

Meditate & Mediate

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[00:00:00]

Thomas: Welcome to the second session. I want to use the time at the beginning to reflect a bit on what we did last time and then I will hand it over to William to start this session.

Recap of the Last Session

Last time, we gave a brief introduction about the course. I will show you something that you anyway got on your course homepage as well. This is the graphic recording of Mathias Weitbrecht, one of our senior student team members. He does... every session you will find the graphic recording. You can, in a way, see the main points that we went through and also the flow of it. I think it's a very lovely way to record, graphically, the flow of our sessions.

As you can see, we talked a lot about—and we will continue with that today—how important it is to become aware of my internal world, my inner space, or the intrapersonal dimension. We talked last time about these two video projectors—that I have perception, but perception is already filtered through my past. It's important to know that many things that I experienced in the past, including all kinds of traumatizing situations, are filtering the perception of this moment. I think that's an important aspect.

The second part that is important is that when I feel you and I feel myself at the same time—which is a basic function of a grown-up mature human being—if I'm hurt or wounded or traumatized, the connection between my interior and my exterior world might be cut. The bridge, as you see here, the bridge between the inner and the outer world might be kind of blocked. That's very important to know. That's also very important to feel if I speak to another person—within myself and also when I feel the person that speaks to me. Because if I feel the disconnect, it will definitely have side effects and show symptoms within the conversation or within the conflict or within whatever the collective experience that we are going through.

I believe that's a point that we related to more in depth last time. Then, we talked about listening. I'm sure we will talk about listening more, because it's such a basic function of any kind of relatedness, dialogue, or conflict resolution. We said there are two types of listening. The more spacious form of listening is that I take you in, that I let you in, that I really listen to you as space—it's kind of a more receptive way of listening. Then, there is the other form of listening that is attunement. Attuned listening has concentration, focus, listening to one tune of an instrument, one instrument of an orchestra. Imagine you are conducting the Philharmonic Orchestra and you are listening to how the second violin's playing. That's different than just being space. That also has an, "I mean you."

I believe, throughout the course, we will talk more about the relation between the most universal principles and the most specific that is specifically you or specifically me. The two aspects of listening: the more spacious—I am space, I am listening as wide open space, which requires vulnerability, which requires openness, feeling awareness, and so on, and then attunement, which requires concentration, precision, precise attunement, and real dedication of awareness to a specific aspect of reality.

[00:05:00]

I believe, then, we had already some amazing questions come up. Last time, we already went into a Q&A portion. Today, I think, William will start with addressing one question that came in and also give you a bit of an overview, a little bit more structure to our course. Maybe, why don't you take it from here, William, and hand it over?

Outcomes of the Course: Becoming a Heartful Warrior

William: It's an enormous pleasure to be on this call again, with all of you, and to be embarking on this journey. Yes, Thomas is right. We did have one question that we thought was well worth addressing in the beginning, which was a question from Kristen, which I'll read here: "Would you share with us a vision or idea of what results or outcome you foresee for all of us? What change or transformation can we look forward to? In other words, what's the purpose of this wonderful course you're offering?"

I think that's a beautiful question to begin and remind ourselves of, and I'll just give you my own sense of it, which comes out of conversations that Thomas and I have been having throughout this year. I think, in the very first session, maybe the introductory session before the first session, I shared with you a kind of an ancient prophecy that came from Tibet a thousand years ago, that at some time of great danger in the world, there will be born a new breed of warrior. They called them Shambhala warriors. They are born right there in the heart of that time, in the heart of that intensity, and they have two weapons, which are *compassion* and *insight*. I think that captures what we're hoping to do with this course is we are hoping to convene our community, us, as a community of peace or peaceful, heartfelt warriors, Shambhala warriors, in these intense times. Because these times, we are experiencing them as intense in our bodies, as Thomas was just saying, inside of ourselves, in our own inner conflicts. At the same time, we are experiencing them out in our outer world. That could be in our immediate family relationships or community, but also in the larger world, on the planet right now.

The question is, how do we deal with those tensions? How do we live with those tensions? How do we transform those tensions from a destructive form to a constructive form, from war to a kind of peaceful engagement. Thomas mentioned a concept that I'd like to play with a lot, called the Third Side, which is very simple, which is that normally, when you approach any conflict, whether it's in ourselves or outside of ourselves, it's always like there's two people in a conflict with each other or two communities in a conflict or two countries in a conflict with each other, but what I've noticed, which is a heritage from every society, and the most indigenous societies, is there's always a third side that we sometimes ignore, which is the wider community, it's the circle of friends and neighbors and onlookers and bystanders who surround a conflict.

I saw that first when I was visiting a group of San Bushmen, many years ago in the Kalahari, who lived as hunters and gatherers. Whenever there's a conflict, everyone circles around the fire, and all, the whole community—the women, the men, the children—they all circle around. The third side serves as a container for the conflict. It's like ancient alchemy, where the lead of conflict gets transformed into gold. They listen to each other, as Thomas was just saying. For me, this course is for us to really train our inner third sider and our outer third sider so that we can show up in these difficult times and these intense times in ways as a global social witnesses, in Thomas' words.

[00:10:00]

To me, the whole idea of *Meditate and Mediate*, which both of them, as we talked about last time, there's only a "T" that separates these two words, they are both about sitting in the middle of something. Sitting in the middle of yourself, the meditation. Sitting in the middle of your community, the mediation. How do we learn to sit in the middle there? How do we blend the inner arts of meditation with the outer arts of mediation so that we can show up as our best in healing our own wounds, but also in helping to heal the wounds of the society around us? That's our hope is that you will emerge from this course, which is a journey, more confident in your own—because we are all third siders, we are all Shambhala warriors—in your own warriorship, as it were, more confident, more competent, and more connected. Because the idea here is not just individual learning—we are collectively learning, we are convening the circle, this community of learning here.

In that, I would say that one thing that we would like to do is we'd like this course, our aspiration is for it to be deeply practical. I would encourage you, in every session, to bring at least one conflict, some situation that's giving you some trouble in your life right now—it might be with your partner, or your child, or it could be a larger conflict in your community, or it could be a conflict in the world—something you want to sit with, so that as we work through these concepts and present different frames and exercises and so on, you could be applying that to your own situation and asking yourself, "Okay, how would that work for me? How would that work in that situation?" We are hoping that you'll get more value out of the course if you're actively applying it to actual situations in your life. We are also hoping that it will generate better questions, and that we can all learn together. So we are embarking on this journey.

The last thing I'll say is we envisioned this journey in three stages, like every great play has three acts. The first stage, the first three sessions, really, are devoted... the focus is more on the inner. How do we tune our own inner instrument? The intrapersonal dimension of conflict and trauma. How do we heal ourselves? Then, we'll gradually turn the focus more towards interpersonal. How do we deal with others around us? How do we bring our listening, our hearts, our compassion to situations that might be very challenging and very difficult, at whatever scale they are? Finally, in the last third of the course, our focus is going to be more on the transpersonal. On the dimension of connecting with spirit, connecting with Source, connecting with the Divine. We'll obviously weave all three throughout the entire course, but our focus will shift in this emerging journey.

I'm very excited to embark on this journey with all of you and with Thomas. I look forward to it. Over to you, Thomas.

Building a Bridge with the Other's Mind, Emotions, Body

Thomas: Yes. I would love to, first, as long as we are still fresh to absorb some theory, I would love to bring in a few simple, I believe, theoretical aspects about human development. Then, I would love to take you, again, on a kind of contemplative journey so that we strengthen our contemplative muscle. I'm sure that many that are listening in are already, in one way or the other, practicing some kind of contemplative or spiritual practice. If you don't, then as I said last time, we will offer here kind of sometimes similar, but also different versions of meditation, contemplation for you to choose, and if something sparks you to take it as—you know, even 10 minutes a day is better than no practice, because practice is a very important aspect of changing our interior environment.

There is more and more neuroscience research how contemplative and meditative practice literally changes our internal architecture, but our internal architecture is the basis of our external architecture. Society, if you will, is a kind of an architecture that depends on our internal sculpture or internal structure. I would love to introduce a few principles and, maybe, on some of them, you want to comment, William, and, maybe, see how this relates to your experience. Then, we will take it into kind of a common journey or mutual journey.

[00:15:00]

I will share my screen here with you and show you, and you will find this later on, also, in your transcripts—we started last time already a bit, and I will repeat some of it—if this is, in a way, let's say, a human being [*draws a rectangle*]. What are the three aspects that we can define as our experience? If you make it very simple, we have a body, we have emotions, we have a mind, we have higher inspiration, that's where my creativity comes from. Then, I have inner space, or *the witness*, or the capacity to go to the balcony, as William says it. Let's say, we have another human being, and we have a relation. So the other human being has a body, has emotions, has a mind, has some sort of inspirational flow, and has space or witnessing capacity.

