



Meditate & Mediate

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Host: *Welcome, welcome everybody, it's great to be with you all at this point. The course is, I think, really cooking at the moment and every day it feels like the world gives us more opportunities to practice, creating the inner conditions to do conflict work and mediation work, and I'm sure our personal, professional lives also may be throwing up a lot of topics. So we've been harvesting and looking through all the questions that you've written in. Also, some of the questions that Thomas and William weren't able to address on the previous session. And I'm going to start with a written question, and then, as Sherri says, there's plenty of opportunity for people to raise their hands and ask live questions, too.*

Question 1: Trust Is a Function of Relation

So a question that we thought might be interesting to start with relates to trust. And I know we've also looked at trust once before, but I think it's a very core topic. And the question is framed like this, "Would you speak to proceeding independent of trust or distrust, balancing the awareness of the person's previously unreliable tendencies and actions with the belief in the best of intentions within them or belief in possibilities?"

So, in a way, it's about how do we bring our previous awareness of somebody in a way that isn't naïve into what we might call trusting relationship. And I think it's a great question to start with. So we'll start up with Thomas and William to respond.

Thomas: Well, maybe I'll start. Hello everybody, welcome. And before we start with the answer, since we'll have many questions today, let's again take a moment to say, okay, how do I listen to a question? Like, am I listening to a question on a mental level? Do I listen to question with my, whatever, mental, emotional, physical inner coherence, which means I listen with my whole body? Can I tune in and get... okay, the question is why do we have a question? The question is, where does the question arise in the consciousness of a human being and what does it tell us? And the same is with trust and distrust. Because many questions that we hold, and also many processes that we have in our life, especially in mediation or in our integration work.

So we, in a way, deal with the separation inside of us. So when there's a layer inside of us that is not fully or maybe just a little related, it throws up a question into the air, and my mind catches that question and tries to figure it out. So when I already find myself, especially also in a process facilitation or in a situation—should I or shouldn't I, or trust or distrust—both show me that I am not fully in contact with the person in front of me, and including all the past that we experienced, because obviously the past that we experienced is unresolved energy that already led to some conflict or disturbance, or kind of, whatever, hurt or retraction. That when I re-relate to a person that I had already kind of a friction with or that I classify as not reliable and not fully reliable.

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So most probably, if I hold the past, which means I already experience something that makes me be more careful, so that is the past that I bring into the situation. And so my, whatever, responsibility, in order for me to be able to respond, I need to be aware of what kind of past am I holding with that person. So what is the unspoken aspect of our relation that hasn't been clarified yet? I think that's one thing that I need to clarify for myself or with the help of others, to get a sense of, okay, what am I holding towards the person that is not spoken, not restored. And that's why it is a past. Which makes me feel less related to the person.

But that was already built on the issue of trust or distrust. But I believe, when we look really deeply we see that trust is a function of relation, so that there is no separate trust. I don't trust a person, I feel a person. When I feel somebody, it's not a matter of trust or distrust, it's a matter of connection. And so that's why my sense is that every time there is kind of a dual split, trust or distrust, there's a valley in my experience. It's like a canyon, one person is here, one here. Here's is an emotional and physical canyon and my mind tries to build a bridge and then I try to deal with the situation through a mental... but my mind can only say, "Should I or shouldn't I? Is it good, is it bad? Is it the right thing to do, is it not the right thing to do? Should I stay in this relation or should I not stay in this relation?"

But I believe that that is just a symptom of something that's not connected anymore deeper here, or maybe wasn't to start with. And so I believe very much that the art of relation that I find in myself, okay, where am I not relating to the current situation fully? And that I find in myself the place that is pulled back, pulled out, holds judgements or holds ideas, or holds interpretations about the situation? That actually the bridge that connects the two sides of the canyon, but usually they are mental bridges. I need to think more if I don't feel it. If I feel it, mind, emotion, and body create understanding. If not, then I need interpretation. But interpretations will always fight with other interpretations. The one interprets it like this, the other one like this. I say this is right, the other person says that is right, but we are talking about the canyon.

