



# Meditate & Mediate

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William: Well, it's a real pleasure, again, to be on this call with all of you around this beautiful Earth and on this day. I'd like to just take a moment for us to kind of review where we are on our journey.

### Recap of the Previous Session

We started by focusing more on the intrapersonal aspect of *Meditate and Mediate*, of engaged awareness, of aware engagement. You know, that we're looking for that space where we can be both aware and engaged in the world at the same time, to bring our collective and individual presence to bear on the issues, on the conflicts that we face or that we help with. So we began looking inward and looking at getting to yes within ourselves, as it were. Then we were dealing with the interpersonal aspect of how do we deal with others, both individual and collective, micro and macro. Now we're slowly transiting in the direction of also inviting in, which has also been a theme, of course, throughout the course, the transpersonal dimension. Thomas has spoken very beautifully about the collective trauma and how do we heal. We've sat with that question the whole course, of how do we heal ourselves and how do we as a collective humanity, how does humanity learn to heal itself.

So, in the very last session, we started with a question. There was a question of how do we go to the balcony and is the balcony a place of... do we only go to the balcony when we're in state of overwhelm? We talked about how balcony is not just a refuge for us but it's a place that we learn to live from or we learn to mediate from. There's a constant seamless flow between the balcony and the stage of life in which we deal with our conflicts.

And a big theme of our last session was—because we focused so much on the word 'yes' and how do we get to yes us ourselves, how do we help others get to yes—and we incorporated the other side of the coin of yes, which is no. You know, these two basic building blocks, understanding that life is a dance of these two words, of yes and no, and how do we learn to integrate them.

We talked about this concept of a positive no—because no we usually think of as negative, but actually a positive no—the positive no being a structure of a yes, which is like the roots of the tree over in the right hand corner, that yes, the yes to our core needs, our core values, the things we’re looking to protect in life, that the deepest drivers and motivations and sacred values that we have, the roots, our why. Then the no that yes gives rise to, a no which is the trunk of the tree, that strong trunk of the tree. Then, out of that no, comes the branches, comes the fruit of the tree, which is the yes on the other side, which is a yes to relationship, a yes to possibility, a yes to the future.

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So, we talked about that yes-no-yes, and I invited you to think about what the yes-no-yes might be in your life, to a particular situation. We invoked Gandhi who once said that a no that is uttered from deepest conviction—which is that yes, the roots of the tree—is better and greater than a yes which is merely uttered to please. Because we often, sometimes we fall into saying yes when we wish, when we know that it’s better for us to say no. So we talked a lot about that, about that dance of yes and no and the importance of each of us developing that practice of practicing our... developing that muscle. It’s almost as if we have two arms. We have this yes muscle here, and we have this no muscle.

We already have a lot of practice with the yes muscle because people love to hear the word yes from us, but really practice the no muscle so that they can come into balance with each other, so we can... If yes is the keyword of peace, of connection, no is the keyword of justice, of power. We need to marry the two. We need to marry love and power, peace and justice, yes and no. How do we do that in the daily conflicts around us and in the world at large? I know some very good questions came up out of that. So those are some of the things. I’m going to ask Thomas to see if you want to add anything to the summary of where we were at the end of our last session.

Thomas: Yes. Thank you, William. Yes, I want to, maybe, add that we said, also, that the art is actually how to say no in relation. I think that, also while I listen to you now, I thought that the power actually is that I can say no and not shut down my own, whatever, experience or energy, and withdraw, but actually stay related and be with the discomfort or the whatever, the disappointment or the awkwardness of the situation. I think that’s also something where we often say no and we shut down our energy and we withdraw from the relation, and how we can stay in relation. I think that’s also an important part of saying no, and how... Do you want to...

William: No, that's precisely it, because a positive no is a related no, it's an engaged no. It's actually moving into relationship with the other and using the word no. It's almost, to me, like the word 'no' is almost like holding up your hand like this, the word 'yes' is we extend our hand—and it's both. You both extend your hand in relatedness and you say... you draw a certain line as a no to certain behaviors or a no to protect yourself. So it's an engagement at the same time as you draw a healthy boundary, is what we need in life to engage with the other, a boundary that protects something that protects against injustice, protects against trauma, protects—so there's a protective no and a connective yes together, which make up the positive no.

Thomas: Right.

William: It's the yes-no-yes.

Thomas: Right. So I think the relational piece is important. Then we talked about, we moved to the collective trauma part, and then we said that, I believe, within the collective body, because we wanted to also to move now and talk a bit more about the we-function, the we-function like how can we be a kind of counterforce to rewrite past tendencies—I will say a few things later about it—and then how can we, as you love to say, the third side, or as I call it, the global social witness, that the we-space becomes a reflective presence, a presence of consciousness, so that we are aware of what's happening within our collective body. I think that function is crucial. It's crucial for, for example, solving current conflicts in the world. It's crucial for, as we see now in the "Me Too" movement like that, more and more collective awareness is showing up on the world stage. It's also, I believe, a very important function that helps us to understand how collectively traumatized or fragmented we are. So that I think that if you see we are living in a time of a strong explosion of technology, and technology kind of created a kind of bigger web, kind of even a new holon around humanity. We want to explore a little bit today that function and what is the function of the global social witness, this third side, when it's healthy, when it's aware of the process.

[00:10:00]

Then we said last time that collective trauma can be seen as a fog that most of us have been born into so that it doesn't matter where we live around the world, I believe the world has many scars, and many of us have been born into scar tissues. So that we know the world only through the lens of the collectively traumatized culture. That's kind of as if we were driving our car, we were used that the visibility is only 10 yards, when the function of our nervous system is actually to see 300 yards. But there's a difference in how we respond or react if something shows up 10 yards in front of our car or if it shows up 300 yards in front of our car, that makes a whole difference.

Wisdom, I like that the description of wisdom is the capacity to listen to the subtlety of the whisper. So if the future is... There was a question, if I can expand a little bit on the future, if the future is constantly corresponding with us, everybody has inside, I believe, a direct connection to the real future, like to the higher consciousness development, to emergence, to the development of us as individuals and as collective. Wisdom, wise people, we recognize often because they can listen within the silence inside to a more subtle future that is not so noisy as is the noise of the world. So there is an inner listening necessary where inspiration comes from, where innovation comes from, and I believe where many of the great geniuses of all times actually got their inspiration from. That's a certain inner environment that's necessary.

I believe that the traumatization and the collective trauma field reduces that function, so we actually have to... many of us, I believe, here on the course, we did a lot of inner practice to reclaim certain functions and aspects of wisdom because we needed to free ourselves inside, again, in order to be open, receptive on the human level, which is compassion, and on the inner kind of guidance level, on the level of where I get my inner compass, my inner direction, my life purpose, and there is kind of an inner knowing that arises. So, I believe that the function of collective trauma reduces the capacity of our nervous systems to anticipate the development that we are heading towards.

So if, in an inner contemplative environment, and we will talk about this in some of the next sessions, what are the preconditions to train ourselves to listen to that more precisely and more and more often, that we actually walk around in an inner contemplative listening that the future can constantly speak to us, like the creativity and the future. At the same time, and that's what we want to discuss today, also how the collective body can be responsive as a third side function or as a... that we all become a witness, a non-dissociated witness or aware of our dissociations as witnesses, and how technology plays into that.