I believe, for us it's important, and that's why, what William said, we want this course to be, also, very practical. So if I, for example, take the next week, and I'm concentrating and listening within myself and with others—this can be in a coffee shop, at your workplace, this can be with your family, in leisure time activities—it doesn't matter, really. When we practice something, like for the Shambhala warriors, our practice is 24/7. Life is our practice. That's where we, in a way, gain this kind of inner science competencies. We develop skills that... many of those skills, we haven't been trained to develop properly, I guess. One is that we listen if those three—mind, emotions, and body—are one line or if my mind, my emotions, and my body have a gap, which means there is a fragmentation between my mental message to you, my emotional message to you, and my physical message to you.

That's one thing, if somebody expresses him or herself, we either get one message—and every one of us is a receiver and a transmitter. Here, the same, you have a transmitter and you have a receiver [*writes "T" and "R" over both rectangles*], which means I receive your radio program, I receive you. But you also send a whole information of your life to me. Everything. I believe, every person is like a radio station, and we are transmitting our whatever FM into the world. Every one of us, our nervous systems are very, very sensitive. Usually, they are much more sensitive, our nervous systems, than we often experience ourselves. Every nervous system sends out a lot of information and every nervous system receives a lot of information. But not all of that information arises in my consciousness every day, every minute, every second.

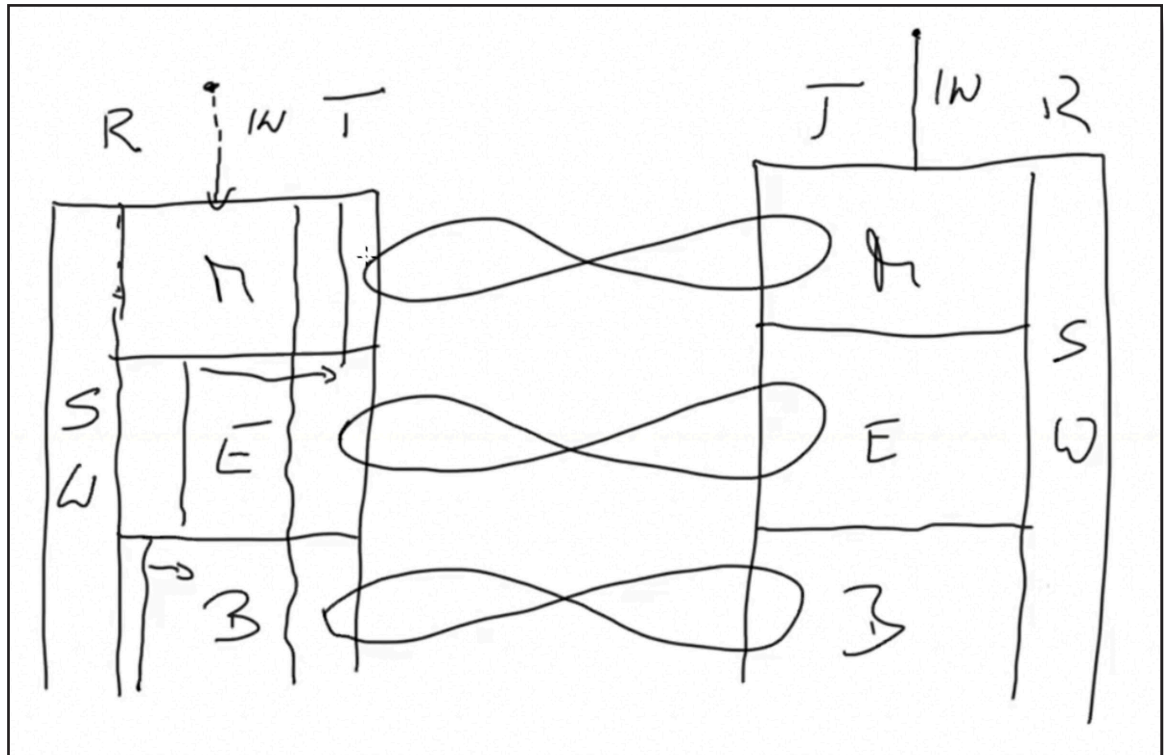
[00:20:00]

But not to forget, we receive information. When I really listen to you, I get much more than what you tell me. Because your body talks to my body. Your emotions talk to my emotions. Your mind talks to my mind—which means I understand you intellectually, and it's great if we talk about Plato, if we talk about neuroscience, if we talk about any kind of mental knowledge and concepts and philosophies. Fantastic. My mind is happy to talk with your mind about it. But my mind is not the one that should understand your emotions. My mind should fly with your mind on new concepts, new innovations, we are excited and we just let it run, let the horses run. Fantastic. Our inspirations come through our minds, suddenly we have ideas, we have visions, so we need our mind for this because our mind is the substance how the new, the future, the innovation comes in.

But emotions talk to emotions. They don't talk to the mind, first of all. I need to feel how you feel. I don't need to hear it through your mental interpretations. I believe, in our world, we are way too often using our mind to tell each other what we feel—because we don't feel. Or we consciously don't feel, often, because we are separate. I think, that's a major thing to pay attention to. When my emotional experience is open and related to you, I feel that you are afraid, I feel that you are happy, I feel that you are ashamed, I feel that you are sad, I feel that you are angry, I feel that you don't feel. Dissociation is a very, very important function. If the person in front of me is dissociated, I can feel that, because if my emotional body is open, I immediately recognize that. But if I'm blocked myself, or protected, or if I'm closed myself or dissociated, I have no idea what you feel because I don't even know what I feel. Or if I'm flooded by my own emotions and they are not grounded in my body, then my own emotions might overwhelm me too much, and I don't feel anymore what you feel, who you are right now in this moment.

The bridge of last time—once I am flooded with my own experience, I might lose your experience. But we said, mature relation is that we can keep the connection between inside and outside, even in intense life situations.

Two things that I want to highlight in here is that the body talks to the body. My body knows what happens in your body. My liver can know what happens in your liver. Even if this sounds a bit far out, but William mentioned Shambhala warriors, so let's say that our capacities to be connected and perceptive and sensitive and attuned and intuitive, I believe, are much higher than we often use them. That we know what happens in other bodies is a function that, when I'm integrated and when I train it—two things: integration, my own development is at a place that can perform that, and I train it. If you have these two functions together, then we can bring those qualities to excellence.



Drawing 1a

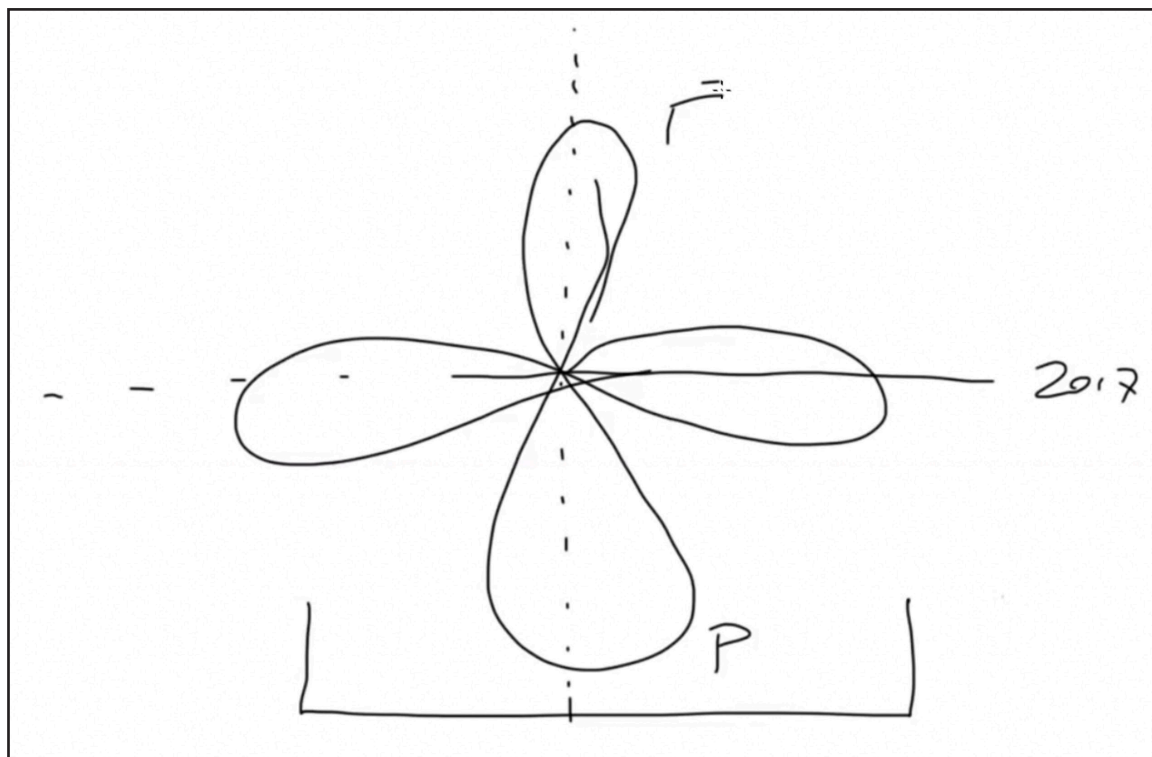
Good body workers, good healers, good therapists, we can feel what happens in other people's bodies because our body needs to be open. When I'm grounded in my body, my body is like a vessel. My body is like a cup or a container. And I want to show you another thing. We could say the physical body is like a container. Our life energy is an energy that's movement, that's motivation, that's horizontal and vertical development. Horizontal development means in 2017. Vertical development, from the past into the future. All my experience is supposed to be grounded in the body. When I am afraid, then fear is represented somewhere in my body. When I'm angry, then anger needs to be represented and felt through the body. But if, in my development, I couldn't develop that, then fear might swirl around like a hurricane in my experience. Anger might take over my experience because it's not grounded, anger is not grounded in my body, I cannot presence it within the relational space.