All the bridges are there because there's a gap, there's a valley. And I believe that valley is what at the end creates kind of, on the one hand the issues, on the other hand an amazing chance for restoration. That the relational restoration is the basis for real understanding. And once there's understanding, the question and the answer become two. Which means that many of the questions that we hold in life are actually process questions, not understanding questions. Because, if I am synchronized, I understand. And if I don't understand, if I ask, so I know that I need to, not to engage in the mental should I or shouldn't I, or is there trust or is there distrust, both of it is a sign that it's not relating fully, that I am not relating fully to the current situation. And so that's good news because that's what I can work on.

I can, so why am I holding that question? So where did I pull back from this person? Where haven't I been in contact, maybe to start with? So, what in me is already a bit back and not fully in contact?

And contact means relation is like a data connection. And then I feel people, then I'm not disappointed because I feel it in the first place. And I think that's, like many of the questions in the restoration of the world are actually restoring relation. And I believe mediation is kind of a social contemplation that restores relation. And when we restore relation, then we understand, because it's one. So that's from my side for now, I don't know if William you want to add something or if you...

[00:10:00]

William: Sure, I would. It's such a core question, and I love the way you began, Thomas, almost by asking who's asking that question. What part of me is asking that question? Is it me as a separate individual or is the question really about the other, or is it about the relationship between me and the other? And what that question raises for me is to ask the question of... because when we say, "I don't trust the other person," what exactly does that mean? Because, and just to kind of break it down a little bit, is it, "I am not trusting that person's consistency of behavior"? I am not trusting that person's predictability, in other words? Because maybe you don't trust that person to keep their word, but they're actually predictable, so you can trust that person's ability to be untrustworthy.

And so you really want to kind of figure out what is it. Am I not trusting that person's competence, in other words, their capability to carry out their word even if they give their word? Am I not trusting that person's character? I mean, is it that that's their personality, is it somehow about their own internal ethics? Or am I not trusting that person's caring about me? And so I think it's important, when you ask a question about trust—which is one of the key issues in any conflict, in any situation in life, both in the micro and in the macro, what can I trust—is to really ask what is it that I'm asking. And then to have a kind of a meta conversation with yourself, and perhaps with the other, and say, "I don't trust that person's..." either their caring or their character or their competence, or their consistency. Find out what it is, find out what you can trust, what you can't trust. Have that conversation inside of you.

Then if you find that you can't trust, for example, their capacity to carry out their word, then I think this is why in negotiation, it's very important to go back to the balcony, understand them, know what your BATNA is, that's why BATNA is so important, your best alternative to a negotiated agreement. Because it's quite likely that you're not going to be able to reach an agreement with the other side, or an agreement that certainly would satisfy your interest, or an agreement that they're going to carry out. So you really want to know your BATNA and think about your BATNA in that situation. That's what it means to be independent of trust, is to really know your BATNA. And then to think about, if you can't trust that person, is there other third party you can trust? And this is where the third side can play that role.

For example, often in financial transactions, the two parties may not trust each other but they trust a bank, they put money in escrow. In other words, other ways to construct this, so that I can deal with that person even not being able to trust their ability to carry out their word. And so then have that meta conversation, and then at some point you might want to even have a conversation, an honest conversation with the other and say, "Look, here's the situation. Because of this, this and that, I don't trust your... When you say you're going to do something, I can't rely on your ability to carry that out. That's a problem, let's look about how we deal with it. And maybe you don't trust me either," and make it reciprocal. And then the question is, how could we together start to create a relationship of trust? What are the steps?

But actually think about focusing the conversation not on the issue but on the prior question of what's the relationship. And is it even worth going into a negotiation trying to reach an agreement if you don't have the ability to trust what the other person will carry it out. And talk about those preconditions for success.

Host: *That's great, thank you very much, both of you, I think it's a very cool question, this orientation of relationship and our prior experience of relationship and how we stay current with what really is and stay in a present and awake relational field, so thank you both very much for that.*

Question 2: Experiencing a Shift in How We Handle Conflicts

Participant 1: Greetings from the Czech Republic. My heart is beating as I'm holding the question. And me asking it is actually a way, also, of participating in the community, because I haven't asked a question before. So it's pounding. And so, I've just come from a three-day mediation training that I offer, and I'm so very grateful that I can also incorporate the inspiration that I have received from you. So, there's a lot of gratitude in me.