So it's a short summary of what we talked about last time and, maybe, today we can explore that collective function a little bit more. Maybe, William, if you want to tell us a little bit of how you look at the third side, and then, maybe, we can discuss this together.

[00:15:00]

### Elevating the Third Side of Humanity to Its Full Potential

William: Yeah. For me, as a student of conflict, of human conflict, conflict would always see there's two sides, that we always divide into two sides—the union, management; the husband, the wife; there's one side, there's United States and there's North Korea—there's always two sides. I think what we miss, often, is that there's always a third side. The third side is the larger whole. It's the community. It's the friends. It's the bystanders. It's the neighbors. It's the allies. It's the rest. It's all of us. In fact, the third side includes the parties themselves. Think of the third side as a circle, as a circle that encompasses the entire conflict. To me, the third side, as I've studied, as I've said before, studied different indigenous cultures, the oldest cultures on the planet, really, every human culture has ways of dealing with conflict that involve harnessing the community, harnessing the whole. The third side is really our birthright. It's our most ancient human heritage for dealing with differences.

I watched the San bushmen of the Kalahari. When there's a conflict between two individuals or two groups, the whole community gathers together around the fire, and the conflict belongs to everyone. To me, the third side is that, it's that it's the capacity of the community, of what Thomas calls global social witnesses, of all of us together, to both prevent destructive conflict, to resolve it, to engage with it, to resolve it, to heal it and then, if it's actually at the point of violence, to contain it or to contain it. That's what we're faced right now with, as you know, I'm sitting very acutely with the situation right now of the conflict between United States and North Korea, which threatens the whole, threatens the whole body of humanity.

The question, the puzzle I sit with is knowing that there is all this trauma—that's why this course has provided so many lenses and insights into trying to understand a phenomenon like this—the thing I sit with, the question I sit with right now is: here we are, this week, where the Olympics are about to begin, the Winter Olympics, just about 50 miles south of the most heavily militarized border in the world, where there's over a million strong army in the North and an almost equally strong, numerous army in the South. You have Russia and China and the United States, Japan, you have all these countries focused on this. Just right now there's this enormous danger that the situation might explode, which would be a veritable holocaust if it did. We know that. Hundreds of thousands of people would die in the very first hours, millions very conceivably could die, nuclear weapons could go off for the first time since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but much more powerful this time. It's hard to even imagine, and I wonder, at this precise moment when this danger is, there is this mystery of the world is coming to this place, showing up for this ancient tradition of the Olympics to engage in sports to celebrate the potential of the human body and the spirit, the human spirit.

It's just that this particular moment that we have, this window of opportunity where we're dancing between possibility of human beings celebrating the diversity and the danger that differences, that threats, that fears, traumas could actually trigger an unbelievable burst of destruction. We're sitting right here, in this precise moment, as the Olympics are about to begin this week, and there's this little window of opportunity. If we don't enter that window of opportunity, then the danger grows enormously in a month or two because both sides are preparing for war.

So, to me, it comes back to the third side, to global social witnesses, of how can we create the we-space, right now with the world coming together here, and the world's eyes and ears and media showing up there, how can we create the we-space to invite in the possibility of a world in which we could learn to deal with our differences constructively, we could learn to live in peace and celebrate our differences. That's the question I sit with.

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Thomas: William, as you speak, I'm wondering, when you say that you observed, in indigenous cultures, the third side, so I'm wondering, now we are here since hundreds of thousands of years, so we are doing this for a long time already. Our bodies, in a way, display the archeological data of hundreds and thousands of years and more of human life and millions of years of life. What do you think, how come that we are not doing this naturally, that we are forming a third side? If there is a conflict in the world, why isn't the world getting up, that we all take the responsibility? Because I hear you saying, "Hey, listen. All of us, we have a responsibility. As mature global citizens, we have a responsibility to be responsive to the global, whatever, landscape or global situation." I'm wondering, it seems like that the third side doesn't really get activated, so do you have any... What are your thoughts on the activation, now that we are here already for such a long time and we have seen so many conflicts as humanity, so why isn't that working already? I think we should have learned it by now, or?

William: You would think so. You would think so. In some sense, it's not that it's not activated. It is activated. The question is why is it activated so far short of its potential. Because the third side is kind of like a social immune system, it's a kind of a collective immune system to... I mean, what's curious to me... I mean, and this is where I really invite everyone on the call, really, we're holding a space around the planet right now so we could study this inside of ourselves because we're all cells in the collective body of humanity right now. So, this is a case in point where, with our minds at least, we're aware that there is this danger, but have we really integrated that into our hearts and to everywhere so that we can actually activate the full potential for healing in this situation? Because this almost seems like we're either... what I notice as just myself, what I notice with myself as I work with my colleagues trying to grapple with this is it's so easy to go into hypoactivation and to numbness.



There's a lot of numbness, collective numbness around this issue, which is why there isn't, for example, there isn't a big peace movement. There aren't people on the streets. There aren't people saying, "Hey, we've got to stop this." There's a kind of numbness and paralysis. And occasionally, there's a hyper state, which is, "Huh, wow. I mean, there could be a holocaust. I mean, there's a..." Some people are very educated, knowledgeable people are saying that chances could be as high as 50%. I mean, that's unthinkable. So we go into a kind of hyper panic state for a little bit and then we go back into numbness. The question is, how can we live in that in-between zone, the zone of tolerance there? How can we learn to really feel things and learn to listen to the whisper of the future, which might be a more peaceful future? How do we create a we-space in that zone of tolerance?

Thomas: Right. That's beautiful. I think that's exactly the point, that we are in a collectively traumatized field already, since thousands of years. I believe, one thing that I want to underline that you said is that often cognitively we grasp what we read in the news, of course, but that we are able to be participants on an emotional and physical level, I think this is rather rare. I believe we need some kind of experimental spaces where we can come together and literally look at and bring into our awareness how fast, as you said, either we go into numbness or our own trauma is being triggered. Because if my own trauma is being triggered, I cannot be a participant because I am just busy with myself, basically, I am trying to handle my own fear, my own overwhelm, my own hyperactivation—or I need to handle or not handle my numbness, so I am not responsive to the situation.

**[00:25:00]**

Once I know that when I'm traumatized, I'm actually not able to perceive that part of the world that triggers me in my own trauma, that means that we all live in a world that is only partial. Even if we think we understand the world but the world arises in me only to a certain extent. Part of the world, the frequencies hitting my trauma, I'm not able to process, so they don't arise on my screen. It's like you look at your computer, and certain parts are black, and they stay black. But because we have a great Photoshop brain, we actually let them disappear. Then it looks like everybody sees the world, but actually, we don't.

