



Meditate & Mediate

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Thomas: A warm welcome from my side and our side here to everybody that decided to join this class. So yes, we are embarking onto a journey together. I think, William and I would love to, at the beginning, tell you a little bit about why the two of us are sitting here today, what's our mutual passion, what's our deepening friendship, and also our mutual interest in contributing something meaningful to the world. I believe, ever since—and I will hand it over afterwards to William, of course—ever since we met, I felt that there was like a deep spark in all our conversations, basically. I've never had a conversation with William that was boring or not interesting. We always had kind of very exciting explorations. There was a lot of wisdom. There was a lot of depth and precision to the conversations that we had and the different topics we looked at together.

After some time, I think, we felt that there is a potential collaboration. I believe one of the potential collaborations formed into this course. I believe we both have a passion for wisdom, and we both have a passion for a meaningful contribution to the world. So, maybe half a year ago, we decided to think about a course together and allow many people to join in and have an online vessel. That's how I think of the course—we are having a big vessel here together, like a container. The course is a container. We wanted to open a space, of course, to let our experience flow in, but to invite you, everybody, into the conversation, which I believe is a very emergent conversation. It's a conversation that deals with an emerging world. We will come later to explore what is the state of the world right now and why we think that *Meditate and Mediate* is a meaningful contribution right now, at this point of time, on the planet. Maybe I will first welcome you, William, and give you a bit of space to come on, and then we'll take it from there. So, William.

William: Thank you, Thomas. It's a real pleasure to join you. This is a dream of ours from our first conversation, when we thought about how to take this conversation to a larger community. I really want to extend a warm welcome to all of those who are joining this because we see this not as just individuals, but we see ourselves as a community of concerned world citizens who are looking at the world today and looking at our own inner world and our own outer world and asking the question of how can we heal ourselves at the same time as we contribute to the healing of humanity, really, at this critical moment when so much seems to be shaking.

Thomas and I, really, we come from very different perspectives. Thomas, as you know, from a world of meditation and me from a world of mediation. It's interesting that the two words are so close, and there's a little T in the difference.

I was reminded this morning of a poem that I've always liked, from Robert Frost, which goes, "We dance round in a ring and suppose, but the Secret sits in the middle and knows." If you think about it for a moment, what do mediation and meditation have in common that it's they're both about sitting in the middle, sitting in the middle where the secret is, sitting in the middle where the inner secret inside of us lies, but also sitting in the middle of the community, sitting in the middle of these conflicts that are roiling our planet, from the micro, you know, in our families in our communities, to the macro, the globe itself. How do we learn to sit in the middle that can really tap into our deepest inner potential and at the same time realize our deepest outer potential, to be able to contribute, to be able to act, to be able to engage from a perspective of awareness?

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Thomas and I sort of dreamed about convening a circle of people who felt the same burning question, and to see if we can learn together, if we can engage in a learning journey together, so it's an enormous pleasure for me to be here with you and to be embarked on this journey. As with the journey, we may have an idea where the destination is, but we're going to really feel our way through this journey. We hope that it will be a very practical journey. It will bring each of us practical skills of how do we navigate our lives in the world of today.

Creating a Collective Field to Redefine Leadership in a Changing World

Thomas: Yes, that gives me kind of a hint for the next step that I would love to bring in. As you said, there's a difference between 'meditate' and 'mediate', and it's a letter. In between 'meditate' and 'mediate', there is an 'and'. What does the 'and' mean? I think that's a very... I would love to start here because throughout this journey, we will definitely address competencies. We will address human development. We will address competencies how to engage in the outer world. And, as I said already in our conversation before we started, to William, that I believe we are living in a world where many structures in society are going to change—technology, climate changes, and many other kind of challenges that we have, many of the structures in consciousness—and they are always structures within us, these are habits, neuronal connections, these are emotional patterns in us, but they're also structures in society. That's the way how we do things, that's the way how we live together, how we form societies, how we build, basically, cultural architecture.

But if, for example, through a technological revolution, many of the ways we are doing things will be obsolete, so we will have to rethink our society. Not only rethink, the society will naturally shift in the next 10, 20 years in a massive way, most probably, which means that all of us—and that's why we wanted, also, to convene kind of a circle—is that we are looking, okay, what is a leadership, a grounded leadership, a present leadership, an emotional and mature leadership, connected leadership, an aware leadership within a time where structures are going to change. Sometimes when structures change, we are happy about them, but also very often when structures change, it scares us. When things become scary, circumstances become scary, usually the potential for underlying conflicts and disagreements and all the effects that that has are growing.

We both believe that, throughout this course, we can kind of lay out, maybe, a vision, a roadmap, competencies, and so forth, that can help us and support us to be of service in a changing world.

I believe, many people who were drawn to this course are anyway already in a kind of a leadership or participatory function in society, and we want to explore with all our intelligence how we can improve this and how we can be fit for the time to come. I will, again, hand it over afterwards to William, and I see human development as one of the greatest adventures of our time—not only of our time, of all times, basically, but now, we are alive now—so that human development, I believe, is an art and human relation is an art, and in order, like with every art, why are some of the artists that refine and refine and refine and refine their skill to an extent that many people sit in awe when they hear music, when they see a movie, when they see a painting.

It has a reason, because there is a refined coherence that we built, and that coherence has a transmission.

A great art piece is a great art piece because it has a transmission. It transfers a consciousness. A great symphony transfers a consciousness. I believe, when we set up this course, I tend to see a course, many of the courses that I run, and I believe that William sees it in a similar way, that courses are not just 12 course sessions and some mentoring calls and triads and everything that we offer as this course, but it's a 24/7 six-month engagement, and life is our teacher. There is an invisible conductor to this course that I would love to bring in as well, that's the essence of life itself, that's when we take impulses—and we will give lots of impulses and recommendations to practice with.

I'd love to invite you to take on some of the recommendations and research and explore those in your own life. So, whatever you do—when you're with your family, when you're at work, when you walk through the woods, or when you sit and meditate, or when you mediate a conflict—that we make the next six months a very intense practice container. Why is that important? Because I believe that the third side, as William puts it, like the circle around the fire is a very strong collective intelligence and power. I believe, and that's what I have seen in other online courses, that we very often create a very strong collective field, like the group becomes also a field of intelligence. Within that field, there's an alchemy.

The fact that we are all joining, that we all put a lot of wisdom, intelligence, abilities, competencies here, together, in this container, all of us, creates a force. I believe, within that force, we have a learning opportunity, a field that enhances our learning, that enhances inner development. That's why I invite you to make, for the next six months, your life kind of the field of exploration in every aspect, because life's always happening. I believe, true practitioners, they are... You know, our life is our practice. That also makes it that there isn't anything that can be *in the way*, like an obstacle, I believe everything *is* the way. This is, of course, my invitation, and I think, if we all participate in this intensity of a course that grows sprouts through our practice, I think, then we have an amazing chance of emerging or emergence. New things are going to be emerging. Maybe, William, maybe you have something to add?