[00:15:00]

And when I was considering what to ask, I was thinking of the question, like if you can recall some important moments, like William and Thomas, in your own life, where you experienced a shift in the way you handle conflicts. I know that, for myself, in, like, more recently, I'm shifting towards handling it... from handling it on the verbal level to focusing more on what's happening in the body and encountering the other's nervous system, also. Which kind of very much resonates with what, Thomas, you were saying at the beginning. And I'm just curious if you can recall such moments, when there was a change.

Thomas: First of all, hello, it's lovely to listen to you and I also feel your depth in the interest of your work. It's beautiful.

Yeah, I pretty much... You know, I encountered this in my groups, and I just finished like a training program for seven days. These are large groups, and so there are very often moments where also participants have a lot of anger or whatever, their own history, in a way, gets projected into the space or onto me, or onto other people in the group. And then we learn to, okay, let's take this apart and see what is underneath, and then it's exactly as you said. And what I do is I allow my nervous system to fully synchronize with the person's experience right now. And then to create a space where there's a real listening and where I am able to fully host the experience of the person in me.

So it's like you create a kind of an inner availability to create a mirror impression inside. And if somebody is very, maybe, activated or agitated or very tense or angry, so in the moment we can just be with it, which means also that we need to have a lot of work done to be able to stay related because if somebody might be angry at us, so we might retract and then we become defensive ourselves, so we start to also engage in arguments. But my experience is, every time I can really host—even if somebody kind of attacks me—with real presence and emotional connectedness, and really listen to the concern or the difficulty that the person experiences, I always find some sense of mutual coherence filed that we create; so the nervous system of the person and my nervous system, we create a bigger mutual space together.

And in the moment that this happens, usually a down-regulation of the activation happens. There's kind of a mirror. Slowly, slowly, like as if you go for a run and you run very fast beside a person, and then you slow down slowly, slowly so that it's hardly to notice, but after some time you actually run a little bit slower and a little bit slower. And then, the more we calm down, the more there's space for connection and mutual listening.

And I see this kind of core regulatory function of our nervous systems is one of the major ingredients of any successful process work. That when we get out of the arguments and we can come to like a mutual... And I believe every nervous system feels this, however agitated we are, if we truly want to listen, the other nervous system, even if very activated, gets a sense of it. And then slowly, slowly we come to a place where we can tal- ... Even if there's still disagreement, it doesn't mean that we have to have agreement, but we have relation. We more and more come back into the mutual space.

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Because often in conflict, you see that people go out of the mutual space. They retract, they cut the connection, why? Because often the current conflict is based upon prior trauma, and trauma most probably always, or very often, comes with a fact that the interior world of a person and the exterior perception of a person are cut. We talked about this in the course, in one of the first sessions, that the bridge that bridges my inside with my outside, as long as this is intact, there is relation. Which means I can feel you as I talk with you and I can feel myself. And I don't lose you.

But in very tense situation, usually people cut this bridge, inside it's already cut from the past. From childhood development, the trauma and the culture, whatever. And I think that's, for me, always that, even if somebody is angry or aggressive or whatever, and we can stay with the movement, there's very often a down-regulation, and then we see the real need behind the original reaction. So there's always a need, something needs, there's something needed that cannot be voiced in this tension. And once we connect to this, we have a gate. Once we hear the need and we feel it, and the person really feels that we mean it really, it's not just a plate but it's honest, you have a gate. Then the moment you have a gate, you have a kind of a bridge, I believe. And that's usually how my experience is very often, that once we get to this moment, we're already in the evolution. Like we're already in the mutual development of this relations. So maybe that's ... I mean, I could say many more things but, I think that's my answer for now.