**Recognizing Third Sider Skills We Already Have**

I would love to discuss with you what are potential trainings, potential experimental spaces, exercises where we can learn how to train ourselves as a third sider. How can I grow? Because I believe, especially once I am initiated into parenthood, which means, I believe, once we become a parent, we are actually pushed by life into being part of everything because that's part of our responsibility to raise our children. Suddenly, I need to be interested in the education system because I want to make a contribution that is meaningful and create a great environment. I need to be part of ecology. I need to be part of many things to be responsible. So I need to be part of a discussion of a potential nuclear catastrophe. That stretches us as human beings because it seems like we are kind of all very busy and how can we deal with it. I would love to see what do you think. How can we train to be a responsible global citizen—because we live in a time where we have been initiated into global citizenship through technology—what do you think can we train?

William: Yeah. I mean, this is the original purpose, as you remember, that we conceived for this course, this community of learning, is precisely to ask this question of how can we learn, how can we train ourselves, how can we train others to be fully active members of the third side. That's really what we're trying to do right here, right now, in this particular moment. One thing I would say is there's one way to look at this and say we're woefully under-trained. We have so much further to go. We hardly have a third side. But I think there's a different perspective which is that we are actually already quite well-trained, in some sense.

In the sense of, as you were just saying, as a parent, for example. I mean, parenthood is a training in being a third sider. If you have children, the parents are always playing the different roles of the third side, which are preventive roles, like taking care of the basic needs of the children for love, for food, for protection, for security. That's the provider role. Now, the parents are, if you look at a healthy family, they're always playing the role of the teacher. We're teaching our children how to deal with our differences, how to listen to the other, how to be patient, how to deal with conflicts. We're bridge builders. We're building relationships all the time. We're cultivating those relationships. Then we play the resolution roles, that we're mediating sometimes among our children, right? We all recognize that. We're healing. We're encouraging forgiveness and reconciliation when there are breaches, when there are violations. Sometimes we're the role of the arbiter. Sometimes we have to decide someone gets to play with the toy now and someone gets to play with the toy later. We're playing with all those roles, and then sometimes we have to contain, we have to kind of like separate them or say, "Look, if you're going to fight, fight with pillows, not with fists," and so on. We'll play the peacekeeper. We play, there are a host of roles that we play. We play that in our families, we play that in our communities, and we play that with our community. The truth is, we are already all third siders, we just don't recognize it sometimes.

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The question that we're facing now is, how do we take that up a level? How do we take those skills that are in us—we are naturally third siders—how do we learn to recognize those? And then how do we take that into situations that are difficult, really difficult, like where there's a collective trauma, as in the case of the United States and North Korea. There's an enormous trauma of the Korean War there, in which millions of people died. How do we up our game so that we can actually deal with these situations that threaten the whole? That, to me, is the question. The thing is that if we look inside of ourselves and recognize it, it's not... I mean, yes, we can hone our skills, of course we can, but I think a lot of it is just recognizing what we are already doing and then learning, bringing it more into consciousness, and then learning to do it collectively, and then using the new tools like we're using right now, Zoom, to have a worldwide community to create those powerful we-spaces that are strong enough to deal with even the most difficult conflicts.

Thomas: Yes. As you said it, that, for example, parenthood, like in the mystical traditions, we see becoming a parent, becoming a grandparent, getting married, and many, many thresholds in our development, that those are also initiations that are not just what they seem to be, but they initiate us into certain qualities. I think that the comparison of parenting and global parenting, in a way, to be part of a bigger system, I think that, through technology, we actually have been born, in the last decades, into, like we are in the birth contractions of a global age, like a global consciousness. I think one of the training tools would be that we come together in circles and that we explore how easy or how difficult it is to be a global social witness. I mean, just what we are doing now, how do we as a community here on the course explore how much can I actually host the conflict between the US and North Korea in myself? Can I host it intellectually? Can I host it emotionally? Can I host it physically? Can I actually hold that the experience in all of my being? I think that's pretty important because how many of us can really host the potential of a nuclear bomb in ourselves, like as a felt experience?

I think that the collective body, as we see, like we see, that we are part of and we see with our hearts and with our physical eyes and energetic eyes, that we actually are being part of the events that are happening in the world, then, I believe, it will come very fast and meet the overwhelm that that means for us or, maybe, for many of us. That hosting the current global reality inside doesn't mean that it's easy. We are not saying it's easy. We might say, "Wow. It might be very difficult, but I can explore what difficult means in myself." As you said, there is a kind of introspection, but I believe a very powerful tool is that we do a group introspection, that we actually have partners to share with, like we have here on the course, many people can just get together and create circles of third siders or global social witnesses and to be witnessing each other, or in the triads, how we are actually able or not able to host it when we are not meant to be able to. We are not meant to be able to do it. We are meant to be aware of where is the limit.

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**Witnessing the Effects of a Conflict on Our Internal Landscape**

I think that's important because dissociation is a very powerful function of our nervous system, but I need to be aware that I'm dissociated in order to expand to the world because where I exit, the world ends, the felt world ends. I think that that's a very interesting exploration because even if it, just now, when we mentioned the conflict between the United States, North Korea, South Korea, this conflict, in the moment we mention it, it does something in us. There's an internal landscape. There is some kind of impression. There is kind of an impression in my nervous system, in my body, in my emotions, in my mind, that creates kind of an inner sculpture. That inner sculpture is true in millions and millions of people. So we all, if you are aware of it or not, have an internal sculpture of that external circumstance in us. Maybe we can explore a bit how that internal sculpture looks like. Because I think that's very important, because trauma has a transference. So if I'm not aware what's the impact of listening to trauma in myself, so I cannot be a full third sider, I believe.

William: Yeah.

Thomas: You share a little bit, William, how you look at it.

William: Yeah, I would love to take us up on it right now, at this particular moment. I mean, just think about it. We're at this particular moment in time. The reason why I'm focusing on it, too, is because this issue, North Korea and South Korea, is us. It's us. It's not somewhere over there. Somehow, with the Olympics now, the collective lens is over there—it's us, this is us. This is us, this is humanity right now. We're facing this point where we're walking on this precipice. How do we walk on this precipice? Because if we fall, we fall off the precipice—it's not just United States and North Korea—if we fall off the precipice, the lives of every single human being on this planet will be affected. The lives of the next generation will be affected. That we can see. We can know with our heads. The question for me is, I mean, if we actually knew, really knew that there is a 50/50 chance of this happening, we would... I don't know. It almost feels like I walk around, and we're kind of like in a sleep walking. It's kind of a numbness. I see it inside myself, too. What would we do?

But the first thing I think we would do, Thomas, as we're learning, is to host it, is to study it, to see what's happening inside of us, to see what's preventing us from revealing our full potential as third siders here. I think if we can kind of discern, if we can shed light on this mystery of why we're kind of in this kind of dreamlike paralysis in the face of a very real danger, then I think we could understand more about how we activate the we-space, how we activate global social witnessing, how do we activate this.

I mean, let me just ask you, Thomas, for a moment, just you personally. If you go to this issue of a potential war on the Korean peninsula—or in the world, for that matter, but centered there—what do you feel inside your body? What happens inside you?

