
<i>Math</i>	Self > Other.
<i>Janus Concept</i>	Attraction / Repulsion.

ACHIEVEMENT - CYCLE # 3

<i>Satiation Period</i>	1 year ~ 10 years.
<i>Revelation</i>	I can manifest the best tent.
<i>Math</i>	Self > Other.
<i>Janus Concept</i>	Concentration / Dilution.

COMPANIONSHIP - CYCLE # 4

<i>Satiation Period</i>	10 years ~ “Life”.
<i>Revelation</i>	You make tent life worth living.
<i>Math</i>	Self < Other.
<i>Janus Concept</i>	Part / Whole.

Checkpoint

Beginning of the discovery of meaning as dedicated effort to enhance shared experience. Beginning of self-aggrandizement tests which emerge from the awareness that “self can enhance other”. Often temporarily devolves to Self > Other.

GENIUS - CYCLE # 5

<i>Satiation Period</i>	Erratically Immeasurable (Potentially Catastrophically Unhealthy).
<i>Revelation</i>	I can improve tent culture.
<i>Math</i>	Self < Other.
<i>Janus Concept</i>	Progress / Tradition.

Test

Self-aggrandizement as “Look how amazing I am! I’m special, and I’m different, because I’m special!”
Often temporarily devolves to Self > Other.

MIRROR - “QUICKSILVER”

<i>Genesis</i>	Compassion.
<i>Revelation</i>	I am the tent.
<i>Math</i>	Self = Other.
<i>Janus Concept</i>	Me / You.

Test

Self-aggrandizement as “I don’t need to do anything except sit here – or sit here and give teachings. I’m special.” Can temporarily devolve to Self > Other.

PRESENCE - “GOLD”

<i>Genesis</i>	QuickSilver.
<i>Revelation</i>	The entire campground is made of Magic.
<i>Math</i>	Other.
<i>Janus Concept</i>	N/A.

Checkpoint

Presence stays relevant, learns everything, and subsequently offers whatever educates whomsoever about the Magic of the campground. Presence uses methods ranging from mind-blowing to minuscule. Presence often moonlights as companionship, genius, or mirror. When moonlighting, Presence is also subjected to the corresponding self-aggrandizement tests.

On Emptiness

“Emptiness, the womb of compassion.”

– Nagarjuna

Potential energy is real, and everything is potentially on fire. Fire needs something to burn, because fire can't burn itself. There are potentially an infinite number of things to burn and potentially an infinite amount of time allocated for the burning of objects. In order to manifest, one thing needs the other, forever. When manifest, the quality of the fire depends on the qualities of the objects burning. That's emptiness in a nutshell.

HOT HAND: EMPTINESS IN THE KITCHEN

I love to cook. Sometimes, I burn my hand. By now, I have spontaneously removed my hand from hot kitchen equipment enough to say that it happens without deliberation or emotion. At a deep, visceral level, I acknowledge a connection to my hand. I say, “My hand is a part of me.” And therefore, when the health of my hand is threatened, I take immediate action to eliminate the causes of its suffering. I do so without any thought of reward or congratulations. I also don't invite friends and family over to celebrate the occasion.

It's almost irrelevant to speak of emptiness without also speaking of compassion. Emptiness says, "All for one, and one for all." If, in fact, the nature of reality is free from all inherently self-existent conceptualization, everything that exists only does so as a result of everything else. Even something as inconceivable as a Buddha's enlightenment has mutual dependence as its basis. Without others to care for, there can be no Buddhahood. Traditionally, the first direct experience of emptiness catalyzes a 360° makeover – all habits of body, speech, and mind. Born in clarity, a Bodhisattva is thenceforth motivated solely by the wish to communicate to others that reality is a magical, malleable, and all-inclusive playground and that suffering is, therefore, unnecessary.

The answer to the question of whom we currently love and why is also habitual. Such sentiment is easier to generate around those for whom we acknowledge a connection, yet all families originate in the meeting of strangers. Loving my neighbor as much as I love myself or my friends and family seems nearly impossible. But from the point of view of emptiness, my neighbor and I are mutually responsible for the health of our shared experience, and we originate in one another. Were I to sense at a visceral level that, "Like my hand, my neighbor is a part of me," loving my neighbor as myself would be spontaneous, enduring, and natural.

IDEAL & IDENTITY: EMPTINESS IN PSYCHOLOGY

That which offers us the most meaning in life is that for which we feel a deep sense of connection – that with which we identify. Perceived isolation engenders suffering, whereas perceived connection produces collaboration, companionship, and so on. When we acknowledge an authentic connection, like a mother does to her child, a sense of responsibility and motivation naturally arises. Henceforth, after such an acknowledgment, I am motivated to act on behalf of that connection.

Mostly, my identity motivation manifests as me organizing my life in order to protect my body. In rare cases, decisions for a deliberate and radical identity reorganization emerge from *bodhicitta*, the sincere, spontaneous wish to protect all beings' bodies and minds. This authentic, spontaneous wish is a portal – a signpost delineating entrance into the Bodhisattva path. Whether we believe it is ever even possible to protect all beings, the Bodhisattva aim naturally results in the construction of a mobile residence that is literally surrounded by an ever-deepening sense of meaning in all directions, wherever it moves. This living-breathing-moving field of meaning benefits both the individual Bodhisattva and the communities served by that individual.