William: Ivanna, thank you so much for the question. I can feel where that's coming from in you. And to answer that for myself, I would say, the shift, you know, to me, the shift early on, in the very beginning of my work as a mediator, was the shift from, or as a negotiator for that matter, is the shift from self to other. Is this kind of learning to listen, learning to put myself in the other's shoes, learning empathy even in very tense and difficult situations with people whom you wouldn't necessarily feel like emphasizing with. That was the first shift, and then I would... say that's from little self to other. And I would say, more recently, in the last, I don't know, decade or more, it's been from other to self, again. But this time the Self, maybe, has a capital "S" instead of a small "s". And it's like the larger sense of Self, which actually includes the other, there is no other.

And that's to play with all the things that we've been talking about here in the course, which for me, I feel like I'm learning just as much as anyone else here is learning. Learning that, in fact, maybe the key gift that a mediator brings to the parties in a conflict situation may not be the techniques, as important as they are, or what you say, the verbal, the kind of like creative problem-solving skills—it actually might be your presence. It might be your own instrument. And so I've learned that it goes back to what Thomas was saying about hosting, to host the conflict within myself, larger Self, include all the different parties. Like right now, in the work on North Korea, which I'm very focused on, is just include everyone inside myself. Include Donald Trump, including Kim Jong-un, include everyone in the world who's involved in this somehow.

That, to me, is the shift, and I think, as you mentioned, Ivanna, tuning into my own body as my own physical instrument here is like... my body is kind of like a tuning instrument, taking in a lot of data, information, feelings, perceptions, and starting to pay more attention to that. That, to me, is the art form, and that's why it's so important that the theme of this course of *Meditate and Mediate* combined, that's the new feel that's wanting to emerge here. So thank you for the question.

Thomas: Next time, můžeme mluvit česky [*"we can speak Czech"*].

[00:25:00]

Question 3: Healthy Guilt and Shame Are Essential to Reconciliation

Participant 2: Hi.

Thomas: Hi Margaret.

William: Hi there Margaret.

Participant 2: Hi Thomas, hello William. I wrote in my question, but I didn't expect to be live with it. The question is around guilt and shame, and I'm wondering, when they arise, whether in myself or the other, whether there's a function, a useful function for that in mediation. How it might be, if there is a way that it can actually serve relationship rather than shutting it down.

Thomas: Maybe, William, you want to go first on this one?

William: Sure. First of all, Margaret, that's a really... I hadn't thought about that question, so thank you for really raising it. As I reflect on it, my instinctual reply is yes, and one initial cut at it is to distinguish between healthy guilt and unhealthy guilt, healthy shame and unhealthy shame. Because I believe that guilt and shame are very important parts of... When there's been damage done, when there's been destruction, how do you reconcile? And guilt and shame are natural functions, natural emotions that emerge. And if properly expressed, they're actually essential to any reconciliation process. And there is way in which there's a kind of a healthy level of guilt and shame, which is kind of based in self responsibility, and then there can be an unhealthy form, expressions of it, which is based on self-blame. And we often confuse self-responsibility and self-blame, but there's actually a huge difference between the two. Self-responsibility is rooted in self-acceptance. Self-responsibility is about taking power. Self-blame is rooted in self-rejection and is actually disempowering. So, sorting that out, finding that out is the key. Thomas.

Thomas: I think, I like to think of, for example, fear and shame, actually, as... many people see fear and shame as kind of emotions that separate us, whereas, in fact, it's an emotion that wants to get us back into relation. So when children need to come back to the parents because they get afraid and they need to be protected, they go back. When we feel that we did something—and that's also important, like what's the shame, what's the value system that the shame is about? Because if you get excluded from the tribe, and the shame is actually like an inward movement to come back to the tribe, so then there is a positive... like if we see the shame and we relate to the shame, and we include the shame in the process, so then it's actually something that reconnects us. But that's, what I'm saying now, is only because for many people shame, for example, is something that we feel... First of all, we don't want to feel it, and secondly it feels like when I feel ashamed, I feel separate. And then I try to avoid situations where I feel ashamed because it's such an uncomfortable process and it feels separate.