Thomas: So the first thing, when I—of course, I'm doing this quite often as my kind of contemplative practice, to tune in with systems on the planet—the first thing that I feel is kind of a transference of a numbness. So, when I set the intention, how do we tune in? When we tune in with something, we set an intention. So I set the intention, okay, I want to tune in with the system of this conflict—because this conflict is a system, it's kind of a whole system that participates—so when I tune in with it, I immediately feel, the first transference that I see in myself is kind of like a numbness. Then if I'm conscious about it, or of it, so then I can let my nervous system relax into that numbness and host it in myself, so there is space, and then there is a kind of a sense of numbness, and then there is a relaxation into the numbness, and then, more and more, if I allow myself to really feel it, then I can get access to the underlying information field, so then I can start to allow my nervous system to display more information within the system.

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But if I were to reject that original feeling of numbness, so then I would either zone out and try to move away from it and think of something else or deal with something else, because it's kind of not easy to touch. I believe that's also when that trauma impulses, like when they are locked in between people or in between nations, it's kind of a fast-moving impulse that is locked within two trauma fields, and so it goes ding-ding, ding-ding, ding-ding []. So what is a good mediation—because I believe, William, that you were in many situations where you actually needed to bridge in yourself, like host in yourself, like the separation of trauma pasts that people brought into the room and, through the openness of your nervous system, you were able to create an atmosphere of a deeper dialogue.

I think that when we... That's, I think, the power of *Meditate and Mediate*, is that we have the availability and the consciousness—that's, I believe, also why we will have a third part of the transpersonal dimension—because I believe this kind of work, successfully, we can only do if we have a certain level of transpersonal inner space or witnessing capacity so that I can allow myself to go into the discomfort of witnessing a trauma and listening to trauma, listening to the divide, but not become part of the polarization but be a bigger space. I think that's true, most probably, but I would be interested to hear about this from your experience. But I believe that that's true on a, whatever, interpersonal level within a room with a few people, but I believe that that's also true for the numbness, the hyperactivation or the openness of compassion in a collective body.

Let me know, how did you experience some of the mediations where you felt that previous trauma was part of it?

William: Yeah, it's true. A lot of it has to do not so much with techniques and skills—that all is important, of course—a lot of it has to do with, maybe, I don't know what you would call it, quality of presence—but it's something to do with the nervous system of attuning, I mean, if I think about it in terms of my own experience, I've had a lot of failures and successes, I would say failures as well as successes, or seeming failures. Because in mediation, what it is is often it's a series of successive seeming failures until you have a momentary feeling of success, so it's learning to live with that. The failures are only seeming, because what you're doing is you're learning, they are approximations, you're learning. But through that process, I think it's true, there's a way in which, in my own nervous system, in my own head and heart, I'm hosting the conflict, I'm listening, because what I'm trying to do, I'm trying to listen to the different sides without judging them, empathetically, and then host them. They're kind of sitting there, and I'm hosting the conflict, the tensions, and looking for where... I'm hosting them inside my own inner circle, inside the third side, and then looking for where's the constructive way in which they can learn to dance with each other instead of to try to destroy each other. Where's the way in which there's a kind of a golden bridge, a golden thread, that... some way through this that they can learn to, "Ah, okay." If I can host them spaciously, then I can learn to listen for what the deep needs are on all sides and see that, in fact, the deeper you go into understanding the deepest needs of every side, there is no conflict at that level, they're just needs. Then there's a way in which, out of that, can come out possibility of all sides benefiting.

[00:45:00]



## Using Accelerating Technology as a Tool to Liberate Our Conflicts

Just coming back for a moment to... Then the question is, how do we do that collectively? How do we create our collective nervous system using the new tools that we have, the technological tools that we're using right now, on this call? How do we do that collectively as well? How do we create that collective sense of presence, right now, to host a situation like the Korean situation? How do we do that?

Thomas: Yeah. Maybe we can even use this in our kind of contemplative journey of today's call. Maybe we, as a group around the world, maybe we can—or everybody who wants to join this—we can contemplate on that field. Because I liked your description very much, you said, "In a mediation, I host the seeming polarization." I believe that's a beautiful description of how we would describe this also with kind of inner science or mystical principles, is that that the nervous system and the consciousness, an embodied consciousness, is able to host polarization, and the more we can expand the internal landscape to include all the factors of this polarization, there's actually an overarching field that allows the inner aspects to reorganize themselves. That's a matter of space, how much inner space can we provide to allow the inner aspects of the conflict to reorganize themselves. If the consciousness is too small, so we stay polarized, or we join sides, or we start to judge. I think that was a beautiful description, that it's literally a consciousness function that you provide in many situations.

William: That's what I said today, it's interesting, you're using... The world right now, we use the world polarization a lot because the world, wherever I travel around the globe, society seemed to be polarized. The question is, can polarities exist without becoming enemies? Can we actually accept and appreciate the natural polarities in the system? Because polarities can dance with each other, polarities can be creative together. The question is, how do we really appreciate polarities and appreciate the possibility of polarities existing? Polarities may be good in some sense. They're healthy, they're natural, without them necessarily getting stuck. That's what happens is they get stuck in this kind of enemy position instead of kind of flowing. I think a lot of that work is turning that stuckness into flow while retaining and appreciating the fact that they are polarities, that there are very, very strong differences there. That's actually natural and healthy. That's part of the dance of life.

Thomas: Yeah. In the mystical perspective, I would say it's all a matter of space, so that we have space and energy. I believe, right now in the world, through technology, we have an amazing acceleration of learning and innovation because we can share so much information in such a short time, so it speeds up, in a way, that positive dimension of the collective learning process, which is a peak in a wave. On the other hand, we have so many trauma impulses circling with the speed of light around the world, around the World Wide Web, so many of our nervous systems get like an incredible speed of learning, as one spike, and then another, intensity of trauma exposure on the other hand. I think that accelerated energy, this is something that our nervous systems and our bodies need to be able to handle because there's so much information. I believe, we live in the world, at the moment, where, without any inner practice, without any training, we actually have to be overwhelmed.

[00:50:00]

I'm sure that most of the people would say, "I consume more information than I can literally embody." I think that's the big danger of our time, the degree of disembodiment and traumatization, if it marries the speed of technology, it's a disaster. If the embodiment marries the speed of technology, it's a blessing. If we will be able to ground, through our embodiment, technology, it's going to be a blessing. If not, it's going to be a disaster. If the disembodiment and the mentalization that we see right now in the world is going to marry the technological progress, that's going to be very difficult because many, many pathologies will just be increased by thousands of times. I think that's also part of the polarization that you see, that you mentioned, in the world. It's up on us to have a consciousness training how to host the intensity of information that we experience.

William: I love that. I mean, technology is an accelerator. It can be an accelerator of polarization. It can be an accelerator of space, of spaciousness. Right now, in this call, we're trying to tap into its potential to be a technology for creating more space. Because the truth is that the problem with conflicts isn't that they exist, it's that they get stuck in these very narrow little spaces. As I'm listening to you, Thomas, I'm seeing that, in fact, the challenge is how do we liberate our conflicts. We think about resolving them or ending them, but the question is, how do we liberate those energies? How do we liberate our conflicts within a context of spaciousness? That's the third side.

