



# Meditate & Mediate

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Thomas: Welcome back, and I'm happy to explore, in our 11th course session, more about the transpersonal aspect of ourselves. But before we go there, there were, actually, again, amazing questions that came in. I would love to review a little bit our last session so that we connect what we do today to last time.

## Recap of the Last Session

As you see, just a few bullet points of last time. We talked about, again, the quality of hosting situations, and as we're going to talk about it more today, the hosting situation always means that I'm not so identified with my own reactivity.

We said that when my trauma and my reactive patterns are being triggered, and I don't have enough inner space, or as William calls it, I don't have the potential or the capacity to go to the balcony, then I'm simply forced, in a way, by myself, to react. But if I have enough conscious awareness and enough presence in order to see my own reactivity, but not being fully identified with it, so then there is choice that comes in. I can let go. We talked also about letting something go.

I think that, when I feel a reactive response and I have enough space to let it go and tune in deeper with the situation, be more related to the situation, so that's where, actually, we start to rewrite history, because not to forget that we are all sitting in an evolutionary kind of engine, so to speak, and life, you know, developed many, many structures and developed many, many patterns, also, and perpetuated many trauma, individual and collective trauma aspects that are alive in us, that sit in our bodies, in our emotions, in our thoughts. So it needs, actually, really presence. We need to invite the past into the present moment in order to create the choice to choose something new.

I believe, later on in our talk, we're going to explore the choice and what kind of lifestyle or what kind of inner decisions, maybe, it also needs to live a life where my life is strong enough to rewrite the past. So not just to perpetuate the past, which means to perpetuate the trauma history of humanity, for example, but to allow a new possibility to take place.

Hosting situations, I believe, is a very important part of it, letting things go, but also that we saw throughout our course, and we talked about this last time, again, William talked about the global immune system and how mediation and healing work and the whole healing arts, basically, are part of the self-healing mechanism of the world. It's part of the self-healing mechanism in myself, but my own self-healing mechanism is also part of a bigger cultural setup. I love to say that healing is a matter of creating the right environments. When we create healing environments or environments for mediation, for example, so that's an art, because if I create the right environment, then what happens inside can be healing, transformational, can be integration.

**[00:05:00]**

We talked about that my individual experience and the global experience, of course, are completely linked. There is an individual nervous system, and we talked throughout the course about how to transform hyper-regulation. If kids grow up in circumstances that are traumatizing or very difficult, so we over-regulate our interior too much, so we are basically under constant stress or numb, and in order to heal that, we need to find a co-regulation that helps us to come back to self-regulation, which means from being in an internal stress that is unconscious, that I don't feel anymore, I create healing relations, I create meaningful relations. Those relations help me to co-regulate, because that's what was missing in my child time, and that helps me and my nervous system to create a healthy self-regulation. What is this healthy self-regulation? Is that I can regulate my interior and the relations around me, and I feel myself. We said last time, in order to be connected to oneself, I need to feel myself. So the regulation of our nervous system is a very important aspect.

Then, we talked about the global nervous system, that actually all of us together, in a way, form a global nervous system, and in a way, we are creating a casting of our global nervous system through the very technology that we are using right now to have this conversation, which means that the World Wide Web is, in a way, an externalized nervous system that helps us to speed up the flow of data, but then this has a backlash onto us because as beautiful as the collective learning is that we create through the internet, maybe as painful is also the trauma circulation around the world. We are being more and more polarized because we have a lot of innovation circulating around the world, and we have also a lot of trauma events that happen right now on this planet that are circling through the news throughout the planet.

And then, so, in order to say, as Kosha said, as William also said, that mediate and meditate, how can we sit in the middle of our experience and create space? I would love, maybe, for Kosha, there were so many questions that came in. Maybe Kosha can read a few of them for us and then we can start to respond to them?

### Connecting the Vertical and the Horizontal Third Side

Host: *Yes, yes, Thomas. There's, as always, an incredible wealth of questions, which really inspires Thomas and William and all of us, so thank you for those. I'll just read four very short excerpts from your questions, so forgive if I don't read your whole question. But Richard wrote, "When we confine ourselves to our nervous systems, and the global nervous system, what happens to the input from our true selves and the universe?" Renee wrote, "How much meditation, a connection to God and to creation, supports generosity in mediation?" Alaa wrote, "Can you say a little more about how vertical attunement and horizontal attunement intersect?" Lastly, Paolo wrote, "How can we transmit the truth, so after seeing the many truths, how can we transmit the truth on a transpersonal level to our community and culture?"*

William: Hello, everyone. Really, it's a huge pleasure to be on this global call again. We are all fellow third siders, and constituting this third side now, this horizontal community that's invoking the vertical third side, which is the transpersonal. And asking this question, what I hear in the questions that Kosha just read is, what is the way in which we're dealing with these gritty conflicts? And I would ask you, actually, right now, just to call up into mind one of the conflicts that you are currently involved in, either as a party or as a third party. Just feel that conflict for a moment. Then ask those questions, which is, how can we invite in as a resource the vertical dimension of the third side? How do we invite in the transpersonal? What is that? What does that mean?

[00:10:00]

To me, I would say, the first intuition, what is the vertical third side? To me, the third side, it's language to represent the whole, and in some sense, we've been talking about ourselves, in Thomas' words, as global social witnesses, as kind of collective third siders. How are we third siders in conflicts that might be in our families, in our workplaces, in our communities, or in the world at large? And that's the human community. That's the circle embracing the conflict. And then, to me, the vertical third side is also the whole, it's the universe. It's the whole, it's the remembrance that all is one, that nothing is separate. And it's invoking that.

I'm remembering, I think I might have mentioned it once, a visit I made once to visit the San bushmen, who are hunter-gatherers, like our ancestors were for 99% of our time on this planet. I was observing the way in which they dealt with the nitty-gritty conflicts that they face. They all circle around in the campfire, and they talk, and they talk for days on end. They listen to each other, they talk. Sometimes people talk all at once. The women, the men, the children, the whole community engages in this, because conflict is regarded not just as belonging to the two parties, but it somehow impacts the community, so the entire community, the neighbors, the friends, the relatives, all get engaged somehow and hold a container within which the alchemy of transformation can take place, within which a conflict in its destructive form, in the way that destroys relationships, destroys connection, creates suffering, destroys even lives, in which those conflicts can be transformed. In other words, the conflict is not eliminated. It's just transformed, the form is changed into a constructive form of engaging with the truth, opening the heart, dialogue, understanding, agreement, negotiation, and so on. That's the key.

And so, what I take from this is this question of, how does the horizontal dimension of the third side intersect with the vertical dimension? To me, what comes to mind is that as third sides, as mediators, what we're trying to do is to create, as Thomas just mentioned, an environment for transformation. We're creating a space. We're embracing the conflict with our presence, with our words, with our hearts. We're creating a space within which even the most difficult conflict has a chance to transform.