So I stop doing this, I stop doing that. But if I learn to, in myself, to become more and more acquainted and a friend of my shame. If I practice, whenever I feel ashamed, that I allow myself to feel ashamed, and I see if I can relate through the shame to people around me, so I include the shame, so I open up my energy field, my energy channels, I open them so that shame can flow.

[00:30:00]

And then, first, that's the basis to understand shame because if I don't understand it in myself, I don't understand it in the world either, because I still try to avoid it. So then I cannot learn because the basis for learning and understanding, as we said, is that the mind, emotions, and the body are one. It's one line. Understanding is not a mental, understanding is a holistic thing that my mind and my emotion and my body are synchronized, and they create an interior where insight and understanding can land. And if its fragmented—that my emotions, my body, my mind say different things—so then I have no understanding and then I need to bridge the gaps all the time. In myself, but then also in my facilitation, I won't be able to stay present with people that feel ashamed. If I'm not clear with guilt in myself, I cannot facilitate, really, a process where somebody feels guilty, because I don't know what that is. And if somebody is ashamed, I don't know what that is. Because I try to avoid in myself. I will try to avoid in the other person. But if I feel that somebody is really ashamed, and I am in peace with shame, then I can be there and I can really explore like a greater connection from my relational capacity, through the shame, to the person.

And then because people get very reactive sometimes or they blame themselves, they go out of relation, and then it's harder to deal with the matter that we're dealing with because actually we're not dealing with the thing that we're discussing about, we're dealing with managing the other stuff that is around it. And so, most of the people, the stuff that we could clarify in a mediation is usually not the stuff that we're talking about. I believe we're often talking about the side effects that are on top of the conflict.

For example, I believe, when we—this makes me think of something—so when... A family system has a 100% energy. When the parents are traumatized already, the family system has less energy. When there are, let's say there are four kids. If the system doesn't have 100% energy because the trauma reduces the pipe, the water that can come through the pipe, so there is 60% of energy or 70%, depending on the power of the trauma. So, four kids grow up with 70% energy. Everybody has the feeling of lack.

So then, later on, they create the family business or they have real estate or whatever. Then it's about inheriting. Then it's about dealing with the family business. And then you often see that family businesses are often in a crisis because there are conflicts. But the conflict is not about the business. The conflict is about the system that has a lack. And then what we're dealing with appears in the lack. It's like there is not enough for me that's why I start fighting, that's why there is often a lot of jealousy, that's why there is a lot of envy. These are all signs that the system doesn't have enough energy.

And then, if I get entangled too much in the matter, in the content, and I don't see, "Oh, wait a minute, this family is not fighting over the business. This family is fighting because the system is not abundant."

In many people it appears as a lack that is being projected onto the business, or onto the inheritance, or whatever. Then, oh, I don't deal with this. I look at the other part that is the origin, and once I can get to the source of it and we create an expansion there, then the whole system can relax, and then usually people are capable of dealing with the stuff. So and that's when we have the shame and guilt and we suppress it and we're not conscious. So then it becomes a kind of an obstacle. If it's something that we learn to include, and especially as facilitators, the more I am in peace within myself, the more I can offer this quality. As William said, then I can return from the small self to the big Self. Then there is consciousness, energy, structure, and there is an abundance.

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If there is somebody in the room that sits in more abundance, usually conflict has scarcity, something is not enough. And the world is not enough. In between cultures there is not enough, because we hurt and slaughtered and killed each other over thousands of years. So the whole system is actually often dealing with scarcity. And scarcity is a trauma symptom, and so that's why I think if we, the more we as facilitators can do our inner work, then we are the space that becomes more abundant. And also when I listen to William, often I hear abundance of space and energy and love and compassion and clarity being infused into a system, and then the system can relax because if we get the feeling there is enough, it is actually the basis of creation. The creative power of the universe exhales the universe. There is always enough. It's abundant enough to create a whole universe. And this power we need is our ally. This should be the force in our... like the tail wind in our mediations.

And so that's why, in the traditions, they say, if you become more and more equal to the force that creates you, you become a well. We become like a source of energy. And I think mediation needs to be source of energy, because systems usually lack something, and there must be somebody that sits in abundance, so we infuse something that's lacking.