William: Yeah, I'd love just to reflect on that, Thomas, because it seems to me so much, in the world today, there's so much happening. We get so much through the TV, through the internet, so much news. Like right now I'm working on the conflict between the United States and North Korea, which poses an existential threat to us all, and the question is, how do we sit with something like that without dissociating, how do we, as Thomas was putting it, how do we go through it, how do we learn to recognize that something that seems so far away, some conflict so far away, is actually us? This is the thing I found—my passion, ever since I was a boy, was kind of sitting with that question of how are we as, you know, because I traveled the world and met people who have many different cultures, many different fates, how are we all going to get along and deal with our differences given the fact that we live in a world in which we now have these weapons of incredible destructiveness?

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There's this race that Einstein suggested we were in, between our technological genius of being able to devise ways that put, actually, an end to the human experiment, and our social, our moral, our emotional, our spiritual genius to be able to find ways to live together and make the world the way we want, we would like it to be for us and our children and our grandchildren. To me, that's the great challenge. I'm an anthropologist by training. As an anthropologist, I've wandered the world and I've always asked myself this question of what's the secret to peace, really—which is something that we all aspire to. Peace within and peace without. Interestingly enough, what I found over the years was the secret to peace, actually, is right here. It's us. It's in our own inner work, which is represented by the field of meditation. But it's also in our own outer work. It's in our ability to convene what Thomas was just referring to as a circle. This is our oldest human birthright, and I've seen it in every society, in every indigenous society: people, when there's a problem, people would gather around the campfire—the women, the men, the children. Conflicts are not just regarded as belonging to individuals, it's a community process, and the community embraces the conflict.

So that for right now, for example, in this situation that's facing the entire world right now, this imminent dangerous escalating conflict between the United States and North Korea in which there's a possibility for the first time, which is almost unimaginable, of a nuclear bomb going off again, after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, how do we embrace it? How do we embrace the parties? How do we embrace the conflict? How do we move in? That's a big conflict like North Korea, but we all have those conflicts in our lives, whether it's in our families, with our friends, with our neighbors, with our communities, there seems to be so much polarization. How do we include? How do we do that? That, to me, is really the genesis of this course, is how do we recreate that ancestral campfire that is really our birthright? How do we create this? Right now we're having a virtual campfire. We're all circled around. There are people on this call from around the world. How do we come together and tap into our collective wisdom, the wisdom of our ancestors? How do we listen to the wisdom of our descendants to be able to manifest and begin to give birth to the world that we would all like to see?

Thomas: It's beautiful that, basically, you know, we do love to go through the course a bit in different steps. One will definitely focus more on, as you said, William, on the inner development, inner individual development, so what do I bring to the campfire? Because it's also, it's important that we meet around the campfire, but it's also important who sits around the campfire and what do I add to this circle of the third side. There is an individual dimension to that, then there is a collective dimension—what is the cultural architecture of a functional society that can take care of its own life base, and then there is a transpersonal side, as the title shows, so what is the greater meaningful context that we are embedded in that is also a key player within that, within our exploration.

Negotiating from Inside Out: Bridging Our Inner and Outer Worlds

Just for some practical steps, throughout this course we will always introduce, or most probably we'll introduce certain topics, or maybe we will circle back to practical applications, like you mentioned right now with the conflict between the US and North Korea, or we will introduce something that is of interest, I believe, for all of us, and that speaks to our own lives and to parts in us and to parts in the whole. And then we will always give some space or time for live Q&A's, so that you can come online and we can have conversations with you. You can address one of us if you have questions that are coming up. We will also have some guided practices or inner explorations, inner journeys, meditations, or simply give some impulses to contemplate throughout the week so that our course will also have a strong practical application, as I've said before.

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The first thing that I would love to ask you is what I started before when I pointed to that our course is called Meditate and Mediate, so there's an inner world, it seems, that's happening inside. There's an inner space to my experience. This room, this camera, this computer arises in me. It's not that I see the camera, the computer, the monitor—it arises in my perception. So when I perceive something, when I see it, once it appears in my conscious awareness, it's coated into me. It's the camera in me. It's you in me. I believe, every time we see somebody, we see the person in us. When I look at William, I see William already coated in my sense perception. It's not that I see William, I see just what arises in me. If that's completely congruent with what happens outside—I don't know.

Perception is always connected also to a factor of uncertainty or not knowing. Wisdom is also to keep that factor of not knowing open. If I become too certain of who William is, most probably I am going to miss something. If I leave a part open that allows me to say, “Okay. That’s what I perceive,” but I actually don’t fully know who’s out there, so I give space for relation and space for emergence that we can become something new together. That’s one thing.

Then the other thing is, of course, something is out there. Like there’s the outer world, there’s my inner world, and my inner world is also what I feel, what I feel in my body, what I feel in my emotions, what I think, and my intuition, my inspiration, my capacity to be innovative—all of those qualities are happening as well. I can tell you what I feel in my body right now. I can tell you which emotional state I am in. There’s also a reflectedness about the inner perceptions.

But then, I believe, something that often is not being fully in the spotlight is the ‘and’. The ‘and’ is the connection, the connection between my inner world and my outer perception. When I talk to somebody and I can feel the person in front of me, we are connected. There is relation. If I stop feeling, so then I don’t feel you anymore. I am not anymore fully related to you. I lost you, because maybe my emotions, my anger, my fear, my shame, or my trauma starts to rattle strong enough that I lose you. Then my processor capacity is overwhelmed by my inner... my nervous system is overwhelmed by my inner process. Or the other way around, I shut down my inner process. I am still kind of with you, but I don’t feel myself anymore.

First of all, I am interested how you experience this, William, this kind of connection. It seems like a small thing, but William sits in New York, I am sitting in Tel Aviv. If just our internet connection was cut, all this livestream now would be over. This call wouldn’t happen. I believe that, throughout the course, we will look at inner development. We will also look at outer relation and the way how we build a world, and how the world around us is being built through co-creation—we are creating it together—how values are being built through co-creation, how structures are built, how collective shadows work. All of that’s important, but then there is this tiny Mediate and Meditate or Meditate and Mediate—it’s this *and*.

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I believe, within this *and*, there is a hugely important factor that sometimes we might assume that if somebody sits in front of us that this connection works, but what we've learned already, through the whole trauma research in the last 20, 30 years, is that that connection in a traumatization, when the traumatization is triggered, most probably will stop working. That means that the inner and the outer world are separate. I believe that's a hugely important function that I would love to draw our attention to, to start with. But I am very much interested how you, William, relate to what I said right now and, maybe, also how your experience in being in many crisis situations and working in many crisis situations, if there is anything you want to add?

