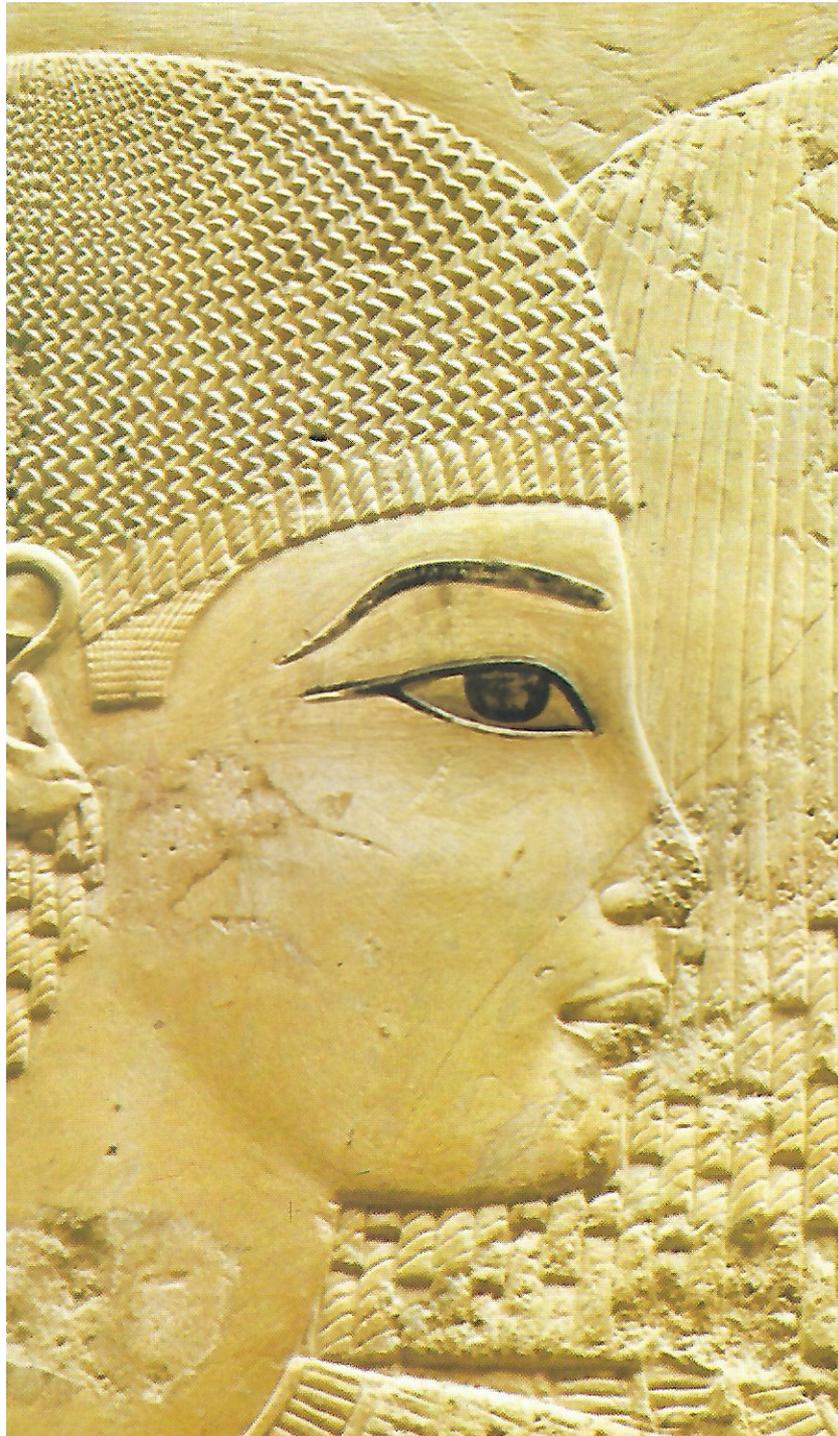




Observation, most powerful tool 19-20 May 2018

All the documents

**Desert Creek House
802 Desert Creek Road
Numbugga NSW 2550
www.desertcreekhouse.com.au**



Tomb of Vizier Ramose in Thebes – under Kingdom of Amenophis IV Akhenaton (around 1350 BC)

A) What is observation?