Question 4: Engaging Our Allies to Dissolve the Illusion of Separation

Participant 3: Greetings to you both and to our hosts and to all the participants. I'm sitting in Jerusalem as I speak to you, and I share Ivanna's, my peer's, sentiment earlier about what it feels like to be part of this community. And I also, I'm myself a little bit nervous asking this question, but I'm really grateful for your course and for your time with us.

Well, my question is actually very connected to your last statement, Thomas, but I would love to hear both of you, from a practical angle, how you suggest dealing with this. It sort of keeps coming up as a pattern lately, I think, for all of us in our lives, that—and it's a core teaching in many of the main religions and spiritual teachings—that it's the illusion of our separateness which is our greatest source of suffering, right? Separateness from each other and from our Source. And so I recently had a recent conversation with someone at a top university in the States who is creating a center, an institution for people to come together in academia and in different practices, to bring in what they call wisdom resources—but really it's, whether it's spiritual teachings or religious teachings attached to a specific dogma or a lot of what we talk about in this course—to deal with many of the top challenges that we face in the world today. And one thing that keeps coming up that no one seems to really know how to deal with is, what to do—because what I find unique about this course and the participants is that, I think, we're all very aware, and almost hyper-aware, of what the separateness does to us internally and in moments of conflict, and then the world's main conflicts.

So what do you do when you're in a situation of conflict, where people are really holding on to their identity? These constructs that are very important to them, and we want to come to it from a place where we're not judging how important that part of their identity is to them. And it's almost like we're taking off our sunglasses and see the situation clearly. We're at the top of a balcony, or we're putting on glasses that would allow us to see the situation clearly, and we want to hold that space for them without judgment, but at the same time knowing what the source of the pain is, right? In situations where identity is the source of the conflict, in and of itself. This does seem to come up. It's a very present challenge for humanity on the whole, so, I'm very keen to hear about that.

Thomas: Yeah, maybe I will start. First of all, thank you for the question. And I think you're talking to something that I believe is crucial, especially crucial for people that have a spiritual motivation. That first of all, when we say we don't have any judgements, I'm always already a bit suspicious that there are some judgements. For example, that if somebody holds on very strongly to something, that there is an anger that arises in us or there is some kind of judgment coming up.

So, non-judgment is really allowing all the judgements but resting in a space that doesn't attach itself to it. Because some people have the effort in themselves to try to be non-judgmental—but actually they are, and then they suppress their natural responses to the situation and their natural emotional world because we try to be non-judgmental.

[00:40:00]

One quality is that I'm really honest, so if judgements come up in me, that I allow them, but I don't grasp them. Because often, so there is the judgements that's connected to my history, but then often there is the transference of people's own judgements. And I need this information if I want to facilitate the process. If try to stay clean, I miss the transference that people send out energy all the time, so they actually tell me their interior anyway. And so, but if I try to stay too clean, I'm actually disturbing the process. And as William said, if I can rest in the big Self, like there is space and awareness of the process, then I can allow it and let it run through me. I don't need to identify myself with the judgement, but I also don't suppress it, because then I suppress another part of myself as well.

And then the second thing is that, especially when we deal... what I encounter very often is that people come to me—to my classes, courses, training programs—and so there are spiritual concepts that many people take from the spiritual teachings, but they are not yet... they are lovely to be inspired, but they are not yet my interior reality. So non-separation is usually not the experience that most of the people sit in. But then it becomes a mental argument that we carry with us: oh, there is non-separation. But if non-separation is not my interior experience, it's actually not authentic. So that we get inspired, we need to study and inhale what people left that really had breakthroughs in the mystical traditions and the wisdom traditions. It's very important to get inspired, but then it's very important to be as true as possible to one's own experience.

So if we can do this, then we see that actually the separation is the history, like the unresolved past that we carry with us, all the trauma past of humanity that is still alive in our bodies, in our nervous systems. That the fragmentation of this past is actually what creates the separation. And if we do the right integration work, and if we invite each other to be totally true to the disassociation and the separation that we carry inside—and we don't overlay it with spiritual concepts because that creates a hamburger that is not healthy, it's kind of like a fast-food. If I take it apart, then we will support each other in the deepest humanity.