William:

I love that, Thomas, because that, to me, is the key, as there's the outer world as we see it and then there's the inner world, and what's the connection between the two. You know, as I reflect over the last 30, 40 years of experience in negotiation and all kinds of context—from families to labor disputes to business disputes to wars and so on—people would ask me what's the most important skill that you need to be able to negotiate. Negotiate, I mean, something that we all do every single day, simply back and forth communication. You're trying to reach agreement with the other side. You know, there are many skills you need, many competencies, but to me, maybe the central one is the ability to put yourself in the other side's shoes and try to understand the world the way they see it or that they feel it. Of course, because after all, negotiation is an exercise in influence, you're trying to change the other side's mind. How can you change their mind unless you know where their mind is and their heart? Where are they coming from?

Of course, the key human behavior we use to do that is listening, you know? There's this old saying that God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason. It's to listen twice as much as we talk. If you observe the behavior of successful negotiators, you find that they listen far more than they talk. It's easier to say that, that the key is listening, the key is being able to put yourself in the other side's shoes. The key is in exercising empathy. But when we are involved in conflict, as we all are on a daily basis with people, with tensions, and on a global basis, it's not so easy to listen. What I've come around to understanding is the reason it's not so easy to listen to others is, and it goes back to your point, Thomas, is that we haven't first listened to ourselves. In other words, we haven't made that connection from the outer to the inner.

If we haven't listened to ourselves, if we don't know where... we're not feeling it in our bodies, we're not listening to ourselves, listening to our own emotions of fear that often shows up in conflict, or anger, or shame, or humiliation, or trauma, if we don't listen to ourselves, then our minds, our hearts are so crowded with all these voices that there's no space for us to possibly listen to another. This is why I'm so excited about this course is because I see the key to us learning to get along and to deal with our differences, and to resolve our problems, and to realize our opportunities together is clearly to be able to get to yes, but I have come to realize that actually the prerequisite to getting to yes with others—which is what we all want to do whether it's our family and friends or whoever— the key to getting to yes with others is actually first to get to yes with ourselves. It's to make that link, that bridge between the inner and the outer to kind of negotiate from the inside out, as it were.

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That's why I'm so excited about this course and why I've been so excited in our conversations, Thomas, is if we can make that bridge, if we can marry and blend the inner arts and the outer arts, then we'll be the most effective global change agents, the most effective, what I call, third siders who hold the whole, who hold the future, who hold the future of our children in our hands and then are really in service to that. Because we have people in the world who are very engaged in the world, but they're not so much paying attention to themselves, they're not so aware of themselves, so it's limited because there's burnout, and we get into lots of conflicts—I see a lot of that with activists. Then there are those of us who are really focused on the inner, they're really focusing on self-awareness and so on, but sometimes we're not so engaged in the world. My question is, how can we do both? How can we have engaged awareness or aware engagement? How can we do both? How can we blend and bring together the inner and the outer arts so that we can be most effective in really helping to make the world the way we'd like it to be?

Thomas: There might be a tendency in somebody to be more skilled and interested on inner processes, and then for other people on outer processes. Actually, that in both cases, if there is this preference, we definitely have to look at the bridge, like what's happening to the bridge and where does that bridge collapse. If it collapses—this might be for a second, this might be for a minute, and this might be for an hour, or this might have happened in the past, and it's, since then, most of the time,—but I think just paying attention, like as a practice, as an awareness practice, I can take this as a research question or exploration into my life: whenever I sit with somebody, I pay attention.

If I can notice when those two—I describe this sometimes as two video projectors—so my internal, right now as I sit here, I have an internal perception: I know what's happening in my body, at least to a certain extent, I know what's happening in my emotions, in my mind, and so on.

One, I believe, in my brain right now, one video projector projects, onto the screen of my perception, my inner world. Then another projector projects my perception of my room, my perception of William, of the group that is sitting here. We have two overshadowing projectors.

Two Types of Listening: Zooming In and Zooming Out

As William said, in moments when I am relaxed and when I am open and when I am totally free, it's easy to listen. Listening, again, has two factors. It has the factor of allowing somebody in, so I really take you in. But in order to take you in, I need to be undefended. Because if I am already protected and defended, so I cannot take you in, so that's where it starts. You stand in front of my door. You're not sitting in my living room. But if we have our conversation in front of the door of my house, it's going to be a different atmosphere than when you sit in my living room and we have a cup of tea or coffee and we have a conversation. That changes the environment. Integration, mediation, and kind of like inner growth usually needs the right environment.

There's one dimension of listening that... where I let you in. Often when we're in conflict, we see that actually we don't want to let the other person in, because we are actually right and it stops. Then there's another form of listening which is equally important. The one is space and the other one is a focus. Like I listen to you as if we both were sitting in a very noisy restaurant and I really want to understand what you're saying. You're telling me your deepest life's wisdom in a very noisy restaurant, and I need to get what you're saying. There is one level of concentration and attunement that's equally important, I believe. We have one that is space, relaxation and openness. Another one that is very attuned, like that I listen to the one tune of a guitar or a piano. We have these two forms of listening.

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Again, I am more focused on you. I really listen to you because it's specifically to you. It's not everybody—it's you. And I let you in. I make space in myself to really feel you and also to put myself, as William said, into your shoes, or in your shoes. Then we have two forms of listening and two video projectors, so they're fading in and out. When I am relaxed, that's very easy. But when I am not relaxed, when I am tense, when I get triggered, when I am emotionally overwhelmed, or when my trauma gets triggered, so that function is being lost. Then the person in front of me, or I am by myself, don't have that bridge anymore available. But that bridge, I believe, is relation. That's what relates the mystical knowledge to the scientific outer knowledge of building a world and understanding one's inner processes and how meditation and mediation are actually partners in the construction of our world and, as William put it, in finding peace, peace within and outside.

So one recommendation, if you want to start with it, is that to take that exploration into your life and let's examine the bridge. The bridge, my self-contact, and we will, in the next calls, we will also look deeper at what's the inner realm of development, what's the outer realm of development. How, within myself, the capacity to feel myself, and the capacity to feel you, the other, the world, a group, North Korea, whatsoever, is possible, or that I have only one or the other. I can, maybe, feel you, but I have no idea anymore what I feel, or I am overwhelmed with what I feel and I lost you out there already because my inner turmoil is too strong—or we have a healthy fade in, fade out, and the intensity might change, but it stays related. So I would put a lot of stock market investments on the bridge. I think that's one key to our world. Maybe, sometimes a factor that's not being held in the spotlight as much as it's needed. Maybe, William, if you have something to add, and maybe afterwards we can go on a guided journey, but I want to hand it back over to you.