In order to transform the nitty-gritty, the grit of that conflict, what we're called upon is to transcend. To transcend the conflict. To go into the vertical dimension. To go to the balcony. To go to the mountaintop, to go to the higher reaches of our hearts and souls, and invite in the wisdom that can come through that. So, if we want to transform, we need to transcend.

Going back to the San bushmen that I visited, as they sit in that circle, they talk during the day, and then at night, they sit around a campfire and they engage in various ceremonies of dancing, trance dancing, where people dance, stomping the ground. People are singing and clapping. They're invoking the help of the gods. They're invoking the wisdom of the gods. The people who are dancing in a trance sort of fall into a kind of trance and fall to the ground. They have dreams, and then they come back and report those dreams to the community. All of that is part of the process of transforming the conflict, so that's their form of transcending to transform.

That's what I think we're invited to do here. There is a link, a direct link between our ability to transform, it requires us to transcend. The more difficult the conflict that we face, think back to the conflicts that you're facing now, the more difficult, the more intense, the more intractable the conflict, the more difficult it is to transform, the more we're called upon to find ways in ourselves to transcend, to go to the balcony, to meditate in order to mediate.

[00:15:00]

Thomas: On the one hand, when I said before that, in an earlier course session, we talked about the fact that all of us are sitting in the archeological layers, the structures of consciousness, they are represented in our minds and in our bodies and in our emotions and thoughts. But this is thousands and thousands, hundreds of thousands and more years old. I believe when we work on conflict, as William says, is we are, in a way, using the archaic and the mythic and the irrational structures that have been formed throughout this time in human history.

So we are sitting, in a way, in a huge kind of pot of the past. The beauty, I think every one of us knows, when... What are the moments when we change something? What are the moments when something truly transforms? Let's say you have a behavioral pattern or you have an addictive pattern or you hold back energy in many conversations, and then there's one day when that changes. There's one day when suddenly a new possibility arises.

I love to look at the intersection of the vertical and the horizontal third side in our heart. So as William also said it, we asked, in different archeological epochs of humanity, we asked the gods, we asked the one God, we asked higher guidance for support. But, isn't it that we all in our life, we have those situations where it's anyway clear. Clarity means that it's clear. So when it's clear, we don't ask questions. Why? Because it's clear. So we only start asking questions when it's not clear. When it's either hard to decide, when we don't know where to go, when we don't know where our life's going to unfold further, what we want to do with our life. As long as it's clear, it's anyway clear.

But the interesting thing is, conflicts arise, obviously, when things are not clear. When there is usually a lack, as we said last time, scarcity, or, which I believe, when we are hitting the trauma net of humanity, which means that the trauma that is being passed on from generation to generation and from culture to culture, when we see effects that are outside of our conscious awareness, like the origin is outside and we see the symptoms. The conflict is a symptom of something that's not being seen, which means we don't have a large enough map of consciousness to fully embrace the reason or the underlying root of the conflict.

That's where, I believe, also when I listen to you, William, that's where I believe, when you say, "Okay, I'm going to the mountains, I am going to go to my balcony, whatever my balcony is," what I hear is life and the lifestyle of gardening a garden. I would love for us to talk a little bit about that a connection, an inner connection, an inner knowing, that I believe needs an inner environment. When we look into the mystical traditions and we say, okay, whatever the mystical knowledge—because there is a lot of knowledge, I believe the mystical, the spiritual work is based on the science, here is a science behind the progress and the levels of consciousness—when we look into the Kabbalah, when we look into, for example, Tibetan Buddhism or other traditions, we see that there are lots of very detailed maps about levels of consciousness that have been mapped out over thousands of years, some of them. So, we are not lacking the knowledge on the planet. What we lack, maybe, sometimes, is an inner state or an internal environment that is appropriate enough for that kind of knowledge to emerge within us, so that we are able to see it, that we are able to get in contact with it, that we are able to get the right practices and the right teachings and the right knowledge to further our process.

**[00:20:00]**

But on the other hand, it starts, I believe, with a decision, and I believe most of us here on the line made a decision. Like we made a decision to be interested in human development, and there are maybe two major paths how to do that. One is through our own suffering and own difficulties that we go through, and the other one, and/or, through a deep calling, that something in us is restlessly calling us and there is no way anymore of ignoring it. If we ignore it, it's painful.



So, I believe, when... Before we talk about harvesting the capacities of a deep internal practice, which means going into the garden of our own spiritual or transpersonal development and harvesting the fruits: having access to greater information, being able to enlarge the map of consciousness so that the symptoms will be read as symptoms of the root cause, that is usually either in the subconscious or in the higher consciousness, so it's hard for us to grasp.

When we become gardeners of our own internal landscape, which means we create an internal state that is, maybe, clear and quiet enough, spacious enough, present enough, that information emerges that is more subtle than our current sense perception and our involvement in the world. So that gardening leads to flowers and fruits that are growing, and once those trees are big enough, they will give us fruits. We have seen it throughout thousands of years, that big saints and mystics all over, that they expressed qualities that I believe are dormant in all of us, and they can be awakened. That our nervous system and also the capacity of receiving is much higher, maybe, than we use in daily life.

### Question 1: What Is Your Favorite Practice to Bring You to a Place of Presence?

But before that, I would love you, William, to maybe talk a little bit, maybe we can both talk a little bit about how important it is, also, to look if we live a lifestyle that allows for those fruits to grow, because I think that's also a very important aspect. What decisions do I make in my life? And what is important for you? When you work on a difficult mediation, for example, how much is your inner resourcing, you going and taking care of your own balcony, an important part for you? How do you do that? And how did you come to it, maybe?

William: That's a good question. I think it's actually a question we can all ask ourselves, actually. Is, what is our resource for drawing in the vertical dimension? For me, Thomas, as you mentioned, as I told you, I like to go up to the mountains, the high mountains, here in the Rockies. There's snow and waterfalls and lakes and rivers, and it's kind of pristine mountaintops. The air is clear and bracing. For me, I like to do that, even go for days on end, and I find that that does, in your words, help me cultivate my garden.



For me, the mountaintops, or the mountains, they're an incarnation of the balcony. They're the higher balcony of this planet. It's a place, for me, of perspective, where I can see the big picture more. I can look back at the conflicts that I'm involved in, that I'm working on. As you know, I've been very focused on this existential conflict right now that has to do, that's centered on the Korean Peninsula, that's holding the world in its grip, holding us hostage right now, and what can be done to liberate those energies to transform that conflict, is the question.