When the community is attuned and conscious, then the truth is, in a paradoxical way, we need more conflict in this world, not less, in the sense of there's so many injustices, like we're just talking about the "Me Too" movement. There's so many things that are surfacing where we do need to say no to things. The question is, can we create the spacious embrace, that compassionate community embrace to liberate those conflicts so that they can transmute, so that they can transform? That's the challenge. With technology, we now have the ability to tap into, can we create that we-space that's sufficiently strong, and resilient, and conscious, and compassionate, that we can really go deep and dark into our collective traumas and into the deepest conflicts and liberate them.

Thomas: Right. Beautiful. I think you mentioned a very important part which is the collective field as one element of spaciousness. And the other is, I believe, that we all know—only when our nervous system feels spacious, which means I'm not busy with my own past. If you go into a mediation, I'm sure, and you are busy with, I don't know, a conflict you had by yourself or something that is circling in you, I'm pretty sure that you will feel less efficient than when you go in and you are free—maybe, you sat in contemplation before and you freed yourself—and you can go in and you are spacious and available. I believe every therapist and every person that works in education, everybody that works with people, knows that everybody that trained to listen knows how actually complex is true listening, that when my nervous system is busy with my own past, I can actually only partly attune to you. I will be much faster overloaded by the situation.

That's interesting because that means that all of us that are working in some sort of process work, facilitation, mediation, therapeutic work, or educational work, actually it's a must that we have an inner practice that helps us to digest our own past in order to be available. So there is, I believe, the personal spaciousness that I'm living a lifestyle that enables me to be spacious enough to listen fully and to attune fully. Then the element that you mentioned, that we actually create a community that, in a way, expands the individual spaciousness into a much higher field of coherence, in a we-coherence, that the we-field is actually a very, very powerful instrument. And I believe we are on the way to explore that we-instrument more and more, that enables us basically to rewrite the past, to invite new possibilities. That's beautiful.

[00:55:00]

William: I love that. I love that, Thomas. I love talking with you. Yeah, as I reflect on my own experience, it's like there's no magic to any of this, really. But it's something like, it's so critical—we've talked a lot about listening and the importance of listening. Honestly, listening is what creates spaciousness, that's what it does. It creates spaciousness. If I truly listen to you or if you truly listen to me, you create space inside me. That's the space, the third side space within which, that alchemist crucible, within which the lead of destructive conflict can be turned into the gold of constructive cooperation. Listening, as you said, we need this practice more and more these days. I find if I don't listen to myself first and listen to all those voices inside me, that's the only way, by listening to myself first, that I can create enough inner space that I actually can take and host you.

The question is, can we all, as a collective practice, as a collective instrument, as you say, can we create enough spaciousness? Now for example, around North Korea, can we go there and host the collective numbness? Can we host that collective numbness? Or can we host the collective panic that took place, for example, in the island of Hawaii a few weeks ago, when everyone on their phone suddenly received a message, emergency message, saying, "Ballistic missile incoming," which I thought was from North Korea? For 30 minutes, 38 minutes, there wasn't an erasure of that false alarm. That collective panic, can we host that collective panic and the collective numbness so that we can bring ourselves into that equilibrium, into that zone of spaciousness where there's a creative possibility of transforming the situation?

Because on the other side of this, this is my—as I listen to whisper of the future, as you say, is the kind of the role of wisdom here—what I can kind of glimpse is that there's a huge potential gain, a huge potential win for humanity and for all the different players in this conflict. If we can transform this particular conflict, imagine what it will take. It will take humanity, it will take the United States, it will take China, it will take North Korea, South Korea, Russia, all these different players, the Pope, I don't know, the Olympics, that third side, that collective embrace. Imagine what we could discover. Imagine the gain for us in having the world's—not just sigh, a sigh of relief—but feel more safe, feel there's more prosperity be unleashed, well-being for people, more respect, more sense of dignity as we talked about. Just the amount of potential well-being that could be released by transforming this conflict, I think, if we focused on that for a moment, we might get attracted to that.

Thomas: Yeah. As I listened to you, there are multiple things coming to mind. One is when you spoke of Hawaii. Then I thought, wow, isn't it interesting that what we can do for one person—so, for example, if a person has a car accident, there is immediately somebody present that can support the person, through an appropriate relation, to release some of the shock, so we know that we decrease PTSD by a lot, in the first minutes. This is very crucial what happens to the person. What is the element of relation and safety and security that we can provide in such a situation. I thought, in a way, wow, actually, if we as a world were able to provide this in the moment of a collective trauma to a whole nation, to a part of a country, to a part of the population, we will be able to provide a sense of security within the insecurity.

[01:00:00]

Because I believe not only is the collective traumatization but the after-effects that we see—like the lack of appropriate parenting, the lack appropriate attachment processes, domestic violence, and, and, and, all kinds of abusive upbringings—so that we actually pass on the trauma, post-war trauma, so you have lots of stuff going on in families later. That the world actually has a lot of insecurity and unsafety and lack of safety within our experience. I think if we can come together and create spaces that are safe and radiate that safety into collectively traumatized fields. I think if we even create the possibility for conversation where there is none—because we all know when we are too frozen, we are defensive, we are not able to listen, we attack, we defend, and, and, and—but if we can provide a certain sense of safety... And that would be an interesting question, what or how can we provide enough sense of safety to the current situation that you work on so that there is a deeper relaxation? I think we all know how that feels when suddenly we feel safe in the presence of someone that we can relax and feel.

William: I love that. I love that question of how can we create a collective sense of safety. It starts with, obviously, within ourselves, but then collectively, how could... It's so strange, but talking, conversations with people on both sides, on all sides of this conflict, the paradox is—it seems so complicated, but in the end, it's so simple. It's like all sides are feeling threatened by the other. Interestingly, when I listen to the voices from the different sides, there's a blindness to the way in which they can't see how their actions make the other side feel threatened, that we have a kind of blindness in a conflict. We see how the other side threatens us, but we don't see how we threaten them. What that opens up is a possibility that everyone could sign up with—if you don't threaten me, I won't threaten you. If you don't threaten me, I won't threaten you. If we could get everyone to sign up for that dynamic, then you could create safety. We could ask the question of what will create a sense of safety for you.

Anyway, the other thing I'm thinking, Thomas, as you're talking about practice, I would love for you, maybe, to invite us into a meditation that might distill some of these things very immediately for us in creating some individual and collective space.

[01:05:00]

Thomas: Yeah, let's do that. Then, maybe, we can continue this conversation and go into some Q&A also. Maybe let's start, again, because...

### Begin Meditation

Let's make some space inside. How do we create space inside? When we give ourselves like a moment and let our breath take us into the physical body. The more we can honor, actually, our physical body is this very sophisticated biocomputer, very sophisticated. It has been developed throughout thousands and hundreds of thousands of years.

So, when I let my breath take me into the body, first of all, there's some sense of simplicity, like when you walk in nature, when you take a moment to drop into the body. There's just sitting. There's just listening. There's a moment of synchronization with the sense perception of now. These other sensations that I feel in my body, this is the movement of my breath, so this is very immediate. There is an intimacy with my body.

Being well-connected to one's body is being well-connected to an internal compass.

Then, most probably, as I focus on my body, I'm becoming aware of many, many subtle sensations in my body, that my body is an alive field: movement, sensations, information.