William: I would love that. I think it's time to go on a guided journey. I'll just add that, to me, as I'm listening to you, Thomas, the metaphor that comes is like a camera lens. Our ability to listen is partly our ability to zoom in. As you said, to focus, to really listen to the other person as if it's their dying words, that they're giving you their wisdom, to have that kind of intense focus. That zooming in function—and then the lens zooms out and kind of has that wider perspective. The ability, to me, in any kind of conflict situation, to be able to zoom in and then zoom out, zoom in, zoom out, to me, is the key. Zooming in is kind of like the attentional mechanism that we have to really pay acute attention. Zooming out is more like awareness. It's kind of like wider awareness.

To me, that ability to do that constantly in our conversations, to me, is kind of the key to success, really. A lot has to do with that bridge. I love the idea that we have the inner world, we have the outer world—now we have to kind of build the bridge between the two worlds because that will unleash the potential of both worlds to really serve us in our lives to create the lives we want to lead and to create the world we want to lead, so I do think it's time for... I'd love to have a guided meditation, Thomas, so please proceed.

Thomas: Yeah, it reminds me a bit of—sometimes, when I drive a car, I somehow imagine how that would land with our, I don't know, a traffic ministry to make an overall study, what does it mean that drivers can keep an internal and external awareness so that it really lands with me that there are other people on the road, and that there is a flow, and then there is the movement, and that we really have this fluid mechanism. I think we would have, actually, a certain amount of percentage less traffic jams, if we could just perform that one function. So maybe even driving our car might be a great place to practice that because I think it's a practical application that would most probably be good for all of us because we would enjoy less traffic jams. I believe, that's just one way where it's very obvious when that function is on line and what kind of flow state it allows, and if that function is not aligned, what kind of flow states we prevent in our lives. If flow—like flow states, or being in the zone, or being in the movement of life is something that we all feel is a consequence of yes, it's a consequence of really being aligned with life's intelligence, so then we see how important that function is that you said, building that bridge.

Well, so I believe where the good musician starts is with his or her instrument. We have that instrument, we have, let's say, a guitar, but we all know how it sounds if somebody doesn't know how to tune the guitar and plays the guitar very passionately—the passion is, maybe, very lovely, but it's good to play with passion and tune the guitar before. It makes a difference. So I believe our instrument is what we are sitting in. That's why I want to invite you now onto kind of a contemplative or meditative journey. That's something, especially for the ones that do not have a regular meditation practice, that's something... we will have different recorded meditations, so you know, throughout this course we will have the repertoire of different guided meditations that can be supportive to re-listen to and practice at home in between the sessions here. We will introduce, maybe, different meditations over time that help us to grow different muscles, consciousness muscles.

Basically, if we simplify it, we are sitting in a body. We are feeling life and connecting life, connecting to life, and building relationships through emotions, and we have the capacity to interpret, reflect on and, of course, build a world through our thoughts. And there is a component of awareness to it, and a kind of higher creativity.

Begin Meditation

So when we start with the most simple one, so if you want, you can sit with an upright spine—it's the best, of course—and take a few moments to let your breath take you just into the simplicity of sitting here.

One beauty of meditation is that it's simple. Actually, the most simple aspect of life is just being. Being in the simplicity of sitting, for example.

Every time you exhale, you can let your breath take you into your body, feel your body as you sit on a chair, sofa, wherever you are, on the floor. Allow your breath to fill—every time you exhale, it's like a wave that goes down into your pelvis, into your legs, into the ground. Enjoy how that wave of your exhale ripples out. You follow the exhale until it ends. Usually, there is a gentle gap, a moment of resting, and then the inhale starts again.

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Every time you exhale, it's like dropping a bit deeper into the simplicity of just sitting here, breathing, feeling. At the beginning, we might feel the posture of our body, the surface that we are sitting on, the movement of our chest, the movement of our belly. Breathing in, breathing out.

The more I listen to my body, I feel into my body, pay attention to my body, the more subtle details that appear—like streaming sensations, aliveness. Certain areas that are more alive, certain areas that are less alive. Maybe tension, maybe stress, which parts of my body are stressed right now or tense.

I still keep focusing on my body and what a beautiful instrument my body is. Hundreds of thousands of years of life building, designing, refining this kind of biocomputer. The beauty of collaboration, of emotions, capacity to think rationally. We have intuition, inspiration, relation. My body is kind of a miracle. It has been refined over a long, long time, and it all sits here. All that wisdom sits here.

And then within the body, usually grounded in the body, is my capacity to feel emotions, like a whole repertoire of emotions. If I check in right now, what is my emotional flavor? Or maybe I don't feel any emotional flavor. Whatever it is, I am just checking in. I notice and I just stay with what I find when I hear that question, what's the emotional flavor or is there no emotional flavor that can be named?

How much do I love to be in the world of my emotions? Is that something, is that a place where I am at home? I love feeling, feeling emotions, I can own my emotions—or do I feel certain emotions as difficult, or I dislike them, I would rather live a life without them? Do I consider my emotions as a very important part of my health, my vitality, my social networking and social network, my relational network? Emotions connect us.

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Then, of course, I can move on and I can see another part of my internal perceptions, my awareness of my thought process. My mind's active to a certain extent. Sometimes it's racing, one thought after the other. Sometimes we might not be able to sleep because we are thinking a lot. Sometimes we are very relaxed. The mind's just gently producing thoughts here and there in a wide spacious environment. Sometimes I am locked in to circular thinking patterns. I am thinking the same thing over and over again—and sometimes my mind feels open, creative, receptive, inspired. I come up with new ideas, new content that I didn't think of before. Whatever you find right now, within the whole spectrum, just notice. There's nothing to change.

Of course, then there is my perception of the environment, the room that I sit in has a temperature, maybe sounds or noises, has an atmosphere, smells, fragrances.

When I listen to my internal perceptions and, maybe, my external perceptions, there is another function which is listening itself, the part of me that is aware of my perceptions, the part of me that can notice perceptions. Let's pay attention to the awareness part itself. It's often when we are mindful, which means we bring awareness to our perceptions, and there's a dimension of inner space, awareness, listening, timelessness, sense of being that arises stronger. Let's listen for a moment to that inner space, the quality of listening. Allowing life in *is* space, deepest listening space. It's open and it's kind of timeless.

If you sense kind of this dimension of space where also kind of the body becomes more expanded inside or there's a little bit more stillness, awareness, presence—to listen to that presence for a moment. That every one of us has that depth dimension, presence dimension, always available. Sometimes it gets overshadowed by activity, but we all have a right to be, to be in life.