[00:25:00]

Then, anger takes over. Fear takes over. Shame takes over. Or dissociation takes over. For us, I think it's important to keep it simple, the body is the cup. The thoughts, the emotions, the body sensations are energy, which mean information in movement. Information in movement. If I watch my feelings, they are moving. If I watch my thoughts, they are moving. Maybe they are recurrent, but there is movement, so intensity of feelings, body sensations are moving. I feel stuff in my body, but it's a movement. It's streaming, it's flowing.

Everything in me, everything that I can experience and name is energy, which means it's movement of information. That I'm afraid isn't information—that I think about Plato is information—but it's movement. Life is a constant movement. Like all the big wisdom tradition say, life is a flow, life is a river. When I'm swimming in that river and I'm swimming with the flow of the water, that creates less and less resistance, which means it creates less and less separation. Which means, I'm more in the intelligence of life. I believe we all know how flow states feel.

When you are in the flow, life is moving. We are not complaining about life when life is flowing. Usually we start to complain about life when it's not flowing, when it feels stuck, when it feels like friction. But in the flow moment, I'm even not thinking about what's not working—because it's working. Even if I meet challenges, it's working. There's a movement in it. We enjoy that movement. We feel less separate. In flow states, in teams, in sport teams, and when artists perform and they enter such a flow state, it's not separate. It's part of the river. The music and the artist—everything becomes one.



Drawing 2

To come back, we said the body is the cup, as we see it here. The body is a very important grounding instrument. It should host my emotions and it should host my mental activity. When I sit at the computer and I'm eight hours in the office and then I go home and I feel that my energy is polarized in my head and I feel, "Wow, I need to ground my energy." It's like too much electricity in the head means that my body is already out of balance. Then I need to do something. I need to learn to regulate my energy to ground that overcharge. Because if I'm too overcharged too much, I will disembodiment myself more and more and I will become more and more like a mental movement. But what we want is *one* movement, as we said here. One movement.

That my mental expression, my emotional expression... and I know this is basically simple knowledge, but that simple knowledge is key because as somebody that facilitates processes and works with people, that's something that I, every moment, I need to be aware of. Because the gaps here [*in the emotional field*], those gaps are crucial because they produce all the symptoms in here [*in the relation on the mental level*]. These gaps produce all the symptoms. I think this is a very important line, so when I listen to people that I can train. In so many situations, when I listen to how people express themselves, is there one message or do I get multiple messages? Because here, I get a message [*on the mental level*], here I get another message [*on the emotional level*]. So this is different information. This is different information. And this [*on a physical level*]. Not to forget, the person transmits the emotional state, the mental state, and the physical state.

[00:30:00]

Emotions become overwhelming when they are not grounded anymore. Mental information becomes overwhelming when it's not connected to the physical body. The whole nervous system—the spine, the different parts of the brain up to the neocortex and the frontal cortex—are one coherent system. Then, coherence creates a feeling of *one*, one message. One message is the highest that I can contribute to a conversation. If I send out different signals—like emotions, mind, and body send out different signals—I already send out a confusion. I already send out my internal fragmentation, and that fragmentation will cause symptoms in my relations. If I meet very wise people that notice, when my counterpart or the person in front of me notices my fragmentation and can host it without being reactive, that's a high development. Every facilitator, I believe, needs to have that quality that we notice the confusion, but we notice it as a transference of information.

If I don't, I start taking it personal and I start to get entangled in patterns—that's how we create patterns. As a practitioner, as someone who wants to be effective in the world and in relationships or relational spaces, I believe that simple but very powerful and transformational aspect between the mind, the emotions, and the body is key. I think that should be the basis of our exploration, that more and more I notice one message, double messages, and I host it in myself and I learn to feel the difference. Because that fragmentation that the mind and the emotions and the body are not the same, if they are not the same, if I get multiple messages, the past of the person speaks. In here, this fragmentation [*marks a line on the physical level*] says something about the trauma of the past, about the conditioning of the past. That's when the past tries to recreate itself.

Because emergence, I believe, happens when we have one line, then we are open and we can rest in the moment. That, what William says, then I can be in an intense situation but I can go to the balcony, which means that I have space. I keep space. There is space, which is conscious awareness. Witnessing. I can be in an intense confrontation and still connected, open, and present. If I'm fragmented, I need to shut down. There's already something shut down in the past that appears now, again.

I think, from this kind of principle, we take that in the nervous system, the coherence between mind, emotion, and body, that we learn to ground our experience through the body. The body becomes the flower pot. It has soil. It has a flower. The flower can grow healthily, because it's in the soil and it's grounded. I think that's a very important regulation, because in the traumatized aspects of myself, I will not be able to hold one message. I will experience myself differently, fragmented, or I won't feel myself.

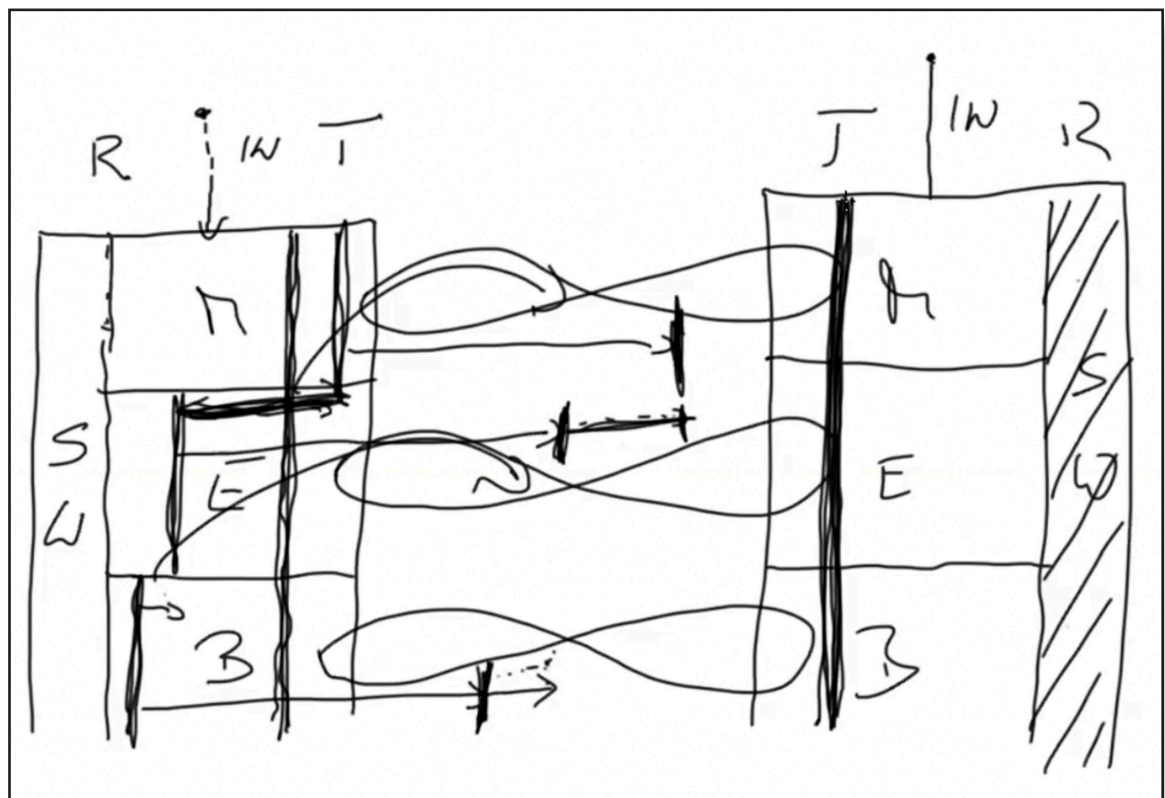
Maybe, that's the first principle that I want to introduce to you. Before I had it over to William, maybe let's have a look how does this principle relate to your experience? For everyone, that we see, okay, what does this mean practically in my life? What are the moments when I feel that my mind, my emotions, and my body, in a way, are unified? They send out the same message. Through that unification, I am a receiver. I can receive other people as fully as possible. Because the fragmentation, also, when I feel you through a fragmented interior, it's like I look through a glass that is fragmented. So I see you with cracks. But if I look through a clear glass, I see you much more clearly. When I feel others, my interior is important, and when I express myself, my interior is important.

[00:35:00]

Also, to look at your life, how do you experience your mind? The combination of your mind, your emotions, and your body. Do you feel that they are kind of connected and anchored? Is your mental, emotional, and physical experience, at least in most of your moments, aligned, connected? Do you remember moments where you felt the inner fragmentation take over? When you hear from other people, like mental pressure, and then emotional disconnect, especially when we are in challenging situations often that happens. When we try to convince people, when we try to kind of override or overpower people in arguments or conflicts.