So, for me, to go to the mountains, I get perspective. Ideas come to me or insights. For me, going to the balcony or the mountains brings a sense of purpose, reminds me of purpose, what's the deeper purpose here? What's the prize? What's the why? What am I really trying to devote my time and attention to? It's also a place of presence. Out in the mountains, there's a stillness. There's a spaciousness. The horizons open up. It lends itself to cultivating a deep sense of presence. I would also say there's a sense of play, which I think is a really important thing, too. Dealing with conflict is hard work, and there's a sense of play when you ... The spirit is uplifted in the mountains. For me, that's a very important practice.

[00:25:00]

I wonder, Thomas, if we might just take a moment and ask everyone, for a moment, to do one of our experiments with the Q&A. Which is, for a moment, if you had one word, if you could put in one word in the Q&A section of what is your practice, what do you find to be a useful practice, a useful activity, like going to the mountains, that brings you to a place of presence, that resources you so that you can deal with the conflicts around you, deal with the grittiness of it all, deal with the difficulty of it all? If you had one word for your favorite practice for going to the balcony, what would it be? I'll just read them out as they come in here.

*Nature, walking, praying, breathing, cuddling with my lover, backcountry skiing, sailing, going to the sea, music, art, praying, meditation again, being physically held, taking a bath, the desert, daydreaming, walking the dog, nature again, feeling my feet, dancing, swimming, pausing, mountain, observing the aesthetics of life, playing, finding a quiet place to be alone, water, water, sea, talking with a friend, singing, a nature group with guided meditation, loving awareness, grounding, singing with my daughter, beach, drinking in nature's beauty. Stillness in nature, healing, playing with children, woods, sunrise, watching the sky, smiling, listening to you guys. Qigong, sitting in the sun. Desert walks, watching the fire, remembering who I am, sitting in the sun, sitting under a tree.*

You can see, you can feel, you can feel all those...

*Woodland, writing, watching the sky, connecting with grandchildren.*

They're still coming in.

*Water, water... Nature.*

All these are resources for us to really... that they are around us, and they're abundant. I mean, all of the things that you're mentioning are things, you don't buy them in a store. They're just here. They're the sunset, the water, the beach, the mountains, nature, friends, being cuddled. They're things that we can do to resource ourselves, so that we can be better channels of presence into the thorny, traumatic parts of conflict that engage us and that engage others. They're ways in which we can transcend to transform. Over to you. Over to you, Thomas.

## Making Contact with the Transpersonal Dimension

Thomas: Yes. Beautiful. I like to read all the comments, and I will come back in a moment to something that you mentioned, and I think you put a lot of your time to. This is the story of Abraham, Abraham the prophet, that appears to be a prophet in the three big world religions. Because why? Because Abraham received, and you can tell this maybe even better than I do, but Abraham received a call, or a calling, and the calling was to set off and go onto a path. I'm interested, what is your version.

[00:30:00]

Now we see what supports you, what gives you, maybe, a sense of inner tranquility, presence, purification, like detox, kind of a detox, so when we sit and we watch the waves on the ocean or when we sit on a mountain, one very basic function of meditation is to detox our nervous systems, because we are living in a world that is pretty fast-paced, for many of us. We use technology. We have many commitments. If you're culturally engaged, you know, our schedules might be full. We need spaces to just create space. We need space in our life. That's a decision, like to create space in my life and not just to be a prisoner of my life, but to be reflected or reflective and sit in space and reflect my internal movements. Even if the internal movements often don't seem to quieten down, what happens is that the battery is detoxing the internal thoughts, emotions, body sensations, tensions.

So, I believe one part of meditation is just to detox and create space for something new to emerge—because often it's about the new, often it's about what is emerging, but if I'm so clustered and full and packed with the old, there is not so much space for something new. The more I allow my nervous system to detox, which I believe is a natural function that is built into our bodies, like same as the liver and the kidneys take care of our physical body, our psyche needs this space to just let go of stuff and get into another state, another state, and meditation often helps.

But then, that's just the beginning of meditation. Then, we start to deepen, and I often call it when the membrane of our heart becomes more and more porous and open to the membrane of the big heart. There is kind of a communication. In the presence, in that which is, in the being, there is becoming.

I believe that everybody who is, every child being born has a right to be, first of all. Out of that right to be, there is a right to become. But we said earlier, I guess, in the course, that when we give up the right to be too early as a child and we start to take over certain functions—for example, we are mediating the conflicts between our parents, or we are managing our family system too early—so we give up on the right to be, to be a child, and we take over a role. We take on the right to do. And so, for many people, because that happens in many families, so then the right to do takes over. Busyness takes over.

That requires a kind of a decision to come back to a sense of being, so that I cultivate being. I become a gardener of being in myself. Like when I listen to you, William, then I have the feeling you go to the mountains also to touch base with your being, and out of your being, there is a becoming arising. There is inspiration, there is innovation, there is intuition. Why? Because ultimately, the mediator is a state of consciousness. The mediation is being born out of a state of consciousness. The deeper and the more profound that state of consciousness in the room is, the deeper is the embrace, the deeper is the compassion, the capacity to put oneself into another one's shoes, the capacity to go to the balcony, the expression of love, the ability to be clear and to embrace multiple perspectives. All of this needs a profound depth.

[00:35:00]

And so, before we come back to Abraham, I would love for all of us to have a moment and see, okay, maybe, what was and what is the calling for you? What is the deeper place that lets us search, that lets us explore, ask deeper questions about life? For some of us, to put a lot of time into an inner practice. For some of us, to make decisions in the favor of one thing over another. What brought you onto a deeper path of more consciousness, more awareness, more mindfulness, more clarity? Where was the original moment that you feel, oh, like as if suddenly we hear or we feel or we intuit a different place that breaks open, maybe, that opens up in us, that is the engine for a much deeper journey? That's a journey to, like an engine, something drives us to go forward.

I believe, once that opened up, we're in contact with a much deeper transpersonal engine already, because that's, in a way, the echo of the whole transpersonal dimension. Meditation is not the sitting, but that the sitting is the consequence of meditation. That meditation appears, meditation, contemplation, prayer, they appear in our life—through books, through people, through inspirations that we get somewhere, through intuition from inside.

But one day, it appears in our life, and then every day when I sit down and I contemplate or when I take days off and I go to the mountains or I sit close to the ocean and I contemplate the waves, and I feel that as a need, this is when the needs of my soul break through. We call those soul needs, that my soul has a need. Like same as my physical body needs food, healthy food, my soul needs space. My soul needs a certain internal environment.

So what was the time in your life or the moment and what is it still, because that moment is not in the past, that moment is now and forever now. I believe the moment when that drive, that calling, broke through, every time we feel it again, we return to the same time beyond time. We return to the same place beyond time. So there's something timeless that slowly appears in the world of time. Many people who have a deep, profound meditation practice know that in meditation, we drop from time and busyness into something that is more timeless and is more quiet, still, present, and it transcends the notion of time.