Then, maybe at the end of this guided journey, let's maybe take one of a more conflicted situation in your last week or weeks. If you remember that situation, we just check in for now: how did I feel about this bridge? How did I feel in my inner world? How much connection was there to my outer world, to the other person, the group, the environment, the situation? How much could I bridge these two, so that relation is inner connection and outer world together? That's my capacity to relate. I feel myself, my self-contact. There's a bridge—I feel connected and I have an awareness and a felt sense of the other, so to speak.

When you think of or you tune in with a recent conflict or a situation that you experienced that's tight or very challenging, how was the bridge? What was inside, what was outside, and what connected them?

Then finally, let's let it go for now—it's just the beginning, we will explore it deeper—and take a couple of deeper breaths. Connect to your body, to your sitting, to where you are right now, and slowly come back and open your eyes.

End of Meditation

Well, just for now, something that we will continue working, and then I will hand it back over to you, William.

I believe, as simple as it sounds—the body, the emotions, the mind—there's a body, plugged into the body are emotions, and they're supposed to be experienced in the body, in the healthy way, and plugged into that is our rational thinking. In the best sense, that's one line. So when we tune in with our nervous system, with the different parts of our brain and our nervous system, so communication is either one message or fragmented messages. My emotions say a bit something else, something else than my mental and my physical expression. That's something that we will come back to. I think the meditation can give us a very good overview.

[01:00:00]

Also, something that we will work with is that our listening is a listening with the whole body. Another recommendation, maybe, the next weeks to listen to people as if your body had eyes all over—like from the toes to your head, everywhere, eyes and ears. So we are not just looking through our eyes, we are actually looking through the whole body. When I listen to you, my whole body is one big ear, or two ears, and I listen to you with my whole resonance system. I believe, that's a very powerful practice, if I look how often can I really listen with my whole body and when am I getting absorbed in my mind and my understanding. Yeah, but I think that's enough for today on this subject. We will circle back to it. Maybe, William, you have something to add?

William: I do. I thought that was very beautiful, Thomas. I'm grateful. I think it gives us a glimpse of just... you know, all of us, I think we would all benefit by, during the course, taking some actual situations that we're facing in our lives—it could be in our families, it could be in our workplace, it could be in the larger world—and actually apply this and see if it works, and then see what questions come out of it. I think we'll get a lot more value out of the course if each of us is kind of working some situations practically.

Space Is a Precious Asset in Preventing and Resolving Conflict

For me, that was a beautiful exercise because it gives you a glimpse of what if you're in the midst of a conflict with someone, and you just kind of take a pause like that—like, Thomas, you led us through so beautifully. And for me, what I could feel was, first of all, the idea that when we listen, we don't just listen with our ears—our whole bodies are sensing mechanisms. We're listening with our emotions, you know. Sometimes we think of emotions as a problem in negotiation, but emotions really are exquisite sensing devices to really... that tell us where our needs, where the things we care most about are not being met somehow. They're clues. There's a kind of emotional intelligence we can bring to the situation.

And the other thing I found is that, as I was going through that exercise, is that in that meditative state, the boundaries dissolve. The boundaries dissolve between me and the other person. It's not like there's a—because right now we think there is this body, and they are separate beings, but in fact, the other person is inside of us. So that even on a larger issue—like, for example, take North Korea, which very much on my mind since I'm working at it right now—you know, it's one thing to think of North Korea as being a country over there, and we have these perceptions of it, and we have these perceptions that it's kind of crazy and so on, or we have that perceptions about the United States now, the leadership is also a little unstable. But if we, in a meditative state, we imagine that in fact humanity is a body and North Korea is us, it's like a wound on our body. It was a wound from a war, a deep, deep, deep trauma where millions of people died that we kind of forgot about because we had a Band-Aid over it—but now, actually, the wound is turning gangrenous and it's threatening the body. So it's us. To really, to me, the meditative state allows me to approach a conflict not as if it's the other but as if it's us. There's only us. There's no other. There's no 'they' out there. There's just us. Then, from within that context, new insights emerge. If we approach it as 'us' rather than 'us versus them'—new insights, new creative insights about how to approach that, there's only us here, and so the boundaries dissolve.

[01:05:00]

The last thing I'll say about the meditative state is that so much of conflict is driven by, if you look at it, a kind of an inner assumption that there isn't enough, that I need that other person to give me something or I need that other party to give me something. But in the meditative state, I kind of get a sense of 'there's an abundance'. It's kind of like, oh, okay, for a moment there, as we were thinking, all is well in the world, because all is well, and so there's an abundance, so I'm fed from the inside, so I'm not so needy, I'm not so dependent on the other. I don't need them to give me something because that something actually arises from within life. That's life's gift to me. Then, if I'm not so needy, I'm going to negotiate. I'm going to relate to that person in a very different way than if I need something from them.

So, for me, just that little meditative exercise gives us some glimpses of how powerful an instrument that can be to take a pause, to do an exercise like that before we're going to have a difficult meeting or a difficult phone call, to just take five minutes or ten minutes and do something like that. Or if things get out of hand, to pull back and say, "Let's take a few minutes." Then you'll come back, and you'll come back bringing your best self to that situation. A self in which you realize that, in the end, there is no distinction between you and the other person. It's all *us*. There is no *them* out there.

So thank you, Thomas. It's very beautiful, just as a little, again, a glimpse of an instrument that we can use and practice in our daily life. We can integrate it into the everyday conflicts that we all are involved in and bring it to bear on even the larger conflicts. Imagine that the leaders right now, North Korea and the United States, could engage in an exercise like that. They might come at their meeting, their conversation, a little bit differently. They might tweet a little bit differently.

Thomas: Yes. I really like... I want to highlight some points that you mentioned. I really think that, on the one hand, we might all say, you know, most probably many of us have very full schedules—we have many things to attend to, if, in our time, we are fathers and mothers, we have a job, we want to make a meaningful contribution to life—and we are living in a time that has a very, very fast-paced data exchange, which means that the innovation of the world is being exchanged in a very rapid speed, but also trauma impulses. We hear... our cellphones are able to channel the latest news, in no time, onto our phones. If we want to be exposed to what's happening in the world, everybody, many people, most probably everybody here on the line has access to it. I think we are exposed—and that's something very important—that our nervous systems are being exposed to rapid data exchange and rapid trauma exchange.

This means that, through many impulses, I don't hear anymore mainly about my village or my environment. Today, we hear about a global situation—which I think is very timely and necessary and I think we have to go there anyway in order to become world citizens, and not just mental world citizens but mental, emotional, physical. The world-centric consciousness is being implemented in our bodies so that we really care and feel the world—and our local lives, wherever we live. That is already a stretch because that's something that we all are being initiated into, throughout our lifetime.