01) 09.30 – Introduction

Rules: 1) Try not to go astray in our sharing and discussion. Focus on the theme / on the questions. 2) Contribute with awareness to the evolution of the debate. 3) Do not confront others but you may challenge them. 4) Keep it confidential.

Observation. My experience as an architect: observe and find the solution in what is already there. This time: rather personal work of observation, more than group work. Yet sharing.

02) 09.45 - What is observation? (45')

The false preconceived idea: the Egyptian eye = an idea, not a reality. Like breathing in meditation observation is a tool that allows us to come back to Reality, beyond our phantasies.

Five stages: 1) How to observe and to get rid of false preconceived ideas. 2) How to observe and see what is as it is. 3) How to become more rooted in truth. 4) How to develop a new anthropology (new view of the world). 5) How to practise. Observation is essential at the beginning of this chain. One needs to come back to observation all the time as the tool to refresh the screen.

Dalai Lama: “When we observe or examine the nature of...”

Le Corbusier: “The most difficult is to truly see what you see”. Egyptian eye.

To observe truly we need: 1) Detachment: ready to see what we see. 2) Search for truth at any price. 3) Ruthless self-honesty. This is the minimal key to freedom.

Chain: Observation (“scientific”) => Insight => Revelation => Change of mind => Transformation. Not an act of will, but a process of discovery of what is not apparent.

Q: Observe an item: cup, picture, tool, trinket, fruit, book, clothes, clock, pencil, worker, work of art, woman, weapon. Be detached. Try to see what is and not what you project onto the item. Let yourself be led by the item. Be honest: search for truth whatever you may find.

Try to deduce from your observation any information or teaching you may find. Observe and conclude each time: what is the new insight? Observe also how you observe and what have been the different stages in the process.

Summary: Observation is a direct tool that brings us in touch with Reality

03) 10.30 – Three main models and the opportunity to be truly free (45')

The change of mentality (after insight and revelation) is the great turn around. How to find the truth between “the official version”, our own experience, our intuition, the tradition, any wisdom teaching, and what remains nevertheless a deep mystery Reality, etc. Try to make a distinction between what your parents, teachers, leaders have told you and what you know by yourself, although it has not been told to you.

It is not a struggle between official teaching and your own version. We have freedom of conscience but this freedom does not allow us to do anything that pleases us. What is truth? Truth is something we do not know but we certainly cannot change it. One could say: our beliefs or talks are free to be what we make them but they nevertheless do not change the nature of God. I believe the main power of observation consists in an ability to discover a personal version of truth because one is able to understand our own experience, to relate it to what is taught after cleansing the official truth of its many twists. Truth is in this way composite because it is enriched by many sources that are tested by experience. One can then go ever deeper into something genuine that speaks to us and is compatible with truth.

Why do we tend to create fiction and not to rely to truth? I may identify five main factors that participate in changing truth into a more or less official fiction (conventional wisdom) = 5 twists:

- 1) 1st twist: Because we are all afraid of confronting life as it is, we have created a soft version of truth that is more comfortable and that has finally misled us: we call it conventional wisdom (easy common justification of what we do); it has replaced truth. Conventional wisdom is a general discourse about family, work, money, church, school, nation, success, values, etc.
- 2) 2nd twist: Because of our own privileges that are so precious to us we have adapted our world view. If we were to see clearly how the recent past has created the present situation (today) and how our wellbeing depends on so many injustices, we would have morally to change radically the way we live and we would risk losing our privileges. Without reconquering our own freedom of conscience and detaching from our privileges, we can't evolve and be free.
- 3) 3rd twist: Because institutions are the game of human power, spiritual experiences (= true experiences of the divine) have been twisted into the institutional watered down versions of institutional religion. Observe how we have been repelled (or even hurt) by what made no sense. The same is probably true for every field of public life. How is it then possible for us to come back to be living in the truth when our context represses truth so strongly?
- 4) 4th twist: because of these many twists we tend to reject teaching which remains nevertheless a powerful tool to acquire relative clear-sightedness; one gets enriched by it (and not trapped by its many twists).
- 5) And the fifth is an anti-twist: see by yourself how observation can be the path to truth and to freedom.

Q: A) Remember experiences in your life of what you have discovered by yourself (by observation or direct experience) in opposition to what has been told to you. How did it happen? Look at the play between experience (observation) and teaching (what they told you). Focus on one example rather than many. 10'.