I often say, our deepest humanity is our highest possibility. Which means that, if we're truly human, we embody spirit. Because spirit needs our humanness to run through all of our channels and illuminate the world. And I think that's why integration with the best that we have at the moment in trauma therapy, psychotherapy, psychology, and the best that we have from the wisdom traditions, combined, is actually an amazing toolbox.

So, I mean, there is most probably much more to say, but this up, like we practice the spiritual practice and we deeply incarnate ourselves, we deeply want to be in the world. It is not a bypass but actually a deeper manifestation of presence. I think this will transcend the separation that we experience.

William: As Thomas is speaking, as I'm listening to your question, at least what I'm visualizing is, there's... another question is ,how do we reach the other? How do we connect with the other? How do we relate to the other? And what I'm hearing as I listen to Thomas's answer is, there is a horizontal dimension of relationship, and I'd say mediation tends to be grounded in that horizontal. How do we reach the other? How do we overcome our differences? How do we engage? How do we listen? How do we engage the other and so on? It's more at the horizontal level of relationship.

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And then what I'm hearing, also, is, yes, that's true, and there is a vertical dimension of relationship, which is paradoxical, which is the deeper I go into myself, the deeper I go into my identity, oddly enough you might think the deeper you go into your own identity, then you're creating separation from the other, but in fact, often the experience is the exact opposite. The deeper you go into your true self, the deeper you go into your Self, the more universal the experience, the deeper you go into that larger Self. And so what we're being invited to—and that's the meditation, that's the meditation aspect that most people who don't think about meditation, they think, okay, that person is withdrawing, right? They're withdrawing into themselves, and so they're separating. But in fact, at least as I've come to understand meditation, and even there have been some scientific studies of this, the deeper you go into yourself, the more connected you get to the other.

And so what we're inviting here in this course is, how can we connect with others in that horizontal way—mediation—integrated with meditation of connecting with others in the deeper way, where I can then host as a mediator, for example, I cannot just reach out to the other person, extend my hand to other person, but by going deep into supposedly myself, I actually can connect with their heart. I can host the conflict, and the deeper I go, the less separateness there actually is.

Thomas: Just to add, because... I mean, William, beautiful, and I think that the relational piece is fantastic. And I want us to underline, again, how important it is what we actually do here. Mediate and meditate or therapy and mystical knowledge, or science and inner science—that how to combine those two. And we learn so much in human history, there are thousands of years of wisdom traditions and there is a very deep and profound science, and if we can spark this conversation—as you said, there is a think tank or something—I think this kind of conversations, if we combine up and down and in and out, that's very very powerful. I think that's what we need to do right now, in this time in the world. That inner competences and outer competences become one, a thing that's really important.

And then, so that's here, and then, while I was out of our camera, I thought, maybe, to add—because in the question before there was something about, there was the question about guilt, and I think when we deal with guilt, it's always important to see what's the hidden loyalty in the system. And then somehow I had the feeling that I want add this, that there are hidden loyalties—there might family loyalties, there might be unintegrated loyalties in myself as a person that I project on to the current conflict that I am in, but there is also cultural and tribal trauma regulation loyalties—that means, when a whole culture goes, like for example in a country that is in a state of war or was in a state of war, so we are surviving together. So there is a tribal, there is a social trauma regulation function, I believe. Individual trauma regulations in the individual nervous systems, but there is a function that is a social trauma regulation, “We as a tribe are going to survive this. We are strong.”

And so when one person, then, goes... steps out, in a way, and wants to heal the trauma—which means also that part that creates separation—then there might be a hidden block, which is that I am betraying the tribe. If I step out, I'm betraying my tribe. And that's, I believe, very important, especially in collectively traumatized areas, that that might also create a guilt: so I am betraying my tribe and that's why I will stay in the traumatization. So this might create a block in the healing process. So that the culture and the individual, they're always connected, in a way. There is no separate trauma.