That's why I think what you said before, William, is so important—exactly because of the reason that our nervous systems are being exposed to a lot of data and that we are living in a time that becomes faster and faster, we need to take care of space. Like, two minutes before a critical phone call, to take two minutes, five minutes to just center oneself, to feel oneself, to contemplate on the conversation or negotiation or just the next meeting of a person, or while we write an email, and we feel it's a more delicate email, that we tune in—the person, according to the wisdom traditions, is here, as William said, within us. We can feel that person that we are writing to. Maybe this would deescalate many email conversations. Maybe better not to even write some emails and take a phone and make a phone call, sometimes better.

[01:10:00]

But that space is an incredibly precious asset. To have inner space means I have the capacity to be reflected. I have the capacity to take a breath. Once life closes on us too much, that capacity gets lost. I think that's the beginning of many, many challenging situations that we know in our life.

But just to highlight that part that sometimes two minutes can change a conversation, two minutes can change the course of a business meeting, of a family meeting. It's a very powerful tool. Why? Because contemplation and mediation—and that's something that neuroscience, luckily, comes up with; I mean, mindfulness was good thousands of years ago, now we have neuroscience prove it, and that's why it's on Time Magazine, now it's kind of a big thing in the world, but it was a big thing always already—so, also neuroscience shows us that there's more and more coherence through contemplative practices. We can literally create a deeper coherence between our bodies, our emotions, our minds, our higher creativity, and within the environment that we are in. That's a factor that I believe that... I mean, in the extreme versions, people like you, William, when you work in very extreme circumstances and, I think, to mediate a conflict within countries or between countries is a more extreme version of it, but I believe it's resting on the same principles like when you meet your wife or when you meet your friends and there is friction.

I want to underline what William said, is that space is, I believe, a very precious asset—we will unfold that throughout the course. Then, maybe the last thing from my side, and then I hand it back over to you if there's more to say and maybe we can, afterwards, open the space for Q&As and see what questions are in the room, so...

I find it interesting that—coming back for a moment to the line that my body, my emotions and my mind say the same thing, and that's for sure something that we can explore, but also, and that's what I would love to continue with, also, next time—that my body, first of all, is a super... it's not just my body. My body is a biocomputer that has grown and been refined for hundreds of thousands of years and more. I think it's a genius miracle. Why do all those cells decide to stay in this shape and form two hours that we are talking? Why don't the cells decide, "No, we don't want to look like this anymore, and we dissolve?" Or why don't they think, "No, we are not being one state anymore, we'll now be two states?" That wouldn't be—I mean, that would be very interesting if that happened—but it's how are all those cells deciding to stay in the collaboration that they are in? I think that's a miracle.

My body, I believe, talks to your body. My emotions talk to your emotions. And my mind talks to your mind. But often in life my mind starts to explain you about my feeling, and that's where I think where it starts. Let's play a bit with the notion that bodies talk to bodies, emotions talk to emotions, and minds talk to minds. It's lovely to talk about philosophy or any kind of methods or science, but I believe feelings should be felt between people, not explained. Once I explain you what I feel or you explain to me what I feel, and I don't feel what you feel, I believe that's already an important signal or symptom. I think that's everything from my side for this session. If you have anything to add, William, and then I suggest we open the lines and see what questions are in the room. But maybe you want to add, still, something.

[01:15:00]

William:

I'm always very stimulated by what you're saying, I go in many directions here. The one thing that comes to mind is, before you get into a phone call or an email or a tense meeting or whatever, I think, that idea of the congruence of thought, emotion, body, to be able to pay attention to that, even the notion that somehow, to me, what is getting to yes with yourself mean? It means—I would like to use the word 'coherence'. There's a kind of coherence. There's a cohering. There's a unity. Then we're going to be much more effective in being able to communicate emotion to emotion, thought to thought, and body to body. That whole notion and, I think, that exercise you led to us, allowed us to get a higher level of coherence, which is key.

As you know, one of my favorite metaphors—and I like metaphors, for some reason I think well in metaphors—it's almost like we're negotiating or relating to other people on a stage.

To me, the key in being able to get to yes, to negotiate, to influence others, is the ability to step back from that stage, go to what I call a balcony, a mental or an emotional or a spiritual balcony—which is just a metaphor for a place of calm, of perspective, of self-control. For me, so often what we have to do is we learn to go to the balcony, you know, just... Maybe this is a moment to go to the balcony. And on the balcony, maybe we can do an exercise, like a visualization, or every one of us has our favorite ways of going to the balcony—it might be to go for a run, or a workout, or have a coffee with a friend—something that gives us perspective, the ability to pull back from the situation and really ask ourselves what we really want. Because so often, as you were mentioning, we're these biocomputers, but we also have these... We're human beings. We're reaction machines.

As the old saying goes, when angry, you will make the best speech you ever regret, or you will send the best email you ever regret, or the best text you ever regret. The ability to just take that moment, and I think the keyword you have there is space, that little bit of space—it could be 15 seconds, it could be a minute, it doesn't have to be long in the day—to kind of pay attention to what's going on in our body, to listen to our own feelings, to watch the pattern of our own thoughts, and to come back into a state of greater coherence, we're going to be so much more effective because we waste so much time, I see constantly, missing each other, miscommunicating, picking up the pieces.

You know, I'll just say one thing I learned this weekend working on North Korea. Here we are, here the world is kind of focused on this issue. In this age of technological communication, the main way—as you know, Korea is divided between the North and the South—and the main way the forces in the South communicate to voices of the North, if they need to communicate a message right now, unfortunately is, an expert was just telling me this is what happens, is someone drives up to the border there, there's a little village there called Panmunjom, and they pull out a bullhorn and they shout, through the bullhorn, a message, and someone on the North then records that message and sends it on.

To me, that's a kind of a metaphor for how we are communicating.

I mean, here we are. This is a nuclear crisis, and we're communicating with a bullhorn, unilaterally, from one side to the other. To me, that's a kind of a metaphor for even in our private lives. What do we do when we're having the most sensitive issues with our children? I think like that we pull out the bullhorn—instead of tuning into our bodies and really giving the most subtle kind of coherent communication that will actually allow us to actually contribute to the healing of a situation rather than the exacerbation of a situation. So I think it's time for us to put away our bullhorns and to bring out our ears and listen with our whole bodies.

Q&A: Dealing with “Difficult” People—Boundaries and Emotional Awareness

Host: To all of you, you’ve written... there are some wonderful questions coming in, and I want you to know that Thomas and William will read them all. Some of them will be answered as we go along because there are too many to present now. William, quite a few people are asking about your work with North Korea, but I’m sure you’ll come to that in your own time. I’m going to choose one or two questions that I think will be the most relevant to the most amount of people. Here’s one. I think a lot of people will understand this. How do you come to the point of accepting someone in you, as a part of you, if you don’t agree with this person and don’t accept this person on the outside? If you have a conflict with someone, you are already closed inside for this person. How can you come to accept them as a part of you? William, you want to start with that?