Identity motives, whether selfish or selfless, whether fully crystallized qualities or budding aspirations, connote choices made, real-time. Identity, by default, manifests in attractions and aversions. Based on my identity, I prioritize and value certain actions, objects, ideas, places, and groups of people more than others. Generally, I try to surround myself with what I value, and I try to avoid what I do not value. Stated more clearly, the choices I make reinforce my identity feedback loop.

Like all effects, the aversion I feel toward that with which I do not identify and do not value is habitual and patterned. Here, the question arises, “Is aversion wrong?” Clearly, all things do not possess equal relevance. I drink water – I do not drink bleach. I would recommend that those with whom I identify drink water, not bleach. Baseball players have valued discipline over leisure, which is why they develop as athletes. Both surgeons and chefs value a sharp edge over a dull one, often either selecting a higher grade of blade or sharpening the blade they currently use in order to optimize their performance. Chefs and surgeons simultaneously carry both a high priority for sharpness and an aversion to dullness.

This fundamental, instinctual yearning to make the best possible choices relevant to an identity construct suggests that, taken to a logical conclusion, what I actually seek for myself and those with whom I identify is the maximum

state of health of body, speech, and mind. Such maximum state requires maximum identity, therefore. A Bodhisattva experiences these maximum benefits, precisely because of an ability to identify with everyone. Thus, aiming at Bodhisattvahood is the best thing an individual can do both for self and others, simultaneously.

CAKE AND EAT IT TOO: EMPTINESS IN ETHICS

No matter my level of conviction that $2+2=7$, it isn't so. Walking the Earth proclaiming that $4=7$ is both arrogant and ignorant. As already stated, each of us acknowledges that arrogance (distorted view of reality), ignorance (active anti-knowledge), and fear are states of being to be avoided – they lead to suffering. The less in touch with reality and its common-sense workings I am, the more I will suffer. None of us wants to suffer, and that's why we try to protect our perceived sources of connection, identity, and meaning. We often take that sentiment to its logical conclusion by actively trying to destroy that which threatens the health of our perceived sources of meaning. War is the obvious manifestation of that attempt.

The fact of inherent selflessness constitutes responsible behavior and creativity a necessity. Emptiness, “forever resting” on the two pillars of pure possibility and

creative effort, initiates us into the wonder that is our own conscious evolution through discipline. Ultimately, no matter how dark the night or how deep the ditch, this indwelling creative potentiality, when harnessed, is redeeming – both for the individual who claims its responsibility and for the inconceivable matrix of beings who benefit from one individual's endurance.

Exposure to the hot seat of authentic spiritual training definitely sets a fire under the backside – and later awakens dull, sleepy eyes to the one clear brilliance simultaneously composing and embracing all diversities alike. Emptiness says, “Life need not remain a mystery, and while the peace we seek lies within ourselves, the profundity we seek lies in each other.”

About the Author

Nathan Alejandro Zapata is a non-sectarian contemplative. A practitioner since childhood, Nathan outlines and unpacks the traditional “path” with profound lucidity in language and concepts relevant to contemporary culture. Nathan earned a B.A. in Philosophy from Bucknell University, where he also played Div I baseball for two seasons. As a songwriter and music producer in NYC for ten years, Nathan (under many aliases) collaborated with Grammy-winning, U.K. Mercury Prize-winning, Korean Golden Disk-winning, #1, and multi-platinum artists, DJs, and producers. During that period, Nathan also collaborated on projects for a diverse range of brands and clientele, including Barack Obama, Rolls-Royce, MTV, and Uniqlo. Describing his call to teaching and ministry as “too piercing to avoid any longer”, Nathan is honored to share his work with you.

Preparing for Vajrayana

In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, there is an advanced practice called Vajrayana, which roughly translates to “The Diamond Path”. Thanks to the dissemination of Tibetan culture, and the lineage of teachers who have kept this tradition alive, we have a rare and valuable opportunity to study and practice this masterful resource. This book outlines and unpacks the preparatory stages of these teachings with profound lucidity in language and concepts relevant to contemporary culture.

It’s no secret – becoming diamond-like requires intense training. Through immense pressure, heat, and time, raw carbon is transformed into a diamond: the hardest, clearest, and most brilliant substance on earth. Ordinarily, we interpret the world as it appears to our five senses – accepting the data as fact. However, the “Vajra View” offers a more exciting possibility: to transform the habit of “ordinariness” into a perspective that is inconceivably magical, blissful, and meaningful.

More Human, More Diamond is a study and practice guide to prepare for embarking on this path. Interacting with these time-tested perspectives and techniques is an opportunity to upgrade the “vehicle” in which you move through life – or at the very least, it can help clear the view through your windshield.

*May you benefit from these teachings,
so that you may one day light the way for another.*