There are many, many layers of communication. It's a highly complex system. There is lots of communication going on as I'm sitting here quietly. It's a very sophisticated system of communication.

Maybe, as I tune into my body, I feel areas that are very alive. There are streaming sensations, flow sensations. There might be areas that are more tight, held, or stressed—and I just notice.

Then my body also hosts my emotional experience, my emotional experience is happening through my body. I feel emotions in different parts of my body. I can look, again, how much did I befriend, become a friend of 360 degrees of my emotional landscape. Its joy, love, fear, anger, sadness, shame, numbness. Can I embrace the whole cake? 360 degrees of what it means to be a human being, the emotional richness.

The more I deepen my own emotional experience, I can resonate with other people's emotional experience, understand the depth of their experience directly—through empathy, through attunement, through resonance, connectedness.

**[01:10:00]**

Then of course, I have the quality of my mind, the openness of my mind, the closedness of my mind, which varies in different situations. Activity of my mind, the freedom of imagination.

Then I have my external senses, which tell me something about the temperature in the room, the atmosphere in the room, noises, sounds, which can tell me something about the group that we are here. We can set the intention to tune in and feel us as a community of exploration, practice, research. To get a sense of the collective presence that we share as a we. Maybe, I can sense the change in the collective presence as we all pay attention to it.

Then I can, then, experiment, if you want to, just open myself to the... set the intention that I want to embrace or feel the complexity of the conflict, seeming conflict, between US, North Korea, South Korea, and all the other participants, and see—if I tune in with the complexity, what's arising in me. If I'm not listening to just what I know, if I listen to what I feel right now, there's an emergence within my experience. I stay with my intention, attuned to the whole field of complexity. I listen, I resonate. In the not knowing, I allow information to emerge. Everything that arises is important.



[01:15:00]

As you stay with your intention, to pay attention to the subtle layers of information. Like gentle breeze that arises, it might disappear or might stay, or a new one might arise—just to listen, without immediately fixing experience into a meaning, gentle listening.

To see if your mental, emotional, and physical experience participates in this experiment, and to not force any kind of experience, just to be open to read this inner sculpture, my physical, emotional, mental imprint.

Then, if you want, you can let go of the intention to tune in with the kind of collective field, come back to your own body. Then just sit for a few moments and listen to the stillness. If there's any insights, any information that wants to surface, that anything that wants to be seen can appear. To listen for a few moments to the stillness and inner spaciousness, and timelessness.

Then slowly, let's take a couple of deeper breaths, feel your body, the feet on the ground, and then, slowly, come back.

## End of Meditation

[01:20:00]

Maybe, just a few words—and then I want to hear if you have any more insights, William—a few words to the meditation. Basically in many of the wisdom traditions, the simplicity of listening, as William said before, is already the most basic meditation there is, like an inner sense of listening—listening to oneself, listening to the whole, listening to the Divine, to consciousness, to presence as such—and that when we listen, we start to create a coherence within our whole central nervous system, so the whole central nervous system participates; the part of my central nervous system that is aware of my physical body, my emotional experience, of my whole cognitive and rational mental experience, of my inspirational capacity. So, there is... Meditation creates more and more—meditation and, in parallel, kind of inner work, shadow work, trauma work—creates the capacity of my nervous system to be a coherent whole. I believe that that's a very important function in order to be a kind of a global participant, that I can participate as a whole. That's why I think many of the spiritual...—yoga, tai chi, meditation, contemplation, prayer—they have been developed mainly as tools and practices to create that inner kind of wholeness and that, in that wholeness, I can represent in myself seemingly external circumstances or situations, other people. So that's a very powerful tool. But maybe, if you want to add anything, William.

William: I just want to thank for, again, for a beautiful meditation, creating space. Just to share, if I may, just sort of floating with me around this moment of conflict, that's kind of the role of seeming accidents. I mean, a long time ago I worked on a project, during the Cold War, to... how do we reduce that risk of an accidental war, a war that no one wants? I'm just mindful of that because we're in the... A century ago Europe was in throes of a cataclysmic war that started almost by accident. It wasn't a war, no one wanted a war like that. Perhaps, some people wanted a little smaller war, but no one wanted that kind of war. It started just through the assassination of an archduke, and then it was summer, August of 1914, and messages got lost, and there were train schedules, all these things somehow tilted Europe into this conflagration, in which over 10 million people died, many more, and it was so-called by accident.

I'm remembering, for some reason it brought to me an old legend that we all know, but we don't know that much about, it's the legend of King Arthur. We know about the round table and so on, and the knights, what we don't know is how, as legend goes on to talk about, how it all came to an end. It all came to an end when the son of Arthur, Mordred, mounted a rebellion against his father, tried to unseat his father, and so they gathered together two hosts of knights, thousands of knights on each side on a plain there in England, facing each other. And then they saw the horror of what might unfold, they sent ambassadors in the middle to parley, to negotiate, to negotiate a way to come to their senses, as it were, and to avoid a horrendous battle. They were just on the verge of reaching some kind of agreement when there was a snake in the grass on one of the sides.

[01:25:00]

A knight saw that snake and he raised his sword to slay the snake before the snake could strike. The sword caught the sunlight, and it was like a signal to both sides that battle is to begin, and so the two sides emerged, clashed, and by day's end there was hardly anyone left alive. Mordred and Arthur fell into a battle and they both died. I mean, that's a legend, that's a metaphor of how accidents...

Then I think of the positive accident that's unfolding this week, where the Olympics are taking place in the very place where is the epicenter of this conflict. Can we take advantage of these cosmic accidents to envision a future? Because the Olympics kind of calls the best out of us, in some sense, calls the best out of people. As we watch those figure skaters and we watch them, all that's best in humanity, can we somehow harness the power of happy accidents for the good here? So I'm sitting with that question, that's what came up for me in the beautiful meditation that you led, Thomas.

**Q&A: The Outer Third Side Practice is Immediately Around Us**

*Host: Thank you so much for this journey. There were many, many questions, 24 questions coming in—deep, diverse. I think there is a lot to delve into deeper there. But I would like to combine two of them, which are where people are exploring how can we bring this down to where we are. On the one hand, there is this aspect of really becoming social witnesses to the global aspects, and one of the comments that was made is one of the most important steps is to even develop that concept in us, that as individuals we are part of this global witnessing possibility. We're an integral part of the global witnessing of humanity. On the other hand, people are asking, how can I bring this down to where I am?*

*So there's one question that came in anonymously, but how can we bring this down to our close environments? How can we be a third side in our close environments? What kind of leadership is needed to develop third sides in our close environment?*

*Also—this is partly a comment, partly, maybe, another... or a response to take in—I'm sorry... yes, it's Shannon who wrote about Norman Doidge's cutting-edge brain research, speaking about how trauma sections of the brain can sometimes be bypassed by rewiring new neural pathways, and that she believes that, in a way, all the people, the householders as she calls them, that are opening to what you're teaching, opening these new pathways of intuition and empathy and connectedness are, in a way, creating a new neural pathway. I thought that was interesting, so I'm curious to hear from you. Thank you.*

**[01:30:00]**

**William:** I guess I see, yes, it does. The process of becoming a third sider, of being a peacemaker, starts with us, starts inside of us, and then starts in our immediate surroundings with the daily conflicts that we face, that we see around us. I guess, to me, I see the seamless web of the challenges that we face in our daily conflicts, whether it's with our loved ones or with our work colleagues, and so on, to me are no different than talking about the conflicts facing humanity as a whole. It's no different. The pathway starts from micro to macro, so just to try to bypass that and just go to the macro, so I kind of see the question as being like concentric circles, we go out.