Also, how much in your life you find that you can regulate your life so that your energy can stay grounded, your experience stays grounded through the body? The body is our connection to nature. It's our connection to the planet, the Earth. It allows me to have a physical experience, have an emotional experience, and a mental experience. I am not channeling, for example, my emotional energy through my mind. When my mind starts racing, it's usually a sign that I don't feel my emotions. If my body somatizes—I have physical symptoms—it's often a sign that I don't feel my emotions, because the energy of the emotions channels itself through the body. Either I feel the pressure in the body, I feel the pressure in certain areas, a constriction in the body, I feel a pain in the body—if that's chronic, then sooner or later my body cannot handle that anymore.

Well, maybe, William, if there is anything you want to share from your experience before I continue, please.



Drawing 1b

Applying the Map of Body-Mind-Emotions to World Challenges

William: First, I just want to thank you, Thomas. What is simple is not easy, or not always easy. That very simple diagram you just drew, I can, as you were drawing it, I was applying it to myself, my own personal life. I was also applying it to some of the challenges we are dealing with that I'm working on in the world today. As I mentioned in an earlier conversation, I'm working on this... A team here is working on how can we be a third side for this conflict in North Korea? As I'm watching your diagram, I'm applying that and I'm saying, wow, okay, if you take—it's not just bodies, but collective bodies of ... you know, the different messages that are going on now between the United States and North Korea, as we teeter on the brink of possible escalation into what could be a catastrophic war, I see lots of mixed messages.

The body, it's like the military movements that each side is making. Testing weapons, moving aircraft carriers. At the mind, there's a lot of policy messages and talk. One thing that's not happening is in the middle there, on the emotions, is there are a lot of emotions, but we are not speaking about them. There's a lot of fear. There's a lot of anger. There's a lot of shame. There's a lot of trauma, because this conflict is arising as a negative repetition of trauma that goes back many, many decades—to the Korean War and then beyond that in Korean history.

That war, which many of us don't remember so well, which fell between the World War II and the Vietnam War for many of us, in our memories, it was a traumatic war in which millions died. There wasn't a single building left in North Korea that wasn't destroyed. The trauma is huge. Sometimes, at least in the West, when we think about North Korea, we think, "What's this strange country?" "Crazy", and all this, but if you understand the history, it actually makes sense. There's a trauma reaction going on. I think your model, really, at least helps me, as a third sider trying to host—that's what we are trying to do in your words—we are trying to host this conflict and look at it from the balcony, from that spaciousness, and try to see if we can empathize with the different players and understand what's driving them.

[00:40:00]

One thing that I'll say, for example, in terms of emotions, there's a lot of name calling going on right now, as you'd know. President Trump, two weeks ago he calls the leader of North Korea "Little Rocket Man." Which, to Americans, this was an issue that came up in our last session, was around culture. That was one of the questions. I had an occasion where, as part of the third side team, we are mostly trying to tap into collective intelligence. Well, it's out there, so we were talking with some Korean experts, a woman from North Korea who basically studies North Korea very, very—she's a scholar and she interviews North Korean defectors to truly understand the culture. And I had occasion to ask her that question last week, which was, "How does this play in North Korea, being called 'Little Rocket Man'?"

For us, it seems a little adolescent or whatever, or trash talk, but she said, "In North Korean culture, the way it's understood", she said, "Well, what if you were in a deeply devote Muslim country and you insulted Allah, how do you think that that would be received? Or in a deeply Christian country, and you insulted Jesus Christ?" She said, "Because in North Korea, people revere the leader as almost some kind of divinity. Whether they believe it or not inside themselves, it's everyone, basically, it's the culture." For us, what might seem a simple kind of name-calling and insult, "Okay, get over it", actually is perceived as a deep humiliation, which then, at that emotional level, could trigger a trauma response which, in this case, would be extremely serious, which could jeopardize the lives of millions of people.

It's, again, just trying to understand that map and really trying to put ourselves in the shoes of others. I think, your map is very illuminating in that regard, Thomas, and I look forward to learning more as you proceed in your exposition.

Space, Energy, and Structure in Conflict Resolution

Thomas: Well, thank you, William. Yes, I think you said something very beautiful. If I want to put myself into the shoes of somebody else, it's such an important process. How can I take on your perspective? If my interior is fragmented, I cannot. Even if I want to, if I will put myself into your shoes, I see it through a glass that is broken. I think that's so important, as you said, once I'm traumatized, or a culture is traumatized, that function of tuning in and feeling somebody else's perspective and really creating an empathic connection is very, very challenged, let's call it like that. Then, I think, that's super important to know when a person is able to perform that and when a person is simply not able to perform it. Then I don't even need to try, because I see already that's just causing stress, but not really a realization.

That's very, very beautiful. That integration... that's why I have to take care of that my inner work as somebody that really wants to make a difference in my own life and in the world. I need that inner integration work. I need some kind of work that helps me to integrate what's fragmented in me in order to create enough coherence. In that healthy inner coherence, it's like a healthy inner coherence is like a healthy screen. Most probably, most of the people listening right now, you are looking at your screen. You are looking at two screens, actually. You are looking at the screen of your computer, and your computer screen arises on *your* screen. Where does your computer screen arise in you? Where is the screen arising in you? It seems like you see a computer. You hear a voice. You hear my voice and you see, most probably, me on your computer screen. But where does that computer screen appear in you, in your own experience right now?

[00:45:00]

Because you don't see the computer screen, the computer screen is already in you. It's wrapped in your perception. That screen has pixels, like the screen that you look at. The pixels of your screen have the capacity to display my image. When you look at your computer, you see, most probably, my image. The same pixels can produce word documents, can produce movies, can produce any kind of surface that somebody programmed. I believe that our nervous systems have the capacity to be plugged into oneself, but also the same pixels that show you the computer with my image, have the capacity to feel, see, and perceive the interiors of other people.

True empathy is the beginning. True attunement. Like the two nervous systems start to create the kind of coherent space in between themselves. Every good therapist, every good mediator, every good facilitator, every good teacher, every good parent does, basically, the same thing. We start to create the mutual pulse. When you see parents that really are connected to their children, they create a pulse. When we feel held and safe, it's because there is a pulse. When we listen to somebody and facilitate their trauma healing, there is a mutual pulse. Without that pulse, the other nervous system feels... the other person is not there. Even unconsciously I feel already that you are not with me. Even if it looks like you are listening to me.

My nervous system immediately gets, “No.” It’s in a very subtle level, we feel each other very precisely. Even if a lot of that information doesn’t arise in our conscious awareness. But we will not feel safe. We will not feel held. We will not feel safe enough to open up and allow our feelings that were, most probably, hurt a long time ago. But in the moment you see it, in the beauty of a mother with a child, the father with a child, a beautiful process that’s being facilitated, there is a pulse. There is a pulse, and that pulse creates a mutual speed. Two trains at the same speed. You can see into the other train. If two trains are driving at the same speed, you see who sits in the other train. That’s relation. If one train is too fast, you didn’t see anybody in the other train, because—poof— they are past each other.

The same pulse. I think, that pulse is something, I believe, is one of our core abilities that we can train. It looks like we might think that that happens when we listen to somebody—but usually it happens only to a certain extent. There is much more... the art of relation, the art of relational intelligence is that my whole body is full of eyes, your whole body is full of eyes, and we are two resonance bodies creating a third space together. I think, that space between us is super intelligent. Why? Because it’s not separate and it hasn’t ever been separate. That space is where, I think, everything happens that is meaningful, essential.

Let’s take, for now, that there is the body, the mind, the emotions, and ideally we will commit to kind of an inner clarification process that helps us to clarify this to become more and more one unit. One unit is like an antenna that can receive a radio station at its best. That’s the best we can contribute to listening and to expression.

Then, there is one more thing, and then maybe we take it into a guided journey. At least I, and I’m sure William in his way, will talk about these three factors that I believe are very important in every human development. One is space. We talked about space last time. Space is the capacity to be a witness. Space is the capacity to have, of course, inner space, which means when I feel an emotion, I’m able to witness my emotion while I feel it. Witnessing doesn’t mean dissociating. Witnessing means I feel fear and I can witness myself feeling fear without being just a prisoner of my fear and making my decisions out of fear.

[00:50:00]

So there is witnessing. There is, of course, inner space. It's a sense of spaciousness inside that allows me to watch the flow of my thoughts, to watch the flow of my emotions, to be aware of my body in a more and more precise way. So it's witnessing. It's inner space. It's what grows through mindfulness practice, meditation and contemplation practice. And it's, ultimately, emptiness. It's the way to kind of an inner stillness. Stillness is a function of it. There's space.

Then, we have energy. What is energy? We said energy is when information is moving. It's a movement, and there's modulated information on top of the movement. When I feel anger, I feel a movement. I feel a movement and it has a quality. When I think about something, there is a movement, and the movement has information modulated on top of it. Everything—when I sense my body now and I sense movements in my body, there is movement and it tells me my muscles feel that way, my liver feels that way, the information my body is constantly communicating inside. Everything. Everything—hormones, the nervous system, intercellular communication—there's a lot of communication. Just to listen to these two hours, the amount of data that flows in my body is tremendous.