Summary: Inner knowledge that derives from experience (unique in its quality) needs to be combined with the wider heritage (opening to the unknown).

B) Many models of behaviour: Nature – Culture – Spirit + observation

Q: 1) Observe (see diagram p7) the 2 wings. 1st wing: the explanations proposed by our natural / social context ⇔ 2nd wing: my own perceptions rooted in my own experience (my inner voice). Integration of the teaching.

2) Describe each model and how it impacts on your life. How much are you free to develop your own point of view? How much is there the risk to go astray? What is your practice in matter of observation and how much does it lead you to oppose conventional models? How much does spiritual teaching (3rd model) help you? 20'.

Summary: Observation allows us to cleanse official models and to integrate what is fruitful.

11.15 - MORNING TEA

B) Observation of our natural context

04) 11.45 - Natural trends vs cultural trends (60')

Nature is a book: you may observe how much the evolution of our society goes against the trends (laws) of nature:

- nature brings more differentiation while we tend to standardise and globalise,
- nature develops more intention and subjectivity while we tend to make everything equal and indifferent,
- nature shows more communion while we tend to develop more individualism and competition,
- nature reveals more depth while we tend to make everything flat and shallow.

Q: Into nature: observe nature and try to notice what you learn from it that is significant for the way you experience life, you understand it and for the way you make choices in your life. Compare how far what you learn is contradicting what we do in our society.

No expectation for any special result in this exercise. Just observe with intensity and detachment. And let yourself be surprised. Open to the surprise! Try then to formulate the few laws you will discover.

Summary: Observation of nature helps us to rediscover the laws that rule and define the essence of Life.

13.00 – LUNCH

C) Observation of our social context

05) 14.30 - The laws of our global western society (60')

Imagine you come from another planet or from another culture and you look at Bega and try to understand how people live here: these weird tins on wheels in which people enclose themselves, this huge boxes into which people go and come out with a lot of food although no food is growing there, etc... Look at Bega as a stranger who is astonished by everything s/he can see: curiosity, new eye, detachment. Look at your own society as if everything were a complete surprise, something you have difficulty to understand. Like anthropologists look at so-called primitive cultures, or entomologists at ants.

1) Describe and 2) interpret what you see. Which are the main laws that rule our society today and how do they affect our local community in Bega Valley (or where you live)? Do not start from ideas or principles you have. Observe what you can see very practically in Bega: the landscape, the people, the shopping centre, the streets, the parks, the different shops, the pub and cafes, the churches, the council building, the parking, the show ground, the sport equipment, etc. Describe what it tells you about what happens there and how it explains what is. How are social and cultural qualities and flaws made visible? What does it reveal to you about the way we live.

Q: In groups of 3, try to describe what you see with a new eye and to make a list of main sights and characteristics. Try to depict a complete picture of what you can observe. Avoid commonplace and try to challenge each other, but respect diversity of opinions and understandings. Do not discuss points of view. Value qualities you can observe but be aware that negative trends will invite you more radically to react...

1) 10' personal reflexion, 2) 3x10' debate about the remarks of each participant; do not oppose each other but help each one to develop one's own view. 3) 10' What are the new insights?

Summary: When we look at our own society with a new eye (i.e. perfect honesty), we see all the flaws and become very aware of the twists in our way of life.

06) 15.30 - Technology and market and politics (45')

A) Havel President talk. We are all responsible for what is, as a collective creation.

Vaclav Havel: President talk: 1st January 1990 – President talk, when V. Havel was elected president of Czechoslovakia, after the fall of the wall and the end of the pro-soviet regime.

We live in a contaminated moral environment. We fell morally ill because we became used to saying something different from what we thought. We learned not to believe in

anything, to ignore each other, to care only about ourselves. Concepts such as love, friendship, compassion, humility or forgiveness lost their depth and dimensions, and for many of us they represented only psychological peculiarities, or they resembled gone- astray greetings from ancient times, a little ridiculous in the era of computers and spaceships. Only a few of us were able to cry out loud that the powers that be should not be all-powerful, and that special farms, which produce ecologically pure and top-quality food just for them, should send their produce to schools, children's homes and hospitals if our agriculture was unable to offer them to all.