Of course, so I think the best, just like Thomas led us in a beautiful inner practice, and then the question is what's the outer practice. The outer practice is immediately around us. We have, every one of us has, I mean, we don't have to look far for conflicts. They're right around us. They're among us. We're part of them, so we have a chance to practice every single day, every single hour of every single day to hone our third side skills.

What are our third side skills, as we've talked about? It starts with the ability to go to the balcony, the ability to cultivate that space, the ability to go to the balcony, see the larger picture. Then, having listened to ourselves, which is so much a foundation of the art of meditation, to listen to the other, to put ourselves in their shoes. Because it's easy to listen from within our shoes, the hard thing is to listen from within the shoes of the other. It's easy to listen within our frame of reference. What's hard is to listen from within the other's frame of reference. That could be people—I know one of themes of the questions has been different cultures—how do you listen within the frame of reference of a different culture? We have all that grist for our mill every single day. Then, from there, it slowly expands, so that we can encompass all of humanity. So I would say that we have practice everywhere, all the time. In the end, it's a seamless web that goes from the micro to the macro, and it starts within, and starts right now.

### Q&A: Participating in the Amplification of the Global Immune System

Participant 1: This has just been amazing for me. So many light bulbs going off, and then so many questions, and then so many of them getting answered, too. I guess I want to ask one thing that's already been addressed somewhat, but I want to expand it, which is, what is needed to make this third side? What is needed to make it a reality, to make it more fulfilling its potential? I think we have a lot of existing models already, like you mentioned parenthood, you mentioned the tribal society, you mentioned... Also things come to mind like the Truth and Reconciliation work that's being done in various places in the world and restorative justice, there are just all kinds of things.

But I guess I would like to ask this question of what, so starting from that sort of vision—because I think as third siders and facilitators, we're also visionaries—so starting from that place in the imagination where we have a world where the third side is strong and empowered and considered in the decision making of our leaders, what are the things that will get us there? What are the things that are needed, that have to be in place for that? You've talked about a lot of individual practices, it seems like we need that, and plus we need a common intention, and maybe a lot of conversation around it, but I'm just wondering if there's anything else, maybe, that that question would spark?

[01:35:00]

Thomas: Well, maybe I go first and then... So, thank you for your question, I think that's exactly why we made this course, that we, together, explore the question. I mean, most probably, here on the course we find already lots of volunteers to be third siders, otherwise we wouldn't come together, so there is a... The fact that we are sharing a mutual intention means that there is a voluntary participation and a mutual co-thinking, co-intuiting process happening already between us. I think, on the one hand, that was the intention for William and I to create this course, but also to spark a conversation. The second thing is, I think, the very technology that we are using right now is a kind of an amplifier. If we feel called to participate in the creation of the third side in any way—which might be that we have technological skills, that we have facilitation skills, that we play this role already anyway in our families, in our education systems, in our therapeutic systems or medical systems or law systems so that many of us already working in a system that is part of the third side—but I believe that we are being called to develop kind of this global immune system.

On the one hand, it's a creative question because it seems that we are kind of sparked and inspired in the creation or, let's say, the amplification of the global immune system. Even to think about the global immune system is already a very sophisticated process and an inspiring process, so there's the creative side, but then I believe you also need to look at why isn't it happening already anyway. I think that's also a good question, what desynchronizes the third side, what disintegrates the capacity of humanity to respond as a global immune system. I think that's where, I believe, the whole collective trauma question and trauma as such comes into play. Then I think it's up on us to develop new tools that help us to integrate collective trauma on a bigger scale and take out the sand in the engine. I think that's also a very important part. But maybe I hand it over to William or back to you.

William: Just to add, I really resonate with what you're saying, Thomas. To me, it's experiments like this, like these, like we're doing today, we're doing in this course, that create a new field that links together all those threads that you mentioned—the new experiments with truth and justice and reconciliation and restorative justice, new experiments in the field of negotiation, mediation, systems design, meditation, consciousness, neuroscience—it all feels to me that it feeds into a new field animated by this question that you ask, which is how do we activate this third side. Together, then, that leads to creating what might be called a *third side culture*—or I would call it like a *co-culture* because it's collaborative, it's cooperative, a co-culture—realizing that, in the end, the first thing is just simply awareness that we are actually all third siders. Whether we recognize it or not, we're all third siders, we're all peacemakers. Starting, as the previous question indicated, right around us. We play that role all the time. Human beings, we are the most cooperative, one of the most cooperative species on the planet. We don't see it because, in our images of the media, we see all of our conflicts and the wars and the hostility and the violence, but if you look around you, for most of us, if you look around us, you just see countless acts of cooperation, parenting, and so on, of people working together.

[01:40:00]

If we can just become aware that that's, in fact, our reality, that we are cooperative by nature, that that's our nature, that's our destiny, then we can listen to the future and we can call into that being. So it's not a question of going from 10% to 100%. It's a question of going from 90% to 99%. That's what we need to do. We need to go that last bit, and it comes from awareness that we are already empowered. We already have the resources. The third side is the most powerful potential force on the planet. It's that collective immune system.

Thomas is just absolutely right that what's holding it in check right now, from us dealing with a lot of these more difficult and tractable conflicts, is trauma. If we can learn to free those traumas, to liberate, to heal those traumas, it's like the third side is there, it will bounce. The consciousness is there, it's just suppressed now. If we can go into the sources of suppression, it's our birthright, it's our destiny, is to be a co-culture of third siders.

Thomas: Right. Maybe, now that you're saying this, William, I think a great practice, for example, is also—because I believe the global immune system has a very, it consists out of many, many billions of building blocks, and the building blocks are, in a way, our systems, like our bodies, our emotional systems and so on—I believe that when we look just at our level of vitality, so when am I very vital in my life, when do I feel that I'm participating in a yes or when do I feel that I, whatever, leave the conversation, leave a team meeting, leave a situation, leave an argument or a conflict, and I feel depleted, and I feel tired, and I feel exhausted, so that, I believe, watching our individual vitality level is actually one of the key indicators for how we live our life and how we are part of a global coherence that is the global immune system. So I think we can, maybe, take this as a practice—to just watch.

I think we even mentioned this already in one of the earlier classes that we watch during the day: when do I feel energized and when do I feel depleted, when do I feel I participate in a creative moment—I believe, all of us, when we have creative inspirational dialogues, we feel kind of on fire, we feel inspired, we feel alive—and what are the situations that seem like they took energy from us? Which is kind of already a shadow language way of putting it, but that I see, actually: in this situation, I wasn't fully aware, and that's why my life energy level dropped, and that's why I need some other moments to fill my life energy and vitality again so that I feel kind of good or energized. I believe, that's a great... It seems like a simple practice, but if I kind of even, whatever, write a diary or make myself notes when are the moments in my life that I feel energized or when are the moments in my life that I feel depleted, and that's a great way to get the profile of where do I participate in brightness and in the immune system of the world and where do I participate, actually, in the disintegration of the immune system of the world.