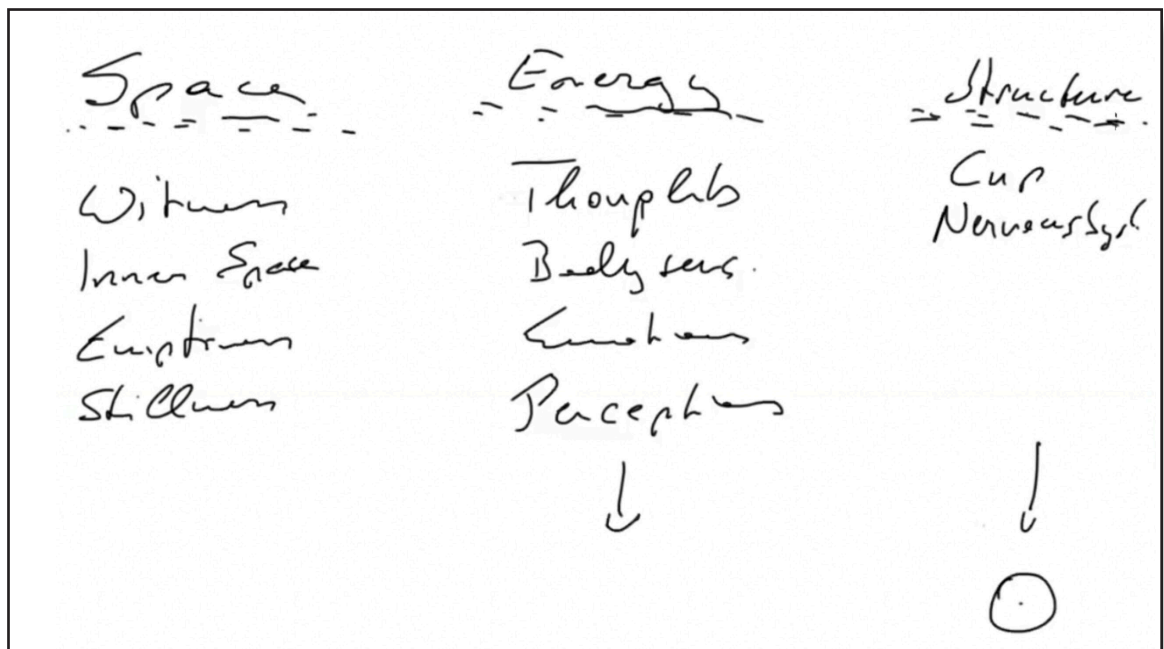
Everything that we can name right now—when I look at the room that I am sitting in or the camera that I am looking at, the camera is already a movement in me. The camera is information that arises in my consciousness, in my brain, in my perception. Everything that I can name is energy, which means information that has a certain speed of movement. Some of the information is slower. Some of the information is faster.

Energy is kind of... Energy is kind of thoughts, body sensations, emotions, perceptions from the outside—when I feel you, you are information in me. That's very important because energy... like the soul of a child, when a child comes in, the parents, they are a lot of structure—and that's the third part—the child is learning, it's building its structure. But the child is an open space. Information perception goes in and out. They are very open. Structure is the cup, is the container, is our nervous system. It's everything—our hormone system—everything—my body, my physical body, it gives me a structure. It's a pipe, because every energy needs a pipe. There's a pipe and the energy flows through this pipe.

And in us, when our development was hurt or couldn't be fully fulfilled, the structure is not strong enough to channel the experience. I believe, in many of the challenging situations, just the one that William mentioned before, that the structure is either hurt, the pipe is too small, and either too much information wants to flow through it—like a data cable that is too weak—or a data cable that has a leakage. If we have a leakage, my emotions will be all over. When somebody is in a regressive state, often the experience is so overwhelming because we don't have an appropriate pipe. The other person would say, "What is the difficulty here?" But for that person, it's an overwhelming situation.

[00:55:00]

I believe, our journey should sensitize us more and more to what is a healthy structure, what is a flow of energy, when is the water pipe big enough to channel the water, when is the water pipe overwhelmed, when is it leaking, and do we have enough space, like witnessing capacity. Can I witness myself while I feel myself talking right now or can I witness myself when I think, when I feel my body? When I am in a conflict, can I still witness myself or do I lose witnessing capacity? Then, I am suddenly fully the prisoner of the situation, because there is no inner freedom anymore, I have to react. When we react, we are the prisoners of our reactions.



Drawing 3a

I will come back to that. I just want to see if William, maybe, has something to add. Maybe then we do some guided practice. Let's see. William, if you ...

William: Sure. I'm actually, again, just learning and applying it, because the situation I picked to bring to this session for myself was this issue of North Korea I'm sitting with. Again, your concepts kind of illuminate, clarify things for me. I bring up North Korea, I'm not trying to... To me, as I think I mentioned before, North Korea is us. This situation is us. I like to view humanity as a single body. Where is North Korea? There is this wound in our body—because, as I mentioned, during the Korean War, there was a bad wound. We never really reached a peace treaty. It's just an armistice. It's like we just put a band-aid over it, and now the wound is turning gangrenous and it's threatening the body. And so the question is, how do we as a body, we as a humanity, how do we begin to heal it?

It's a challenge, one of many challenges, facing humanity right now. To me, it's maybe the most urgent or existential challenge of how do we come together? How do we come together as a third side as a community? As I listen to you, Thomas, and I look at your... I love threes, because it just helps. You start off with spaciousness, space. I look at, where is the space? Where are the witnesses for North Korea? Where is that inner space? This is where I invite all of us—as facilitators, as mediators, as citizens of this planet—to listen to the call as the Earth itself, the body, our collective body, is calling us into unity at this particular point in time. It's calling us into connection. Right now, we have this severe point of disconnection.

As I observe the interaction now between the United States and North Korea, there isn't a lot of space. There isn't a lot of spaciousness. There isn't a lot of witnessing. There is a lot of mixed messages, aggressive messages being exchanged, threat dances, it's kind of a game of nuclear chicken, where two cars are racing towards each other and each driver wants to other one to drive off first, except it's a game of nuclear chicken. I feel like, as a whole, we're, humanity, watching it, but we are watching it in a dissociated way as if it's a game or kind of like a show between these two leaders. But in fact, it's us. A lot is at stake. My question is, how can we bring spaciousness? How can we learn to hold a situation like that, to host it without dissociating, without going into fear or numbness? That's a challenge I would like to invite everyone here on the call just as a challenge, just because we read in the news, and it seems somehow dissociated. "It couldn't happen, a war. It couldn't happen", we say to ourselves.

Unfortunately, as I talk to experts and people who are deeply involved in the situation, the chances of war are all too real. Some very intelligent, well-connected people have been following it and are putting the chances of war as high as 50%. It's almost unbelievable. The question is, how can we hold that without going into panic? How can we hold that with spaciousness? Because that's what's needed right now. Even in your own meditation practice, just to hold this part of our body that's wounded. I think, that's a beginning. That's what I'd like to see—more of that spaciousness.

[01:00:00]

Then, to go to the second—of energy. It's like the thoughts, the emotions. As a third side, we want to be that witness, but then we need to engage in a process. How do we begin to calm those emotions down? To find ways in which each side, as Thomas was mentioning, that it could tune themselves a little bit more because they are way out of tune. How can we do that? How can we do that with North Korea? For me, it's just one of the things I did early on in this process, about six months ago when I began to really get, myself, anxious about it, was... I find that the way that I deal with my own fear is if I put it into action. Then, that's a way of regulating my own system. So I began to think about what could be done.

As I researched more, I found there's actually one American who actually knows the leader of North Korea and considers him a friend. That's a retired basketball player. Some of you may know the name of Dennis Rodman. He used to play for the Chicago Bulls back in the 90s. Turns out, Kim Jong-un, the leader of North Korea, is a passionate fan of the Chicago Bulls. They formed a very unlikely friendship. I went to visit Dennis twice, actually, just because he had found a way to do exactly what, as a third sider, to do exactly what Thomas was suggesting—to tune in, to really somehow become... they've become friends, really considers him a friend, and they both consider themselves friends. That's a way into that person's heart, is to figure out what makes this person tick because that's a key person we need to be able to influence if we are going to calm this situation down. That's about energy.

The third one is structure. How do we begin to build structures? In that particular case, which is a large-scale conflict, how do we begin to build structures of talks? How do we get the parties into talking with each other? Talks about talks. That's what my colleagues and I are working with. Some of our colleagues are going to visit Pyongyang, meet with very top leaders, and so on. We are going to Washington. And we are trying to figure out how to encourage both sides to get into constructive structures where we can calm the situation down, channel the conflict into more constructive forms of negotiation and dialogue rather than an escalation to war.