The previous regime - armed with its arrogant and intolerant ideology – reduced man to a force of production and nature to a tool of production. In this it attacked both their very substance and their mutual relationship. It reduced gifted and autonomous people, skilfully working in their own country, to nuts and bolts of some monstrously huge, noisy and stinking machine, whose real meaning is not clear to anyone. It cannot do more than slowly but inexorably wear down itself and all its nuts and bolts.

When I talk about contaminated moral atmosphere, I am not talking just about the gentlemen [in power positions] who eat organic vegetables and do not look out of the plane windows. I am talking about all of us. We had all become used to the totalitarian system and accepted it as an unchangeable fact and thus helped to perpetuate it. In other words, we are all - though naturally to differing extents – responsible for the operation of the totalitarian machinery; none of us is just its victim: we are all also its co-creators.

Why do I say this? It would be very unreasonable to understand the sad legacy of the last forty years as something alien, which some distant relative bequeathed us. On the contrary, we have to accept this legacy as a sin we committed against ourselves. If we accept it as such, we will understand that it is up to us all, and up to us only, to do something about it. We cannot blame the previous rulers for everything, not only because it would be untrue but also because it could blunt the duty that each of us faces today, namely, the obligation to act independently, freely, reasonably and quickly. Let us not be mistaken: the best government in the world, the best Parliament and the best President, cannot achieve much on their own. And it would also be wrong to expect a general remedy from them only. Freedom and democracy include participation and therefore responsibility from us all.

If we realize this, then all the horrors that the new Czechoslovak democracy inherited will cease to appear so terrible. If we realize this, hope will return to our hearts.

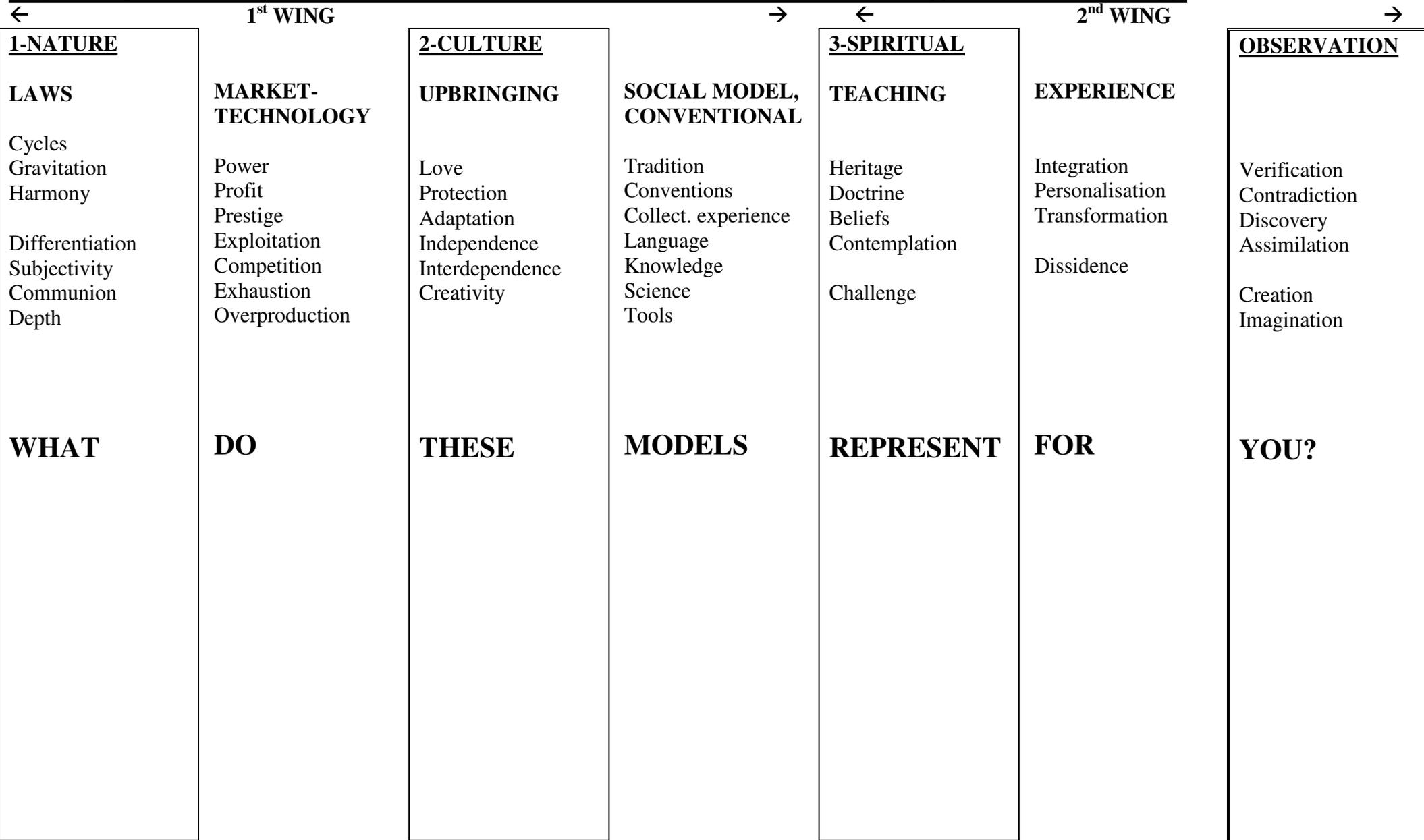
... In conclusion, I would like to say that I want to be a President who will speak less and work more. To be a President who will not only look out of the windows of his airplane but who, first and foremost, will always be present among his fellow citizens and listen to them well.