William: Yeah.

Host: Nice easy question.

William: First of all, I would say this is not easy stuff. This is why we have a course. We’re studying precisely this question, so I really appreciate the hardest questions that you can bring to bear. That’s the challenge. If it was easy to bring someone whom we either have very strong feelings about, we’re angry at them, they’re angry at us, we fear them—how do we bring them into us? That’s the last thing we want to do. It’s a real challenge because the thing is—I mean, I’ll say, just to give you a little bit of my own biography here in terms of, like after writing *Getting to Yes*, for instance, perhaps the most frequent question I got, after working on *Getting to Yes* with Roger Fisher and Bruce Patton, was, “Okay, but how do you get to yes with someone who doesn’t want to get to yes? How do you deal with someone who’s really obstinate or is aggressive or offensive, and whatever?”

So I spent about 10 years thinking about that question. My next book was called *Getting Past No*, you know, what happens if the other side is saying no in various ways, could be even violent ways, how do you deal with difficult people in difficult situations. And then, many years later, I realized, you know, there’s something, actually, to the word ‘no’ that is very important. You know, when you’re dealing with people like the kind of people you’re talking about, and they’re difficult to bring in, how do you establish boundaries? I called it, “How do you create a positive no”.

We're going to be talking about these kinds of things throughout the course, too, about the process of getting to yes, about getting past no, but also how do you deliver what I would call a positive no, which is a no that is coming from a yes inside you, but there is a no, but it's not an aggressive no, it's simply a matter-of-fact no, how do you protect yourself. There's a whole art form to doing these things.

Then, of course, then after that I realized that, in fact, working on difficult people, that actually the most difficult person I ever have to deal with, the person who gets most in my own way is not actually the person sitting on the other side of the table, it's the person I look at in the mirror every morning, it's me. That's why my last book was called *Getting to Yes with Yourself*. But I'm exploring all these different aspects of the situation, and so is it easy to take someone into yourself? It's not that you're taking them—the key thing here is, when you're in that, what I was suggesting, when you're in that meditative state, you know, if you're dealing with someone who is actually being aggressive, and so you do need those boundaries, you do need to be able to say no, and a positive no, and it's almost as if, you know, what I found is that, in negotiation, there are these...

What is negotiation? It's a dance of the two most basic words in the language, which are 'yes' and 'no'. It's almost like we have two arms, a 'yes' arm and a 'no' arm. We need to learn to use them in good ways. The 'yes' arm is the one that welcomes the other person in and the 'no' arm is the one that kind of sets the boundaries, and that delicate balance is what we're going to be focusing on, at least I hope, in this course.

I guess what I'm trying to say is, to take that person in is that I'll just... I remember many, many years ago, during the Cold War, I was giving a talk to a group of military officers, naval captains and so on, and I was saying, "If you want to negotiate with the Russians, we're going to have to put ourselves in their shoes," which is in some ways understand them, empathize with them, take them in, see them as we ask ourselves what we would do if we were in their shoes.

[01:25:00]

One captain said, “You’re asking me to put myself into Russian shoes? That might distort my judgment.” I think that it’s almost inconceivable to take someone that we regard as an enemy and try to put ourselves in their shoes. Yet the thing is that we’re trying to influence the Russians. We’re trying to influence our enemies. It’s very hard to influence your enemies if you don’t know where they’re coming from. I mean, the first rule is you have to understand them. That means, in some sense, to learn to take them in, in that sense. Then there are going to be stages. But it’s that art form of realizing that if we just create castle walls around us, we can’t see the other. We have to kind of create boundaries that are more transparent, that allows us to see the other without allowing the other to hurt us. We’re going to talk and focus on those dilemmas throughout the course, I hope.

Thomas: One thing to add is, maybe to explore—and I agree with many things that William said—maybe one thing to add is, I believe for us in our self-awareness process, it’s always important, I heard the sentence in the question, “Okay, when I already feel closed inside or defended, how can I take another person in?” I also want to say that, first of all, we are not talking about, now, violent situations where it needs like a self-protection. I am talking now about, often, daily situations where there’s no immediate danger, but there is a conflict in the room. Every time I feel that it feels tight or closed, I am looking, okay, when I say the situation is difficult or the person out there is difficult, what is actually that difficulty in me? What is it in me that I experience—when I am related to that situation or person or group or environment—that I experience as difficult?

I believe, if I go inside and see, okay, what is difficult right now? Then I might find out, oh, the situation scares me, or I feel ashamed, or I suppress my anger, or I suppress... over a longer period of time, I didn’t speak up and I didn’t express my voice, and therefore it feels already very tight inside, and, and, and—we all know that has many, many reasons, but I would go inside and see, okay, what is actually here? And this is something—I don’t need to take an hour off and look inside. While I am in a conversation and I feel that I am getting tense or I feel the situation is difficult, usually, first of all, as William said, most of the time it’s an emotional state in myself that I don’t want to feel. Because if I don’t want to feel ashamed in a certain situation, I will experience the situation as difficult. If I don’t want to feel afraid and I suppress my fear, how do we suppress fear? By contracting, by holding, by shutting one part of me down. That’s always a very helpful... “Okay, what am I feeling right now?” Maybe I will come to the conclusion “I don’t know.”

[01:30:00]

It's interesting, often when we ask people, "What do you feel right now?" Then you get all kinds of interpretations and ideas and thoughts, but you don't get the description of their feeling. I feel angry. I feel sad. I feel ashamed. I feel afraid. But that's usually, as simple as it sounds, that's not that simple at all because usually our emotional life is somehow fragmented. Usually, our society that we are living in right now is emotionally fragmented. I might find out that I don't feel anything, that I am numb, I am dissociated. When I am dissociated, I am naturally already in a tension. In a dissociation, I cannot take another person in. I first need to honor the fact that I meet, in myself, a wounded part. Dissociation means also that I dissociated already in the past and that I meet a place that I need to give attention to. As William said, we will deepen this, of course, throughout the course, what tools we have and how we can work with those moments because I think that they are very important for our own evolution.

Q&A: Discovering the Cultural Lens We Are Looking Through

Participant: Hi. My question is in relation to power differential. I'm going to the ... I've just started working with the Lummi Nation. I spoke to a friend of mine this week who is Buddhist. She brought up the idea of gender studies and how gender performance is an issue. When she brought that up, I thought, "Well, that's an interesting topic." What about human performance? It made me think about how different race, different societies probably have, well, do have their own idea of what is best performance as a human. So as I'm just beginning to work with the Lummi Nation, for example, one of the things I uncovered in my research is, you don't call a Native American an American because they don't abide by our geographic rules. They are their own nation. So how do I come to a space to be with these people when there's so much—I'm going to call it 'predetermined power differential' over the past?