And when we return to the calling, when we return to the place where that really matters to us, we return to the place where we make choices from that place. When it's important for us to sit because it's nourishing, then we do it. When it's important for us to listen when we are in kind of a difficult situation, then we develop a sense of listening because we feel it's important to us, and we will make this space.

**[00:40:00]**

And then, when we rest more in the place that has a calling, that calls us, then I believe an interesting question is, what is essential in my life? What is essential in my life right now? If you were to take a moment and you look at your life, what are essential moments? What is the composition of an essential moment? How do you know that it's an essential moment? When you look back in your life, into your life, and you say... and you just remember a few essential moments. And strangely enough, most probably remembering essential moments is not so hard. There's something about essential moments that is so essential that it's easy to remember them.

I love to think about the essential moment like a necklace, pearls. Every essential moment is part of a necklace. If you look at your life and say, how essential is the way I live my life today? What is essential about it? What makes it essential? Why do we call some moments essential and some moments, maybe, not essential?

Maybe in certain conflicts or in moments where, maybe, there was a breakthrough, what was the essential thing that happened there? When something turns around, when something, well, not just in conflict, in many situations, in difficulties that you needed to solve throughout your life, what was the moment when a difficulty opens up? When something that feels tight suddenly finds an expansion? When something that seems not to have an answer suddenly becomes pregnant with the answer? It's not that immediately... sometimes the answer appears immediately, in a certain moment of intuition or insight, but sometimes we feel that the situation is already pregnant. There's an answer growing with the situation... And then we feel, oh, I can't grasp it right now, but I know something changed. It doesn't feel anymore so stuck. There is... something started to move, even if I cannot point my finger on it.

When situations that feel tight suddenly have a new movement, life restores more and more its original movement. Interestingly enough, many wrote in before, in William's question, the connection to nature. Like a re-synchronization of our bodies, our minds, our nervous systems with the planet, with the forces of nature, with water, with the mountain. The emptiness of the desert. What is this re-synchronization? Something synchronizes itself again, it's part of a bigger system. I recognize that it's not just about me and about the small situation but it's about something that is embedded in something much bigger.

**[00:45:00]**

And then, maybe my last question is, how is your life like how is your gardening? How do you perceive your own gardening? Gardening essential moments, gardening the fruits of essence or the fruits of presence, the fruits of insight, compassion, clarity. If I can train, whatever, soccer, playing soccer, when I really train and play it very often or I train playing the piano or doing operations, I can refine a skill until I become more and more masterful.

And then, in the more ancient concept that William and I play around with, with the Shambhala warriors, the group of people that are deeply socially engaged, with insight and compassion, equipped with insight and compassion and presence, groundedness, clarity, to really engage in the matters of the world. So, what's essential in my life to be a gardener? To grow the fruits of those qualities? What helps you to grow it, and how do you take care that there is enough of it?

And also sometimes, by living, how do you take care of it in your own life, even if your environment is sometimes not supportive of it? How do you deal with the friction that that creates between your inner need, maybe, for stillness, inner need for clarification, and for intuition, inspiration, when the world around you might not provide the most beneficial environment for it?

### **The Abraham Path: A Call to Find Oneself**

Before I continue, I would love to, maybe, hand it back over to you, William. I know that you're passionate about, besides the mediations that you do, or maybe because of the mediations that you do, about the Abraham Path. Ever since you told me the first time about it, I thought, wow, what a beautiful description of the spiritual path. Maybe, you can tell me why that resonated so strongly with you, that you actually created a whole project around the Abraham Path? And to combine the project that is there in the world with the... what is the essential aspect of Abraham's life for you? Also, for your work.

William: Wow. Now, I'm just recalling that it was a little more than a year ago that you and I sat together there in Jerusalem as I was about to embark on a walk on the Abraham Path. That's where the idea for this course actually arose. So yes, to me, I've always liked to walk. I noticed that walking showed up a number of times when you asked what helps you go to the balcony, you know, walking, walking in nature. It's like something about... Abraham is the original pilgrim, you know? He's the first pilgrim, in that kind of mythological sense, who is called to leave everything behind, leave everything that he knows behind. The culture, the city, the family.

**[00:50:00]**

He hears a call, “lech lecha,” “go forth,” “go find yourself.” It’s a call to go find yourself. Go to a place that I will show you, and what’s that place? It’s a place within. That’s where the Promised Land is. It’s within. Go find yourself. And he goes out into the desert. That’s, to me, a metaphor for all of us. That’s the soul’s journey, is to go, to leave, to let go of everything and to go find yourself.

For me, that’s what the Abraham Path is about. What does he find when he goes out there? He finds that he becomes like a Shambhala warrior. He gleans the insight that all is one, that everything is connected. He ascends to the vertical third side, as it were, and out of that realization that all is one springs immense compassion, so that’s he’s known, actually, throughout the Middle East, throughout the world, if there’s one thing he’s known for is hospitality, which is receiving the stranger as a sacred guest. Having his tent open in all four directions.

He received a call, like we all receive a call, to be... If you’re on this call right now, it’s because you received a call. The sages of old would sit around and ask, “So why, of all the people on the planet at that point, why was Abraham chosen to receive the call?” They came to a very interesting answer, which was that, in fact, everyone receives the call. Everyone was receiving the call. The difference was that Abraham listened. That’s what makes that story special. It’s the one who listens to the call, who follows the call.

I believe that’s what we’re all doing, that’s what you’re all doing right now, is you’re following the call. What is your call? What is the call? That’s, to me, why I go to the mountains. I go to the mountains to remind myself to listen to that call again. What is the call, that sacred purpose, that motivates you, that engages you, to go into the conflicts of the world, the problems of the world around you, and bring that consciousness that Thomas was just talking about? Mediation as a state of consciousness, that brings that sense of presence.

It all starts with hearing the call. We all receive the call. The question is, do we actually follow the call? To me, the Abraham Path, which is a kind of a long-distance pilgrimage route retracing the remembered journey of Abraham and his family across the Middle East, it’s like a connection line. If you look at it, it connects all the different countries of the Middle East. All these ancient cities, whether it’s Jerusalem or Damascus or Aleppo or Mecca or Hebron or Urfa or Ur. They’re like that necklace of essentials, essential gems that Thomas was just describing. These pearls of humanity.



Every one of those places has a story that Abraham walked there. And what did he bring with him? Like Aleppo, how did Aleppo get its name? It means Halab in Arabic, which means “milk,” because Abraham is believed to have milked his goat to give the milk to the poor. So Abraham is a symbol of the open heart, of compassion for others, of receiving others out of that insight that nothing is separate, that all is interconnected.

For me, the idea of walking, when you walk... You know, it's funny. People never fight while they walk, because when you're walking, you're walking side by side, moving in a common direction, pacing your breathing. I find that that's one of the best ways to have a conversation. When you walk, you're shoulder to shoulder, side by side. To me, the Abraham Path is a giant balcony, really. It's a giant balcony where we put our feet on the ground and we walk in common purpose through these amazing landscapes in the Middle East.