[01:45:00]



**Q&A: Becoming a Grounded Field of Presence Within a Disruption**

Participant 2: Hi, Thomas. Hi, William. Thank you for this fantastic session. I just wanted to bring up—and this is kind of a personal thing—I live in Hawaii, and you brought up the false missile alert that we had a couple of weeks ago. I was in my car, driving to work. I got a text from my daughter, saying, “Have you seen this?” I hadn’t. I read it. I read it again. I was interested in watching my own reactions. There was something saying, “No. This isn’t real. This is not happening.” I was interested in how, whether this was like just being disbelief and denial and, “This cannot be true,” or whether there’s like an intuition also, going, “No. This isn’t true.” Because for me, there’s all these things to living in Hawaii, they tell you you have between 12 and 17 minutes to get organized if this happens. There was no way I could home or to work in that space of time, so I had to decide what to do.

Obviously, I called home. My husband said, “No. Just go to work.” Obviously, there’s a feeling that it’s all surreal, but there was a very strong feeling—and I really can attribute this, I think, to my work so far on Thomas’ teachings, of trying to create space, trying to say, “Okay. I’m here. This is now. What am I feeling?” So being aware of feeling my body, and then feeling fear, but the mental part kept saying, “Okay,” and this is what I’m wondering about, whether rationalization or true, actually, intuition. It’s like, “Okay. Let me think now. The Olympics are happening. They wouldn’t do this before the Olympics. The Olympics, this is a good thing happening. Korea wouldn’t start this. Trump would start this.” All these things going around in one’s head, and then coming to decision, “Okay. I’m going to work.” I did. And I’m still, right now when I’m talking about it, the feeling is, again, there was no panic. There was a sort of space.

But yeah, my question is, again, sort of knowing, having that knowing of what is really happening. Then also something you mentioned, William, which I thought was sort of to the point of the accidents, because a part of me was thinking, “Okay, well, let’s say, if I believe this is a false alarm, what if the other side doesn’t think it’s a false alarm and press it, because he has a bigger button, and it works?” So yeah, I was interested if you could add your own view, speak to that.

Thomas: Yeah. Maybe, do you want to respond first because it’s connected to your example, and then I will finish it?

William: Sure. Well, first of all, I just really deeply appreciate your sharing, Jenny, because it helps me, because it makes it all real, because this is what I'm sitting with. I didn't have that immediate experience that you did for those 12 minutes or 17 minutes or half an hour, but as I work and study this situation, I'm living with it. I'm dreaming with it. I'm sleeping with it. I'm thinking, there's such a... I kind of resonate with your experience because there's a kind of a disconnect, like, "Could this be real? Could this actually be real?"

Because there's an overwhelming sense of, "It couldn't happen." Really? I mean, really? Are we... I mean... And yet, with my brain, with my head, I'm listening to people who are deeply knowledgeable and are deeply worried that it is all too possible and sort of dancing on that edge. First, I just want to say how much I appreciate just listening to you because you experienced it all, you experienced all those different voices. I'm touched, too, that your work with Thomas, your own inner work, allowed you to kind of sift through, to listen to the voice of wisdom inside you and to discern. I'll let Thomas build on it, but I just want to thank you, Jenny.

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Thomas: Yeah, I agree. I think first of all, it is already a sign of your inner work that you can have this moment of reflection, not to go into an initial panic, but to have a moment and say, okay, how does that feel? Maybe, it's a combination. Maybe it was a combination of also shutting down some fear and, at the same time, still being able to listen and—even if it was a mental process—to listen to that inner dialogue that you had, you need some sort of awareness. I think that's important. Most probably it was a mixture. To me, it feels like it was a mixture of also holding or containing some fear inside and, at the same time, having enough space to be in the process of exploration. But you inspire, I believe, us as a field to say, "Yeah." Even in a moment of an extreme, whatever, crisis potential or crisis situation, we still can check in and say, "Okay. In my healthy self-contact, I can connect to my inner compass and see what I feel," and that I constantly come back.

And when I read the news, when I'm talking to the neighbor, or whatever, however close or far it seems, that my body, in its openness, is plugged in. I believe our body is a chip that is plugged in to the motherboard of life. That's why in our body is when we say, okay, when we want to make a decision or when we have a question that doesn't find an answer, that I can take the question inside, into inner space, and listen to how my body feels with possibility A and possibility B. That kind of inner questioning—or I take a question into my body and allow my body to give me a signal—of course, where we are traumatized, that signal is kind of over-iced [*sic*], but the more we presence it... like it was in the question or in the statement before, that we create, also, new pathways in us that help us to channel insight within our nervous system and our bodies. I think that process is really, really important. Especially, I believe if we are going into a time that's going to be more disruptive, through climate change and more and more climate refugees and, maybe, new potential conflicts, ones that will arise in the future because of that, I think that what we are training, also, through our inner work, is to become more stable and grounded fields of presence within a potential disruption. I believe that's crucial.

I think that many people that are doing consciousness work at the moment—and inner spiritual work, contemplation, mediation, shadow work—that, in a way, we're also preparing ourselves, that more and more people can stay in a kind of an inner stability within an external potential instability. I believe that's crucial because, when I was in Israel two years ago, when the war was going on here, with the missiles, and multiple times a day there were missile alarms and real missiles coming, you heard them being shot down by this iron dome, I think the degree of how cultures can disintegrate within conflicts and how even functions that we take for granted in regular environments, in regular cultural environments, that some of the functions simply disintegrate, they fall apart. I believe that our nervous system in high level of stress is this going back to former functions that are more, that have a longer wiring than the newer functions.

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I think that's pretty interesting, that in real crisis situations or real conflict situations that our capacities of multi-perspectivity, compassion, non-judgment, and those higher functions of consciousness might easily disintegrate, because it's a difference if one person in a company has an existential crisis or if a culture has an existential crisis. I think, then we will be called to use the inner practice. I think these are the moments where literally our inner practice shows its fruits and how deeply what we practiced— I'm sure that also you, William, that when you were in more hot conflict situations, that your inner practice actually provided a kind of stability that was needed in order not to become reactive, not to be sucked into the polarization. I find this interesting how we prepare ourselves to be centers of presence within kind of a cultural instability. Because those cultural forces, I believe, are very strong, that when there's a real crisis, those cultural disintegrations, I believe, are really strong.

William: Yeah, so it's a wake-up call. Really, all these things are like wake-up calls to us, to awaken as Shambhala warriors that we are. Really, to use that inner presence, to use our insight into the nature of reality, it comes from being on the balcony, to use the compassion that arises from our hearts and then to put it into action. That's a key theme, I hear, is how do we put this into action, so I want to leave that for our next session. It's just such a pleasure, a privilege to be on this call with all of you.