Just to sum up, Thomas, I find your concepts very applicable, both internally inside myself, as you were saying, and then in our immediate environments with our children, within our families and so on, but also within the human family right now in facing this crisis together. I believe that all of us can actually participate just simply in witnessing, for example—that's a participation, rather than... Moving our anxiety into witnessing what's going on, what's wanting to happen here, how can we create more spaciousness around that—that's the role of the third side. That's becoming an inner and outer third side.

Thomas: Well, I want to say, first, that I honor very much the part in you, William, that makes all of those things happen. I think that you going to Dennis Rodman, you starting to think about, "Okay. What can I do?" I think that's a very important principle because you're modeling something that is, basically, every one of us has that part in us that we see a situation and potentially can engage and become a part of. I think it's very interesting, what is the difference between indifference or the feeling of, "Oh. It's so overwhelming that I don't know what to do,"—and even if you don't know exactly what to do, we are engaged enough to make the first steps that will show us, potentially, a path. It's not just about the North Korean issue or American-North Korean issue now—that's something that you felt called to engage, but there are so many other issues. This might be just in the neighborhood. Or this might be just in our village. Something that seems like a recurrent issue. It might be anything. But what is the principle that gets us going, that gets us engaged?

In the Tao Te Ching, there is a sentence, “A journey of a thousand miles starts from beneath our feet. The giant pine tree grows from a tiny sprout.” But there’s a sprout—and there’s a journey. There’s a next step to the first step. I believe, if it’s active in enough of us, then, as you said, the third side, the witnessing capacity in us, we become aware of something. Because before we are aware of it, there is no chance for any action or for any change. If I become aware of a pattern in me that I drove unconsciously or I’m addicted to something and I become aware of the addiction more and more, not just of the symptom but of the addiction itself, suddenly there’s an option for change. A tendency that has a tendency to be this, opens slowly a window to be re-written into a course correction. That’s what real integration or healing is. It’s a course correction.

A real healing is not just a little bit of improvement. A real healing is a life that went that way and then it goes that way.

Now, when I listen to you, what touches me is that you, out of your own inner drive—of course, it’s part of your profession, one can say, and it’s part of what you’re anyway excellent in, but it’s more than that. It’s also the activation to engage in something that you feel. I think that step is a crucial step. It doesn’t matter where on the world stage that happens, it’s a crucial activation energy to co-create the world that we want to live in. We don’t want to live in a world after a nuclear catastrophe. We want to live in a world where we can enjoy the beauty of nature, where we can still take a walk outside on the beach, and we want to enjoy the beauty of the life circumstances that we have, even if they become more and more difficult, as it seems.

I want to take this principle because, first of all, it touches me again and again when I hear you talking about it. This self-activation that engages with an issue that seems huge—but a journey of a thousand miles starts from beneath our feet. I think that’s a very important function. Maybe, we take this into our contemplation, that we will go have a guided journey and, maybe before we switch to the Q&A part, or maybe afterwards, William wants to add something.

But to look, what is that part in me? Where do I recognize something—you know, a situation, an issue, a recurrent pattern, something that I want to change in my life—I become aware, “No, this cannot continue.” What is the energy necessary to start the movement of change from recognizing to co-creating? I think, that’s beautiful. As you said, it’s the witnessing, space—gives me the capacity to become aware of. And then energy—I need my inner motivation, I need my intelligence to make a move. Otherwise, it’s just, yeah, I’m aware of it, but from being aware of it, in order to make a step that changes the course of the flow of energy, the flow of the world. That’s an interesting movement.

Let’s have an inner journey. Where I want to take this now, this inspired me now, it’s a good ... Because that’s in every one of us. We all meet issues, it doesn’t matter if it’s in your workplace or if it’s with your family, with yourself, or as a citizen of a global system. We all see many issues coming up. What motivates us to move? What’s the energy that moves us?

[01:10:00]

Begin Meditation

If you want, let’s, again, take a deeper breath and sit with an upright spine. Let’s let our exhale take us, again, into the body. The body is such a precious, precious system. It’s not just my body, as we said already, it’s hundreds of thousands of years of life refining this system, this bio-computer. This very refined network of collaboration, communication, intelligence, creativity. When I feel my body, I feel the archeological layers of humanity. They are all present in my body.

How cells learn to work together, create intelligent systems together, create a nervous system, an emotional system, organs, communities, and humanity. All of it’s present when I take a breath.

That I allow myself to sense my body, to feel my body deeper and deeper as I follow my breath into the simplicity of just sitting, breathing, sensing, relaxing. I can allow everything that I heard, all the information that we talked about, to settle, settle in, settle itself in the body. Like seeds.

I can feel where my body is alive and open, streaming, pulsing, breathing. Where my body is, maybe, stressed or tensed or contracted. Where I learn to hold life, to hold my experience because it was too strong, too overwhelming, too difficult, too much. There are free-flowing, open parts and there are more dense, held, contracted parts. And I just presence both.

[01:15:00]

Dropping into the body means also giving myself time to digest life. Do you have enough time and space to digest your life? To let the activity relax, to offer a down regulation into relaxation and digest experiences. Create space around experiences. Do you have enough space to digest the energy experiences of your life, ground it in your body, so that the nervous system has a healthy balance between being very active and very relaxed. Regenerative. Recharging. Digesting.

As we spoke about the three main aspects, I can move to my emotional experience and see how open is my emotional world right now. How active, overwhelmed, numbed, or pulsing. Do I feel at home in the range of my emotional experience—fear, shame, sadness, anger, joy, love—am I a courageous explorer of all of those, or do I shy away from certain emotional qualities more than others? Emotions are the connective tissue of the world. The relational tissue of the world.

Then I can presence my mental experience, the state of my mind, the busyness of my mind. Do you feel that your mind is open right now, open, creative, receptive—or more held, circular thinking patterns?

[01:20:00]

Then, inner... the amount of inner space. Most probably, when you presence your sense perception, there's also a sense of more space inside, so when we relax, there's more space. There's a sense of expansion. More coherence in the listening. Up to even a sense of inner stillness, presence, or a timelessness.

Then, let's have a look—in this kind of inner space, let's see what's your... how do you see your capacity to step in when you feel that there is a life issue in your closer or wider environment that you feel called to? What creates the activation energy to be part of a change? When do we feel called to step in? Even if we don't exactly know what's the solution going to look like, if there is a solution at all. But a healthy participation as a global citizen, even if you live very locally, we are all, by the definition of our time, global citizens, just by using the technology that we are using right now.

What is the motivational power, the co-creative power to be a partner in this world's process—and to have the world's process as your partner, both? Do you feel yourself more holding back? Hesitant? Maybe, not knowing what to contribute. Do you, maybe, sometimes jump in too fast? Or do you find in yourself a healthy rhythm of receiving a call, calling, and also stepping in even if it takes courage? If it means, kind of, actions. Maybe, work. To put in work to change something. To be attuned to the situation and read the situation.

Do you have the feeling, “Yes, I’m doing my part. I don’t have to do everything—I have to play my instrument. And I’m playing my instrument.”? I don’t need to become an orchestra, I’m part of an orchestra.

Then, maybe, slowly take some deep breaths. Feel your body again, your feet on the ground, yourself sitting on the chair, take some more deeper breaths and slowly come back.

End of Meditation

Homework

Well, as we said, to summarize so far, and then I hand it back over to you, William, if you want to add something, but I guess, also as a homework, until we meet again, let’s pay attention to the principle of a synchronized experience of the mind, the emotions, and the body. How my body speaks to your body. When I listen to somebody, my body listens to what a body sends out. My emotions listen to your emotions. My mind listens to your mind. Or how often are those mixed? My mind tries to understand your emotions because I cannot feel your emotions, or vice versa.

This one message, fragmented message, is when you listen to people, how people send—or you, how you send fragmented messages that your mind and emotions say something else. Or is it when... And how do we feel when we get one message and how do we feel when we get mixed messages? The body doesn’t fully express what the mind says. Then we feel confused, we feel irritated.

I think that's a beautiful practice. In daily life, we can practice this all the time. The other one is the correlation to play a bit with the principle of space, energy, and structure, and how that relates to your daily experience. If you find those elements in your life and how do you find them. What is structure? What is energy and movement? What is space and awareness or witnessing? We will continue with it next time.

Maybe, William, is there anything you want to add before we go to the Q&A portion?

William: Sure. First of all, I'm just grateful for the meditation. I was moved. [It] reminded me why we are doing this course in the first place, why it's called *Meditate and Mediate*. I find that these kinds of practices, for me personally, really enhance my ability to be an effective mediator, an effective third sider, in whatever situations I'm in, from the micro to the macro—because, as you mentioned, we are an instrument. How can I play my music unless I tune my instrument first? I like to take a few minutes, just as you did, just as we all did a moment ago, before I go into a difficult situation, I find it extremely helpful. That's why we are trying to cultivate this peace, as peaceful warriors engaged in the world, and to draw on those inner skills in order to practice our outer skills is essential. And your point about we only have to play our instrument, we don't have to be the orchestra, precisely to me is the essence of the third side. The third side is all of us. It's the community.

[01:30:00]

We each play our role and then, as a community, we create that circle that I talked about, around the campfire. That, to me, is a great challenge that we face in today's world, is how do we create those larger and larger circles and more and more effective containers, stronger containers, stronger structures, so that, within that, the energy can start to flow in a different way. It's all within that spaciousness that we are talking about.