[00:55:00]

There are now, thanks to this project, there are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of kilometers, of miles, that are open for walking these ancient paths that call into remembrance that we are all Abraham. Abraham's just a name, actually. It just means “the higher aspect of us all.” It's the soul's journey. We're all called upon this journey, and listening to that calling in the deserts, in the valleys, that's when we, then, are called back to be agents of transformation in this wounded world, to help heal the traumas, to help humanity heal itself.

Thomas: Well, that's beautiful. I like what you said, like the realization that life is not-two, or unified, creates a sense of hospitality and generosity. I remember, at the beginning, Kosha read one question where, how can meditation create enough generosity for mediation? I think that's exactly what you said right now, that when I rest in a more and more spacious interior and I'm deeply connected to the essence of life, to something that is essential, so then that essential place becomes like a well. In the traditions, they call it when you become more and more equal to the force that creates you, to the drive of life, life that's being passed on from one generation to the next.

I find it also very interesting to think of the will. The will to live is not just our will to live. Our will to live, you know, is connected to so many generations where life wanted to live. There is kind of a highway of light, or a highway of life, that goes from one generation to the next, where life wants to expand. Life wants to become. That drive is alive in all of us. That's deeply generous.

I believe that the more we live a compassionate life and the life that is loving and embracing, without being kind of a “spiritual” behavior, but when it’s deeply authentic, then there is a well emerging. A well of giving, participating. And then the context that I’m caring about grows. That’s what I also hear when you talk about the life of Abraham but, as you said, as a metaphor for a calling that all of us carry inside.

William: Yeah, if I might, just a reminder that if there’s one thing, one message behind that story, it’s that whatever appears to divide us on this planet—and there are many things that appear to divide us, causing all of these conflicts that we’re working on—whatever appears to divide us, what unites us is far, far greater. That’s why we walk. That’s why we go to the balcony. That’s why we transcend, to remember that which unites us, to bring that spirit back into the heart of the conflict. Into where everything appears to be divided, we bring, we listen to that voice which, to me, is the voice of the Earth, the voice of the universe, which is calling us into unity, calling us into the unity that we already are, even if we don’t realize it.

Thomas: That’s beautiful, that’s beautiful. I completely agree that listening, and there was the other question where, at the beginning, was it how can vertical attunement... How can we attune to the vertical attunement? That’s exactly what you said, that in presence, I can listen.

Also, when we had our guest speaker call with Flavia, where we talked about, in a way, mediating different systems of law in different cultures, then we listen to the center. Let’s say, all the different expressions of law, of different cultural bodies, are sitting in a circle, and we listen to the center. We listen to the emptiness, or as Lao Tzu said, that only by listening to the Tao and following the way of the Tao, because the Tao is what animates the whole world. Which means, in the emptiness, we start to become aware of what William said before, that which always unites us.

[01:00:00]

Or, in another way, we could also say, how often when you read a book are you aware of the fact that you’re looking at paper? Usually, when we read a book, we read letters, words, meaning, and after a few lines or a few pages, we might be absorbed in the meaning of things. The story that we read, the knowledge, the information that we read, becomes alive in us as a reader. It’s kind of, we participate in the meaning of knowledge. We participate in the meaning of words. But often, we forget that the words only exist because they are written on the paper, and the emptiness of the paper gives rise to the words and the letters and the meaning.

And so, I believe that the quality of this cultivating and the gardening a deep sense of stillness within the movement, maybe, at first is something that we need to kind of adapt our lives to, like make space for it, like also as Abraham said, he left his life. Maybe, we don't have to leave our life, we have to make space for something that's essential. I mean, that's for sure. But then also the balcony, as we said in some other calls already, becomes also more and more part of every moment.

Actually, the height of the spiritual practice is when the balcony is inserted into every moment. When the moment includes the balcony, when I am participating in stillness and in movement, in stillness and experience, in stillness and the meaning, yeah. So then, that which unites us, and the beauty is that, in the mystical traditions, there is the principle of grace. The principle of grace says that the future always has the power to rewrite the past.

I believe that the insight, the insight of the mediator, when I heard you talking, William, and you said, "And then it came to me to say," "It came to me to say," is that the future inspires the now to rewrite the past. If we include all of our former sessions, in a way, and we say that we have been born into a field that is fragmented, that has been collectively and individually traumatized over thousands of years. We know the world in a fragmented way. We know the world through our bodies and our emotions and our nervous systems and mental capacities in more or less fragmented terms. That's why it's like we are looking through a glass that is partly broken. When we look at the world through that glass, it also looks like separate and fragmented. I believe every successful mediation is that we restore part of the glass so that the future rewrites some of the trauma of the past, which means our nervous systems, they are wired by thousands of years of human history. Grace is the capacity that the future can insert space and new possibilities, innovation, and new possibilities.

I believe that's truly exciting, because together, we can rewrite human history. Together, we can insert new possibilities. I think that's a very, very powerful, powerful message, that grace, the principle of grace, that out of nothing, something is being born. Not out of something, something is being born. That's different. The mystical knowledge deals with how out of nothing, something is being born. That's truly beautiful. I think we all can participate in the way how, out of nothing, something arises. How out of the Tao that nobody can know, that we can just be, something arises. This reminds me, when you say that we participate in that which unifies us, for me, that's when we participate, that out of nothing, something arises. The beginning of... Go ahead.

[01:05:00]

William: Yeah, I want to just... Yeah, that's a wonderful image that out of nothing, something arises. Just what it leads me to imagine is that the third side is a nothing, you know? The third side, what is the third side? It's a space. It's nothingness. We create a space of nothingness within which something, which is the transformation, the healing of a conflict, can arise. That's the key. That's why we go to the balcony. It's to create that sense of spaciousness, of emptiness, of nothingness.

Because the world is so full right now. I mean, you were mentioning before, the internet and all the news and everything that's happening, it's all full of objects and things, and things crashing into each other. There's so much... objects. And what we need is spaciousness to hold those objects. That's what the third side is, it's an embrace of emptiness within which, then, the objects can realign themselves into a more harmonious relationship, and people, parties, can learn to dance with each other, move with each other, rather than clash with each other.

That's the key, whether it's our conflicts immediately around us or whether it's, right now, this conflict that I'm working on right now, around Korea. It's all the same, whether it's the micro or the macro. It's how do we create the space, the nothingness, within which something can arise?

Thomas: If you bring it back to your current work, how do you see applying what we said before, how can we, into the kind of tightness of a potential conflict, like a potential violent conflict, how do you feel we can insert space, we can insert a new possibility into something that seems very tight? What's your feeling?