So, in a way, the separation that we experience in the world is also a network. Trauma is a net. In the separation, we're inevitably connected. The trauma net connects us. Many people experience this in intimate relationship, that actually they get attracted through their trauma structure because it feels familiar but then, after some time, it creates this kind of tension because we are actually not in an emergent relation, we're in a destined relation. We have a destiny together. And relation is having freedom together, having a future together. So trauma usually doesn't have a feature, it has a past. And relation has a future because it can relate. There is maturity in the relation.

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So, often that which separates us, the separation in the world, is actually a hidden connection, but without free will. It has a destiny. The trauma needs to either fulfill its non-experience, like it has to surface it, or it will recreate it. So, it's actually going into the past not in the future. And that's what we often feel, that separation recreates the past because it doesn't have a future. Only when trauma is conscious it has a future. Before it has a past and it's bound to that past.

Yeah, so, I think that's why there is a connection, also, with the guilt and that social trauma function, and that which separates us, also, between countries when they're at war. The trauma, like between Israel and Germany, there is a bond, but there is, underneath, there is a bond. There is a trauma bond. There is a mutual destiny. And also in the Middle East. I think that is very important that we work with it.

William: I like that. Just one comment on what you're saying, Thomas. It's almost like, as you're speaking, I get this image like, what does the Whole want of us? What does the universe want of us? What does life want of us? If there is one thing, to me, as I listen to that voice, it's life, the universe, wants unity, wants coming together, wants the dissolution of the illusion of separation, and so that's the future. The future is there is this yearning, you mentioned the Germans and Jews, there is a yearning to come together. There is a yearning to come together, and the trauma is almost in the way. It's kind of like, it's like the wound. I had a friend who's had a very, a gashed wound in their body, and you could see, it's like the skin, everything wants to... nature wants to come together and heal it.

So it's just for us to get out of the way and let nature take... But we don't have to force unity. Unity is the natural principal. And the question is how do we then deal with the actual forces of separation in the world, the forces of trauma, to allow them to dissolve so that unity as the emergent principal, can manifest itself.

Thomas: Right, now I want to comment on what you said because this is very interesting. That conflicts might be, or maybe are, self-healing attempts of the system that cannot do it otherwise. Which might be, for example, also interesting that, for example, between North Korea and the U.S., and maybe everybody who is involved, that there is actually an attempt of the global nervous system and the global unconscious to bring something to the surface, even if it's in very strange ways. We all know that trauma finds ways to the surface of consciousness in very strange ways. And I think, if we... Because being the Olympics at the same time as a very strong friction or kind of heating up of a potential conflict, all of this together is very interesting composition, so that we trust, in a way.

I mean the great thing for us as facilitators that we work with processes is that we have amazing powerful allies, we just need to work with them. The self-healing mechanism—like in every body, every body wants to detox itself. My body wants to detox the toxins that I accumulate through, whatever, environment, food, whatever. My psyche wants to detox all the unprocessed stuff that is... all the emotions, all of the stuff that couldn't be processed. When I sit in meditation, for so many people meditation is just a processing of the amount of past that is still catching up with us today. And integration work, when we do a workshop, we create a space for the past to catch up. All the bloodhounds of all the unprocessed stuff coming into our room.

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So, in a way, there is a self-healing mechanism that we can attune to, and then there is the Divine, there is the future, there is the evolution. So we have such—and then we have all the resources of the horizontal relatedness—that's amazing powers. I mean, these are superheroes that are our friends. We just need to connect with them, we just need to call them—like the Marvel superheroes, they call always the superheroes—we also have superheroes available, we just need to call them. We need to create a connection and be aware of it and use those resources, that we trust that underneath there is something detoxing. There is something, something wants to heal. And I think that's beautiful, what you said, I just want to highlight this, that these are our friends. In every mediation, there is also an underlying—even if it's not visible—an underlying force that is my partner. And when I learn to listen to this partner and I invite it from here [*indicates a vertical engagement*] and from here [*indicates a horizontal engagement*], that's very beautiful.

William: That's the vertical third side.

Thomas: That's right.

William: And what if conflicts and traumas are invitations, really, we saw them as invitations to heal?

Thomas: Right.