I'm looking forward to the questions, and I want to say, too, I know that there are probably a lot of questions. We may not be able to get to all of them, but Thomas and I will read your questions. I found it extremely helpful to read your questions and comments so that we can continue this really, in a way, as a whole, and really be responsive to what's on your minds and what's in your hearts. Look forward to your questions.

Q&A: Two Types of Witnessing

Host: Lots of questions coming in. Very hard to choose one, actually, to focus on. Maybe just to give you a flavor, some people are really asking questions about how to manage intense emotions in family systems or where the relationship is very close. Some people are asking questions about power. You also talked about the power differentials, for example, between the US and North Korea, and how blindness to power differentials can often ferment conflicts. Is there a new responsibility that's being called for around power?

Actually, the question that I'm going to read out and ask you to focus on initially is from Nancy. It's about the witnessing. I think, in your terms, William, about going to the balcony. She says, "Does the witness have any responsiveness, which, to me, implies looking through a lens or perspective or opinion? Or is the witness space a non-doing function? If it's a non-doing function, does it even belong to us? Or do we more belong to it? If my witness space is the same as the other person's, then if I go to a witnessing capacity and get there, even if the other person doesn't, am I, in effect, inviting them into the same space? Do our nervous systems somehow join and do we elevate the conversation to a more witnessing space?" I thought it was a great question to go a bit deeper into what we mean by witnessing and going to the balcony.

Maybe, William, or whoever. I don't mind, whoever wants to start. Thomas, you've taken your mic in hand, if you want to begin. Whoever wants to kick off. I think, you both have a lot to say on this topic.

William: I find the question very, very good actually. I reflected on that myself. I do believe, in some sense, there's kind of the witness, with a small "w", and there's the Witness, with a large "W". From the balcony perspective, and that's the metaphor of watching the play, then we go to a mental and emotional or spiritual balcony overlooking that play, which is a place of perspective, of calm, where we just were in that meditation that Thomas was just leading us through.

To me, there is the larger Witness, the “W”, which is... there’s only one witness in that sense. It’s really that spaciousness. I think, at least my experience is that that’s a shared space. That’s what allows me to really, truly, from a higher dimension, really empathize with other people. Then, there’s the smaller “w”, the witness, which is, maybe, more active. It’s an active witness. It’s, to me, sometimes when people think of witnessing, we think of it as passive. Most people think of a witness as someone who’s being passive. In my experience, the third side, if I were to give a single role, there are many, many different roles to the third side—there’s the mediator, there’s the arbitrator, there’s the peace keeper, there’s the teacher, there’s the bridge-builder, but if there’s a single underlying role, it’s the key role, it’s the role—I would use the word ‘witness’. The third side is a witness. It’s that spaciousness around both... And I think it’s profoundly active. It may not appear active to the outside world, but it creates that space, that container, that structure, within which, then, even the most difficult of conflicts, in my experience, have been able to be transformed—through patience, through persistence, but in that collective holding. So witnessing is central. It’s a central skill to the third side.

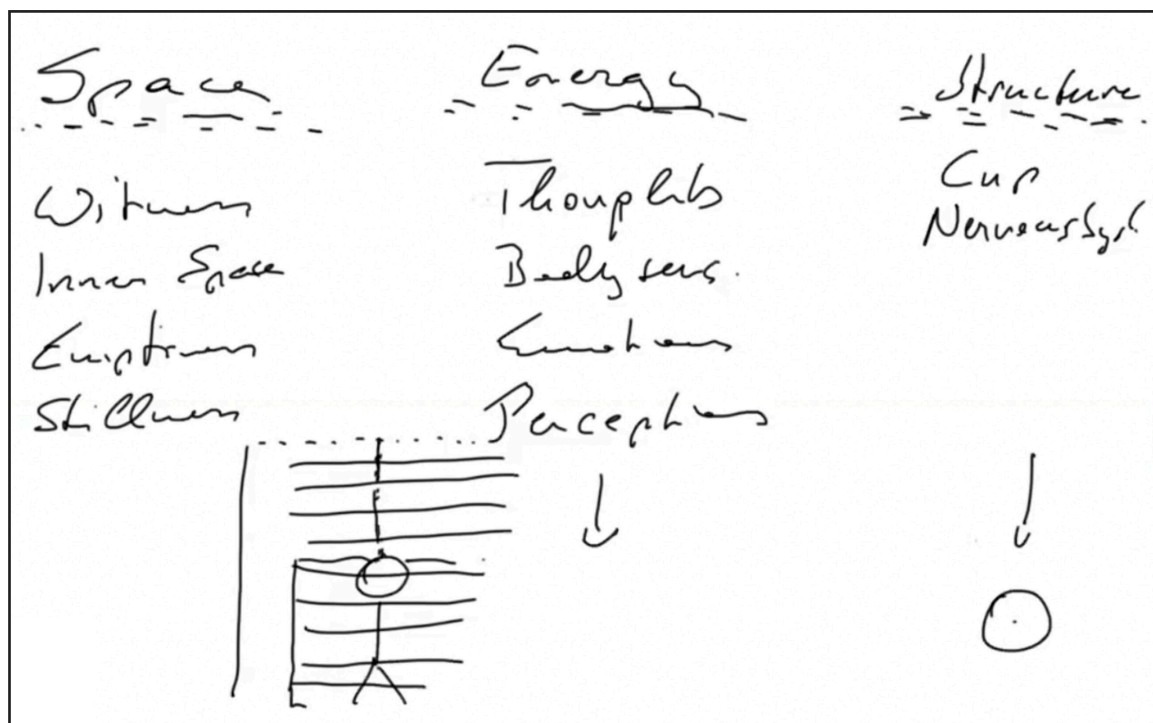
[01:35:00]

Thomas: I agree very much to what William said. I want to show something here. Maybe you can just use this as an example. Here. [*Opens Drawing 3*] What do we see? We see words. We see letters. The words give us meaning. And we see paper. So when we look at this here [*the space around the words*], the white surface, the paper, like when we read a book, usually the book is... we look at the meaning of things. When we read lines in a book, the words create a meaning in us. Shortly after we start to read a book, we are involved in a story. I think, the beauty is just very simple, with the witnessing and the words, the witnessing with the big “w”, Witness, I would say is the paper. The paper is omnipresent in the whole book. There’s always paper. The letters wouldn’t exist without the paper.

That's why, I think, our experience is not separate from the Witness, but the witness hosts the whole meaning. It doesn't matter if it's called witness, inner space, thoughts, body sensations, emotions—the Witness hosts all of it. In the spiritual practice, we learn how to deepen that witnessing capacity into such a kind of a universal witnessing that is non-dissociated. This means that it's connected to life. Then, in the mythical practice, we also say that we increase a human being's capacity of experiencing life. The antennae can either be that big [*draws a vertical line as tall as a human body*] or it can be that big [*draws a vertical line twice as tall as the human*]. Either I just know my body sensations, my emotions, and my mental perceptions, or I know a much higher frame of life. That's the second part of the spiritual practice is to build the capacity to perceive life in more and more and more dimensions of its existence. It's both true.

If we combine it, then we can say, yes, there is a big “w” Witness, there is a deep spiritual practice needed in order to rest in the depth dimension of life, and I need to refine and build the antenna of my life because that gives me access to many, many different layers that life can happen on. Many, many radio stations and many, many aspects of an orchestra. Like if I train my hearing, I will hear parts of music that I didn't hear before. I will hear aspects of life that I didn't hear before. I think that's just what I wanted to add for now to keep it simple. There is so much more to say, because basically the whole wisdom traditions are full of that question.

I think, the paper and the letter, like the emptiness and the fullness, are a beautiful example, because every time we read a book, we actually are pretty much involved in the story, like in the story of our life but we often forget that we are looking at paper, which is the witness itself.



Drawing 3b

Q&A: Presencing the Other with Our Body, Mind, and Emotions

Participant: Hello, thank you for all you've given us so far. Again, to leave time for others, I will not say a lot of other things I want to say in appreciation. My question is to Thomas in particular. I'm not clear and I'm asking for some clarity in terms of distinguishing hearing and seeing with the body and feeling, receiving with the emotions. You did give the example of the liver, so I could say to myself, "Well, the lesson to Paul is only when I actually feel something in the flesh, physically, am I listening with the body." I sense, maybe not only that. Feelings do feel physically located around chakras, for instance. I'm looking for clarity on that.

Thomas: Beautiful. Yeah, you said it already. Your body, if you listen to me and you activate your whole body, like when I listen to you, I listen to you present in my feet, in my legs, in my body, in my head, in my arms. When we learn to listen to each other but we are using our whole body presence, then the nervous system in my body receives lots of information. For example, when we see people talking about difficulties, usually they lift their energy either out of their body, so they actually go inside up, they lose a perception of certain parts of their body, or they contract in the body. When I am resting in my body, I feel the contraction, the relaxation, and the openness. The dance and the fluctuation within a person's body awareness gives me a lot of hints about their issues. Because we will see if somebody's always, I would say, if somebody talks about a difficult area in his or her life, there's some part of their body that is not inhabited.