William: I think we just had an example of that, that we talked about earlier, just to go back to Korea. Which was, last year, the tension was building up, test after test, sanction after sanction, provocation, fire and fury, destroy. It was all reaching an apex. And then in February, just by some grace, what would be the chances that in the most tense, militarized, polarized place on the planet right now, like if the planet is a body, a human body, the pinched nerve of the body. What would be the chances that suddenly there'd be the Olympics right there on the border? Which is a celebration of human spirit, of spaciousness, of remembrance of human potential, of listening to the future, of the beauty of the ice dancing and all of that.

Out of that spaciousness, what emerged was, ah, people could breathe. Breathing is spaciousness. And then out of that came, oh, what about this? And what about that? And now, there's a summit now between the North and the South about to happen in less than three weeks. And then perhaps a summit between the United States and North Korea. Something that was unimaginable at the end of last year. So it's a good example, to me, a very tangible example of something that we all presenced, of, out of grace, out of spaciousness, then things can begin to shift. And we're not out of the woods yet. There's still the danger, it's still there. But there's possibility, there's hope, where there didn't seem to be any.

Thomas: I think that's a beautiful metaphor, on the one hand, to say, oh, how likely is it that the Olympic Games will take place at that time and not in another place around the world? I believe that, I think we talked about this in another session, that I think the fact that it is so is something worth contemplating. What is the global resource that made that possible, I think is interesting.

[01:10:00]

And then, the second thing, I believe, is that people like yourself, like that every one of us can be a source from nothing into something. Every one of us can be the inserted space into a situation. This can be every situation in our home, when we manage not to react or say the same thing to our partner or our business partner or our, whatever, friends. But that when the situation becomes tighter, that we have more and more resources, through a practice and through inner connection, that there is a well that gives us the chance to go to the balcony, to let go, and to let a new response arise, that is different than the one that 30 times before I brought up the same argument in the same situation, in the same "being right" manner.

But that suddenly, something comes to me to say, "I have an intuition. I have an inspiration." And I believe that we trust that that's a true resource. Same as resourcing my body, my nervous system, that I know the parts in my body that are energized, that are alive, that I can trust, where I feel embodied. That's a resource. Relation is a resource in dealing with trauma and conflict. Like building meaningful and appropriate relations is definitely a resource. Then, of course, knowledge and skill.

But also, that there is a resource that cannot be planned. I believe that every one of us knows. I see as one indicator for spiritual growth is the fact that we are more and more surprised by what we say. That there is an unplanned speaking, that transpersonal dimension, the attunement to the transpersonal dimension, kind of suddenly allows me to say things, to know things, to intuit things, to be inspired by knowledge that I didn't have before. When I say it, I'm surprised by myself that I said that. And I'm sure, maybe you can say a little bit? Yeah.

William: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. First, as I'm just listening to you, unplanned here, just thinking about the Olympics for a moment. Who created the Olympics? I'm not talking about the Olympic Committee. It's all of us. We all tuned in. We tuned into the skiing, into the figure skating. We tuned in, we kind of created. So all of us, we were kind of a collective third side there, creating a collective consciousness, a celebration of beauty, that then had this transformative effect on this intractable conflict.

My question is, in the smaller conflicts in which we're all engaged in the daily basis, what's the equivalent of the Olympics? I think it goes back to some of the things that were coming across when you were saying, you know, what's the equivalent of being able to create that appreciation, that spirit of appreciation, that spirit of gratitude, that spirit of wonder? That's what we can take from... We take from all those things we mentioned, whether it's sitting on a beach or watching a sunset or being in nature or being held by someone or being with your children or your grandchildren. It's that spirit of wonder.

That's that gossamer weaving that we do, of wonder. It's like we beam it. It's almost like a laser. It's like we sit in a circle around a conflict and we beam our wonder—and that's what was happening on the Korean Peninsula, that can happen in our families and our workplace conflicts—of listening, that deep, wondrous listening to what is really... to the soul, to the essence of those human beings in conflict. Then that creates spaciousness within which possibilities, new possibilities, can emerge.

[01:15:00]

It's all unplanned, because essentially, the essence of the third side is you create a space, you create an environment within which an unplanned, spontaneous transformation can take place. One of the beautiful images of one of the questions that came in was the phrase "the alchemy on the balcony". You know, that's what it is. Everyone's sitting around the circle there, in your families and your workplaces, in the world, we're on the balcony on the third side that then allows an alchemy to take place, an alchemy that changes the destructive lead of conflict into the gold of human connection.

### **Coming from Yes in Order to Get to Yes**

Thomas: One more thing comes to me when you say that. I believe it has a reason why you are so passionate, most probably since decades, about being in conflict situations. I think there is something that seems like rather small, but that's, for me, one of the most essential things. I believe, when I asked before what are moments that are essential for you, essential moments, and usually essential moments, when something essential happens, it means that something new, there's a new movement that arises. Something is different. Something has been changed. There was a creativity at work that wasn't there before. So, we plugged into the original creativity of life, so there's something changed.

Essential is accompanied by "yes". Yes. An essential moment is a yes moment. When somebody lives an essential life, we wake up with a yes. We don't wake up in the morning, say, "Oh, I don't know if I want to be here." When it's essential, when somebody does what he or she loves to do, we wake up with a yes. Our life is a yes. We are not getting to yes when we don't want to be here. I think that when I listen to you, William, I find a curious, fresh, refreshing interest and curiosity to be in those situations. I know how much energy you put in, way before anything was possible, into the North Korean conflict, how out of your own self-motivation, you set up a lot of things because you are interested in this.



I want to say about when you asked about everybody's conflicts, basically, I think one of the major ingredients that our spiritual life gives us is that we want to be in the situations that we are. I believe, getting to yes had a yes before, which means a yes to be in the situation. Then, we can get to a yes, but there was an original yes that was there before. So when I, in my own private life, already go into a situation and say, "Oh, no, not again, the same situation," then it's very hard to get to a yes, because I am a no when I go into the situation like this. But I don't see you going into the situation like this, William. I see you, going into the situation, be curious, "Okay, let's find out what this is about."

William: That's it, that's it, Thomas. Go ahead, finish.

Thomas: No, no, go ahead.

[01:20:00]

William: I was just going to say, just to riff on what you're saying, is that to get to yes, truly, in the difficult challenges that we all face on this planet, we have to come from yes. We have to come from essence. We have to come from that yes to life, that yes to what is. And by coming from that yes, which is our calling, right? Which is our calling, which is what we hear, the voice we hear on the balcony, that call, coming from that yes, it makes it so much easier for us to get to yes. It's about coming from yes in order to get to yes.

Thomas: Right. And when you said before, somebody, I think Scott, wrote in, "The alchemy on the balcony". I think the only alchemy on the balcony is that I decide to be in the situation. Once I decided "I am here, and I am going to look at this, and I am going to face this, and I am going to find out more about it," so that's when I... Because in the moment I resist the situation, it's very hard to get to a yes, because actually, I am in a no.