Thomas: My sense is that, I believe, the capacity to have a certain amount of space and reflection within myself, which I hear when I listen to you, I hear the capacity in you to reflect that process, but that's already a complex process because it means that you are holding your own personality structure and also your cultural setup as structures in consciousness that define your cultural environment. That's something that we need to have on our screen in order to allow space, to listen to the differences on a cultural level, that it seems like that that's so easy but actually to listen deeply into other value systems is a complex process, I believe, within ourselves. It means that we have enough reflection on what we call the individual and cultural ego structures. If I am identified with being a white European or if I am identified with being any kind of person somewhere in a culture, in a religion, whatever, so that defines my inner makeup, of course, but that also defines my sensory input because I have been imprinted that way that how I experience the world seems normal to me, but it needs a lot of examination to be able to be more and more reflected on what I am looking through.

I think that's highly important because then, even if I am liberal in my thinking and if I am pluralistic in my thinking and if I want to include different perspectives, the lens that I am looking through still has kind of invisible values, often, imprinted that I am looking through and listening through. That's why I think that was also one reason the question that you bring up is also one reason by William and I, I believe started with the idea of this course is, how can we as hundreds and hundreds of people all around the world create an awareness process, a reflection, and a community where we can detox, in a way, ourselves from looking through that imprint. I believe it's already difficult enough to be reflected on my physical, emotional, and mental capacities, but it's even more so when I need to be able to be aware of my cultural ego structures, the ego structures of my culture.

[01:35:00]

I believe your question can only be answered when we detox ourselves, and only that gives me the capacity to listen to different cultural fields in a very refined way. That's, I believe, the beginning of relation, because otherwise I am still projecting my culture, unconsciously, onto that other culture, even if mentally I think that I am already much more pluralistic than that. For me, that awareness process that I know, how my nervous system has been imprinted by my culture, that's, I believe, a very complex process, so I want to highlight how can we, for example, as a group here, all the 500 something people that are with us, how can we create spaces, methods, ways, practices, and also exchange where we support each other to look through that cultural lens. Because if we say, okay, as an American, I am looking at North Korea, or as a North Korean, I am looking at America or at South Korea, the tendency that I will see my own cultural imprint invisibly projected onto the other side is very, very high.

Then as I look at it, also, lots of these power structures are basically buried within a collective unconscious field because we are collectively traumatized, all around the world. That collective trauma is unconscious to every one of us, basically. We are bathing in an unconscious lake. I believe some of the understandings of power structures within societies and cultural differences are actually buried in that unconscious lake, which makes it even harder. I believe, through the internet and through the technology that we are building and through people like yourself that are interested in an awareness process, we are actually the ones that begin to illuminate collective structures of consciousness and collective unconscious structures of consciousness in order to be able to answer your question. That's why I am saying, I think the answer to your question comes, also, through a very sophisticated process, and we are kind of the process there. But I think it's very, very important, what you're asking. Very important. For now, I think the course will unfold, at least my answer to it, more.

William: Yeah, it sounds like we're going to get some... This is it. These are the kind of hard questions that we're going to grapple with together, and that's what makes this course, I think, so useful because these are the dilemmas we're facing. These are the real-world dilemmas we're facing. What I come back to, for a moment, is that kind of *zoom in*, *zoom out* kind of metaphor. It requires us to kind of zoom out, take a larger historical perspective and recognize and acknowledge the power disparities, whether they're economic, they're historical, whether they're military, whether they're economic, social, all those power... To be able to go to the balcony and realize that that's the context you're walking into and, at the same time, to be able to zoom in.

To me, the great kind of leveler of power, at least in the zooming in, going to the stage, is, in a simple word, respect, is when you can respect the other human being. It goes back to your question about human potential, the human potential for respect.

This is what I found, at least in all my experiences, that respect is the most underestimated power that we have. To respect the other human being, to see the humanity in the other human being. Respect coming from 're-spect', to see again, to look again, and see the human being there. When we can sit and respect the human being, then you level, at least in a situational way, as you're sitting around the table, you level the power. It's both zooming out acknowledging it as a reality that you're dealing with, and then when you zoom in, to be able to deal human to human being through respect. To me, to respect the basic dignity of every human being, that's the channel into the human heart.

Participant: Right. Because what I'm feeling, and to talk a little bit about the ego, what I'm trying to do is kind of I'm trying to work into relation by trying to both surrender and honor. What I'm finding is I get kind of trapped in the dualisms of it all. I try to be with them but it's very difficult, just very difficult, because I'm so aware and feel the shame in my body of the power differential.

[01:40:00]

William: For sure. The course is perfect for you. This is the question we're trying to deal with is how... because you're feeling it in your body and then the question is how do we build what Thomas was saying, what I... as that golden bridge between the inner and the outer, in a way, that you can show up in a difficult situation like that in the most effective and human way.

Participant: Right. Thank you.

Thomas: The challenge is that we are becoming enough human beings on the planet that are willing to sit in their own discomfort. Because I believe in the places where you said, "Oh, I feel ashamed," if you are willing to be ashamed and to sit, also, in the heat of the shame and allow it... I believe, I often say in my courses, I think we need an institution that's called amnesty feeling, amnesty emotions. There is a kind of emotions rights organization, and every emotion will have a lawyer that is the kind of their representative in the human court. This means also that often the fragmentation that we have is that we deny those feelings and then we project a difficulty outside. But actually that the dualism starts firstly, "Oh, I am ashamed. Now I am afraid. Now I am getting angry. I actually suppress that feeling because I learned in the past that I cannot bring those feelings as relational components into the situation.

How many children have not been really supported in... or how many of us as children have not been supported in this pendulum movement of curiosity and fear and building an individualization or individuation that can see all the spectrum of emotions as connecting powers, that fear is actually a power of connection. A child runs back to the parents because it's afraid. It's very intelligent that the child goes back to the parents when it's afraid. Shame brings us back into a context of a tribe or of a culture. That have been powers that have grown over thousands of years and they have a meaning. I believe in order to transcend the past—because, in a way, we transcend certain steps that evolution made in order to open a space for new possibilities. You, through your work, you open a new space within power structures but we have to transcend how power structures have been built in the past so that we can bring in something new. We are the walking experiment, I believe. So I see your question very much as what I call evolutionary question. It's a question that walks us, and our path is becoming potentially the answer.

Participant: Right. Because I do recognize the shame as being the detox, right?

Thomas: Yeah, right.

Participant: It's both personal, it's both collective. So yes, it feels right, and thank you. Yes.

Thomas: Yeah, beautiful. I would love to come back to that... I will make myself a note that we will come back. I think it's very important.