For me, as somebody who works a lot with people in process work, it's, for me, an amazing indicator, I just need to track where the person is not, and that's my focus. My nervous system is immediately creating a relation to the part where the person is not. That's an amazing function, because that already connects me to the part in the person's, what I call, energy field where the shut down, or dissociated, or traumatized part lives. If I track that... But for this, I need my body. If I'm hypnotized by the words of the person or the story that the person tells me, then I already might lose very fine but very important information impulses that the person sends me all the time. Of course, for people who are working more in the healing or whatever in the profession of integration, that, of course, my body can get a lot of information about your body on a very physical state, like about your organs and about your inner state, about your immune system, and so on. Or about the state of your nervous system—which parts of you are activated and which parts of you are relaxed.

That's, definitely, one aspect. The second is, as you said, that emotions connect to places. When you ask people, "Okay, where do you feel your fear?" Then, usually people say, "Oh, I feel the fear in my throat. I feel the fear in my chest. I feel the fear in my legs." Fear can be located in the body. I believe, in a good process work, it's actually very important to locate the feeling, the emotion in the body in order to process it within a grounded process flow. Otherwise, emotions are all over, and we are just confused or disturbed, but it's not really changing the internal wiring of a person. And, which also says that when I listen to you with my emotional experience open, if I'm integrated enough, I can feel the fluctuations of your feelings.

When you feel fear, I can sense your fear. If you feel joy, I feel your joy. When I'm listening with my whole system, my whole system becomes like the resonance system of a guitar. It doesn't matter which string you play, the resonance body of the guitar will create an amplification of that tune. That's how I look at the whole nervous system. We train that with people that do process work, and where I hit my limit, I know that I carry, still, some of my own past trauma that doesn't allow me to go into this resonance.

In order to become the best vessel possible for my life, I think I need to notice every time I get stuck in a process, I find a situation challenging, I need to make a note or remember that and then, in my mediation, with a supervisor, with whatever, have a look—what happened there? Why did I hit an area in myself? What is that area that I hit that doesn't allow a full resonance of the external experience in my inner awareness? That's how we work on it. If you want it a bit more specific, just tell me if there's more I can address more specifically.

[01:45:00]

Participant: Yes, thanks. It sounds as though my experience of listening with more than just my mind includes the others at the same time.

Thomas: Yeah.

Participant: Yes? Okay, because when I asked the question earlier, I was assuming that there was just a way to just be listening at the emotional level, just at the body level. That's what I had no previous clarity about. But if what you're saying is your experience also is your mind, your emotions, your body are open at the same time, and there's no effort made, something will come in, and then all three can participate in my comprehension, and then, I'm triggered to focus, maybe, on one of those levels. Yes?

Thomas: Yes. That's exactly it. That's exactly it. There is no effort. It's more like an open receiving. And it will also give me the chance, if they are connected, it gives me the chance to track the disconnect in the person that I work with. In the moment I feel that I feel disconnected, either I hit my own unconscious stuff, or I really get the transmission of the disconnect that I can host in myself. And if I'm not afraid of feeling the discomfort that I receive, then I'm already, as William said, I'm already a bigger space that hosts that fragmentation in the relation. Then, it's already, I believe, the healing movement already started. Yeah, it's listening on all channels at the same time. Also, to notice if suddenly one of them is going blank.

Then, I feel, “Ah, the body goes blank. This emotion, the person felt shame for a fraction of a second, and then shut it down.” Then, okay, I just host it. I stay in the open spaciousness with the person. Yeah, right.

Participant: Thank you. That clarifies it for me.

Thomas: Great. Thank you. Thank you.

Q&A: Power Differential and Responsibility

Host: *There's a written in question here from Laura. She says, "I'm interested in what William said about how the US's ignorance of the pain we inflicted during the Korean War is playing out in this current threat of war. The imbalance of power, blinding the US to its damage, seems a very similar dynamic to the collective wound coming up around sexual abuse in the workplace here in the US and in the UK. Can you talk a bit about the new responsibility being called for around power?"*

William: Yeah, that's true. Very, very true. We are in a learning process because we are... traditionally, our societies have been quite hierarchical. That's privileged. The Western countries over the developing countries has privileged the male over the female. We are in this great era of transition where those hierarchies, those pyramids of power, are, thanks to larger forces, including technological forces and social forces and cultural forces, and in an uneven way, those pyramids of power are flattening into networks, into more horizontal relationships. What that means is the veil is being lifted over the ways in which power has been abused, as we can see in all the sexual scandals that are unfolding before us.

[01:50:00]

You can also see it in an example like North Korea, where you have the most powerful country in the world and a country that feels intensely threatened and has felt intensely threatened by the United States for the last sixty years, how they behave. For us, or I could say for the United States, in this particular case, it seems, from the perspective that when we read in the media, North Korea is a, “What's going on there? It's kind of crazy.” But if you really look into that situation and you really look at the asymmetry of power and the historical asymmetry of power, and the trauma that was experienced by all Koreans during the Korean War, then I think it gives you a little bit of empathy that actually if we were in that very weakened position and threatened position—they are almost in survival mode and constant threats.

You can imagine going back to what Thomas was saying, what that does to their nervous systems if you're constantly under threat and you feel and know that the government also plays up the threat. Every child breathes in that threat with their mother's milk, so they are raised as a society with that, sort of the collective nervous system. First of all, you can understand why it is that they've sought to develop nuclear weapons and to hold on to those nuclear weapons and not be willing to surrender those nuclear weapons—because for them, that's survival. That's their security. Then you can begin to see how, in fact, difficult it is because the United States now... the demand is that they denuclearize. But every action of the United States is symmetrical in that power situation. We've been educating them for 60 years, through our threats, that actually they need to nuclearize. I'll just give you an example of... for years during the... years ago, US government officials and so on used to tell the North Koreans, "Why can't you be like Gaddafi or Libyans?" Because Gaddafi surrendered his nuclear capability and entered into relations with the West.

Then, within a month of this new leader who was very young, coming into power a few years ago, Gaddafi was killed, body shown on TV and humiliated. We were asking him to be like Gaddafi, so you can imagine what lesson he took from that about whether or not he could trust or whether or not he would de-nuclearize. So I think, the more we can look at it through this angle, the more we can understand how challenging the situation is and trying to find a way to deal with parties that have less power in this situation. I think, your question, it's a very live question that we are sitting with in all domains of life—for the more powerful, for the less powerful, of how we learn to deal with each other as equals with dignity and respect for everyone.

Host: Thank you so much, William. Maybe, Thomas, is there any last comment from you? We are pretty much at time now, but maybe you have something you want to add to this question about a new responsibility with regard to power.

Thomas: Yes.

Host: Then, we'll close the session with some announcements.

Thomas: I think, just a few words, because I think we will anyway come back to that topic in a much more refined and elaborate way as we can do it now in a few minutes. I think, William said already a lot for now that is important. I think I would just like to throw in two things into the mix. One is, I think, in order to understand vertical power and the difference between power abuse and power and kind of what often appears now as equality is to understand the primary attachment process. What does it mean when children are attached healthily to their parents and what does it mean when we create too much peer-to-peer attachment that doesn't have a healthy vertical attachment process?

I want to just park this for now, because we don't have time to go into it, but I think it's a crucial function that determines how we deal with authorities, how we deal with power, how we deal with kind of equal rights, and what is really equal. There are many questions that I think we have to look at through the lens of the original attachment process and how much verticality is something that we connect to that is a healthy competence hierarchy is allowed or not. What is the abuse of power within a healthy and an unhealthy hierarchical system?

[01:55:00]

The other thing is also what William already mentioned, I think we need to understand the principle of what the Eastern traditions call karma. The carry-on luggage. If there is an unprocessed experience that we all know, when we cannot process an experience right away, we need time, it seems, to process it afterwards. If William and I get into an argument, and then we are both half an hour, an hour, busy afterwards to try to find out why did we get into that argument, everybody for himself, it takes processor capacity in the next moments, but I might already be with somebody else in a meeting and William might be with somebody else, but we are still processing the event from before, which means we are not fully present in the meeting where we are.

That principle, I think, is much, much deeper. If two nations had a war history, it's like a big, big powerful power cable that we let into the ocean. Now, between two countries, there's a cable that connects them, that is fixed and holds a lot of information that both of the parties are connected to and they will stay connected to until that past will be resolved. I think that's a very important principle to understand.

When we look at our world today, our world today is driven by a lot of consequences. Let's take colonialism.

Colonialism has lots of invisible power cables distributed all around the world. Nations being connected to each other in a way that is caught up, that is not emergent. It is kind of fixed. Until we understand how much work we have to do on collective levels, in order to release that kind of fixation, I think that's one of the key principles why a collective traumatization is so important. Here, in the example that William brought in, like North Korea, but in many other situations in the world also, and how that limits our capacity to even hear each other, because it goes through so many filters in our perception.

I would love to, throughout the course, to unpack that more because I think it's fascinating to see how the collective unconscious process is driving symptoms on the surface. We are often dealing with the symptoms rather than the origin, the fire in the unseen world.