But as you said, when you come from a yes, and I think the balcony that you're saying is also that we have space to transform our inner distancing or our own inner defense system into curiosity. Then I say, "Okay, yes, I want to explore that situation in my life. Whatever is difficult for me in my life, I am here."

I believe that that's the ultimate yes, that's in all the big, also, spiritual traditions, when people woke up to a much more profound consciousness, or when Abraham set off and said, "Okay, I'm going," this is a yes. I'm not going because I have to and I'm not going with the resistance, and I'm not going because I don't know what I will find out or where I don't have anything better to do in my old life, but it's yes. I know that this is true, and I know that I am here.

And so, like in many, many, many of the things, I believe, that we said throughout this course, for me, that's one of the most essential points that we are talking about now. What does it mean that somebody... And it is the doctor, the psychologist, it's the mediator, it's the social worker, it's the parent. It's basically everybody in his or her life in situations that are difficult. Like what brings in a new possibility is somebody that really wants to be there.

William: That's it. That's exactly it. What Abraham did was he said yes to the call. That's what we're doing. We're saying yes. It's a yes, and so the way that that yes is, when we're third siders, when we're listening to someone, when we're showing curiosity, we're saying yes. We're not saying yes in the sense of agreeing with what's being said, but we're bringing that open-hearted, positive listening, which is a yes, an affirmation of the essence of the human beings there. In that circle of affirmation of who they are, who their essence is, they remember who they are. They remember their own inner yes. And thus, it's easier for them to get to yes.

Thomas: Right.

William: Yes is like a fire. It's like a match that we light, and we light it in our... It's lit inside of ourselves, maybe, lit through the vertical dimension, and then we warm the people with whom we're mediating. We warm them, we warm their hearts, and the fire gets lit in their heart. From within, the transformation happens, because it's not the third side that transforms the situation. The third side creates an environment within which the parties themselves, their own hearts, can transform from within.

Thomas: That's beautiful. That's right. Right. And that yes, I believe, is something that is crucial in our own self-reflection, that how the power of that yes is connected to the power of creation. Creation, the creative impulse of life, is a pure yes. And I think, if all of us look at it like now, in the current world situation, like just with what you're working on now, William, the US, North Korea, and China, and maybe Russia, and maybe all the other parties, South Korea, that are involved in it, what does it mean to be a yes? What does it mean to say, if this is the situation on the planet, or whatever, here in the Middle East, if this is the situation on the planet, I am here?

[01:25:00]

I am here, but this also opens my screen. This inserts a sense of nothing, and out of nothing, everything can become. But this unconditional yes, yes I'm here—and as you said, yes doesn't mean I agree to everything, not at all, yes means I want to have this experience, I want to be in the current experience. And I believe the same is in the awakening process, in the consciousness of relations, that often, either in deep crisis or in deep meditation, when somebody dropped into such a fundamental yes, that much more could be seen—that's what usually people call satori or awakening experiences, that there is such a deep yes to life that suddenly the revelation is the gift, the presence, the blessing—I am wondering how we can be part of that yes for North Korea, USA, or for here in Israel, or any other situation in the world?

William: Yeah, so I think that goes back to the myth that you evoked in the beginning of the call, which was the Shambhala warriors. How can we become Shambhala warriors endowed with drawing upon the twin arms, as it were, of insight and compassion? That's what this course has been about, a course set with that question. What would it mean for us to become a learning community here? A learning community of Shambhala warriors, able to serve as global social witnesses, able to serve as third siders, in the difficult situations that we face, from the micro to the macro, at this point in the human story, at this point in our own stories?

### **Question 2: What Surprised You the Most, in Your Own Practice, in the Way You Approach Conflict as a Result of the Journey You've Taken in This Course?**

So, I think this might be a good time, Thomas, I would like just to ask all of us, all of you, because we're in the 11th of 12 classes, just to imagine for a moment, think back to the beginning of this course when it began, back in... I'm trying to remember... in October, perhaps. I'd like you, again, to go to the question and answer box for a moment. If there's one word... Sometimes I find, if there's one word about your journey in this course or inspired by this course in your life, if there's one word, maybe, in answer to the question of, what surprised you the most? That goes back to what Thomas was saying about the unplanned. What surprised you the most in your own practice, in your own way in which you approach conflicts? What surprised you the most in the last six months, as it were, of this course? Maybe animated, inspired, stimulated by our collective learning as a community. What has surprised you the most? Let me just see what comes up here.

*Hope, empowerment, grounding in authentic self, how big the balcony is, my embodiment, yes, effectiveness, the grace of possibility, pure delight, curiosity, how accessible it is, beauty, to have more space, the vertical. Space, myself, and the body. The yes-no-yes tree. The mirror. Stepping back. Wonder. Saying yes to conflict, BATNA, inspiration, seeing myself clearly from the balcony. The light within, embracing our heroes, feels like coming home, how no can be as essential as yes, loving what is in conflict, the balcony. More clarity inside, finding a way with more space, North Korea is inside of us. The deep stillness, the witness, saying yes to the journey, conflict is life wanting to emerge. The enthusiasm for the possibility of the individual to help the world, a global community of Shambhala warriors. There's only one of us here. Those are... there's more here. To choosing yes and truth, compassion to self and others, North Korea as part of the global body with a deep wound, the marriage of no and yes. So, very beautiful. That light and shadow. Beautiful. Crucibles for emergence.*

[01:30:00]

### Question 3: Going Forward, How Could This Learning Community Help You in Your Own Practice?

So now, let me ask you one more question, which is, as we look forward, as we look forward to... imagine that this learning community that's born here, that we're feeding here with this course, all coming together, the many hundreds of people around the planet, each dealing with our own conflicts, each meditating, each mediating, meditating and mediating. As you look forward, is there anything that you would like to... Is there any... We're trying to think of what might be a continuation of this process in some form. We don't know yet, but we'd like to ask you what you would like to see, in a word, what topics would you like to... where would you like to go deeper in your own training as a Shambhala warrior? What topics or themes? What's the next edge for you, as as we develop as a learning community? How could this learning community help you in your own practice?

So, what comes up here now are: *creative solutions, practice sessions, practice groups, ways we can practice together in the world, collaboration. Community, group practice sessions again, experiential action.*

Okay, so a lot of it I can see is practice.

*Working with inner conflicts with self, a collective blog, walking the Abraham Path, right livelihood, action research on collective trauma. Small groups, the potential of mentoring, which has come up a lot here. Practicing the embodiment. Dignity dialogue sessions. Using the visuals for learning, tangible practice examples, early trauma linked to conflict. Continuing with Thomas and William. Practicing a simple life, supervision, teaching the children, continuous conversations.*

This is great. This gives us a good idea, a very good idea. More coming.

*Case studies, women's wisdom, color and how it heals, trauma solving, be the third side for special situations, ongoing supportive structures, practicing practice.*

Okay, so this is very good. It gives us a sense, then, of... One very big and powerful theme has come through is, how can we practice this? How can we take this and put it in practice, and how can we support each other, and how can we gather more support in applying this to the very challenging situations that we might face around us and in the larger world?

### **Q&A: Transcendence In Being on the Balcony; Parenting Is a Spiritual Practice**

Host: *Yes, thank you. What a very rich call. I think, in a way, you've already addressed this at the core of the call, where you spoke about needing a yes to the now to be able to come to a yes, but two questions. From Richard, right at the beginning of the call, he wrote in, "William talks about transcendence. Isn't there a level of consciousness available to us currently wherein transcendence does not apply?"*

*And then Susan wrote much later, while you were speaking about Abraham's Path and going to the mountain, she said, "The mother cannot leave everything behind, can she? Walking is wonderful, freeing, but some of us also need to remain home and keep the home fires burning. Pregnancy of a human being or a new way of being may take something else, may call for something else rather than the mountaintop. Where is the feminine voice in this?" So, over to you two.*

**[01:35:00]**

William: When I was using the word “transcend to transform,” it was simply a way of saying transcendence is in the now, is right here in the present moment. When we’re present, we’re transcending for a moment. We’re detaching from the grip of thoughts and emotions and words and so on. So, for me, as you mentioned, Thomas, we’re learning to live from the balcony. The balcony is every moment, is every moment, and so for me, that’s what I meant by transcendence.

I think, actually, that actually goes into the second question about, yes, not all of us are in a place or in a time in our life or in a stage in our life when we can go to the mountaintop. But there are practices, like when I asked you what your own practices were, many practices are available to us right here, right now, without going, setting off on a long journey or going up to a high mountaintop, that are right here. Whether it might be as simple as, I think people said, as being with children. Being with the spirit and the innocence and the curiosity of children. That’s transcendence, that’s being present. That resources us, then, to be able to deal with the conflicts that arise in the family around us. Whether it’s being cuddled, being held by a friend or a lover, as someone said. That’s also a resourcing. We can go to our own inner mountaintop without having to go to an outer mountaintop. I’m not saying we have to go physically to the mountains. Some people were just talking about looking at the sky, breathing, and other things that are accessible to us all around us, the sun, the wind, the air, the water. You know, water’s a profoundly feminine element and a number of people spoke about the water and swimming and just... That’s also a transcendent element that we can then integrate into our ability to be present in the conflicts around us.

Thomas: Yeah, and maybe two more things. I don’t know if I understood the first question, Richard’s question, really, but the consciousness that is available to us is available to us, and the one that is not available to us is not available to us, even if there is a possibility for it to be here all the time. What I mean by that is that when we look at consciousness development, of course there is a fundamental state of consciousness always already. But for most of the people, that is a concept. As long as it’s a concept, even if it’s true, it’s not true. And if it’s true, then it’s true that there is no transcendence.

So, what I'm saying is transcendence is just the shedding the layers to realize that which is always already here. But as long as that's not my state of consciousness, that's not true for me. That's why the path of transcendence is important, even if at the end of the journey, we realize that emptiness is and has always been and will never vanish. Because for me, it's important that we see that our current state of consciousness is the highway to our development, or for our development. Being authentic to that inner whatever, inner state of consciousness, is very, very important.

[01:40:00]

William:

Yeah, I would just add, because I see that Richard said, "I agree there's transcendence in balcony consciousness. I'm speaking of consciousness beyond the balcony." And so, I guess my experience, and I'd really appreciate your thoughts on this, too, Thomas, is that there is a consciousness, there is a transcendence in being on the balcony. And when you were asking me about why I go to the mountains and try to spend some days up in the mountains, it's because there I can resource, I don't know what I would call it, the higher state of consciousness, but a more developed state of consciousness where it's really clear to me, that insight that all is one, right there on the mountaintop.

It's like my body kind of vanishes and I just feel like I'm part of the whole. And that consciousness beyond the balcony, then, informs and feeds the daily consciousness on the balcony. There are ways in which we can take some time for ourselves, maybe it's a meditation, even, on a daily practice, a meditation where we can resource ourselves so that in every moment in a conflict, we're on the balcony. We're meditating, in a sense. So, you sit on the cushion in order to practice in daily life, where the real practice takes place.

Thomas:

And in order not to make it too long, I will come back shortly to the other question, with the parenting. I believe that, in the mystical understanding, parenting is the closest... giving birth to a child is the closest way how we go through creation through our body, which is a very deep and sacred act. I believe, once we are parents, we are truly being called to a different path. Then, the setting off and being on a path is the deep involvement, in a way, of raising and supporting our children, as close to the light as it's possible for us.



Then, now, our practice is in the beauty of really transcending our egos because I believe every parent knows that, once we are parents, it's like we are not just there anymore for ourselves. There's a deep caring for another human being in life. There's a deep giving. There are many things where we would love to do A, but actually we are going to do B because that's what's needed now. I think that there is a deep practice of transcendence.

So the beauty of parenthood is actually a very deeply spiritual path, and that's why I believe, in a spiritual tradition that is embodied, which means we are living in the marketplace, parenting is actually a deep part of our spiritual practice and needs some kind of adjustment of our practice. I want to underline this, that in the embodiment practice, the parenting and the conscious experience of parenting gets us equally closer, if we want it, to consciousness itself, or the light.

On the other hand, we need to be willing to be there with the yes, and to be there with the yes, if the natural built-in therapy that we get with parenting—because every parent gets a natural therapist at home—and when there are some things in us that are not clear, then we get into difficulties, and if we are willing to look at those difficulties and really reflect them, then that's a very, very deep healing process and a very deep mediation process and a very deep... creating environment of growth and potential-oriented growth. That's a deep, deep practice.

William: I just want to add to that, if I may. Yes, absolutely. First of all, parenting, to me, is the ultimate third side practice, because as a parent, you are a third sider. You're constantly meeting needs, giving love, teaching your children how to communicate, how to deal with conflict, building relationships, encouraging reconciliation, containing conflict from getting too destructive. You know, "Don't fight with fists or with pillows," or whatever. To me, maybe the single best practice for becoming an effective third sider is as a parent, because you're constantly developing, honing those skills.

It's no surprise to me that in many of the conflicts that I work in the world, some of the most effective third siders, I would say the preeminent third siders, are women, mothers. Mothers often are victims of the conflict. I've seen that in Colombia, as I was talking about earlier. The victims participated in the process, and most of them were women and mothers who had lost their children somehow, and they were the most eloquent voices, and so for me, the third side is a profoundly feminine phenomenon of embracing. So, mothering, to me, it's at the core of third sider-dom.