You may ask what kind of republic I dream of. Let me reply: I dream of a republic independent, free and democratic, of a republic economically prosperous and yet socially just, in short, of a humane republic which serves the individual and which therefore holds the hope that the individual will serve it in turn. Of a republic of well-rounded people, because without such it is impossible to solve any of our problems, human, economic, ecological, social or political.

The most distinguished of my predecessors opened his first speech with a quotation from the great Czech educator Comenius. Allow me to round off my first speech with my own paraphrase of the same statement:

People, your government has returned to you!

03) The power of observation and the confrontation to 3 dominating models – 2 wings



06) Market (replaces relationships) and Technology (replaces meaning)

How do they affect Life as the essence of Being. What do I observe in Bega that tells me that...

MARKET

I observed

TECHNOL.

I observed

POLITICS

I observed

They are:

They should:

What in your life does not depend on market or technology? What importance / quality does it have?

Q: 1) How do technology and market affect Life as the essence of being? How is politics reinforcing / solving this tension? Use diagram on page 8.

2) No preconceived ideas; only observations and facts in Bega today that are made visible. Say what you observe and what it tells you about the way Life is affected by market and technology.

3) How much are you responsible for what is: no guilt, only a sense of responsibility, an understanding of the way you are involved. Observe without judgement. What are the remedies that you can practise here and now? Observe with detachment and ruthless honesty.

4) What in your life does not depend on market or technology? What importance / quality does it have?

Same exercise as before but focussing on technology and market. Same groups of 3.

Summary: The fields of our lives that are not dependent on market and technology are the deepest and richest. Luckily out of reach for “mechanical” power.

16.15 – AFTERNOON TEA

07) 16.45 – Resistance and surrender (60’)

Which are the creative energies that help us thriving? Are there evil forces at work in our society? How can you notice and observe each kind of them? There is a fundamental positive and life giving energy in the Universe: Reality is a Mystery and this Mystery is Graciousness.

“Resist no evil”. Mat. 5:38-42

38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ 39 But I tell you, don’t resist him who is evil; but whoever strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 If anyone sues you to take away your coat, let him have your cloak also. 41 Whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to him who asks you, and don’t turn away him who desires to borrow from you.

Q: 1) What does it mean not to resist evil?

2) Why are we so caught into illusion (the promises of market and technology, etc.)?

3) What is preventing us from following a spiritual path anchored in truth and peace? What is so attractive in an individualistic materialistic system based on competition rather than in a social cooperation based on love?

4) The herd effect: how can we dare to be different or to be dissident: what is living in the truth?

5) What is the motor that propels us forward on our spiritual path? What about the image of God, our Buddha nature, the Atman, the Spirit in us, etc.?

6) Is Life trustworthy? Why do we trust? What about a positive energy in the Universe that would lead us into creative transformation: love, grace, or anything similar?

General discussion: the purpose of it is to rediscover on what we have to rely.

Summary: Life and the Universe are positive forces we can trust. Reality is a Mystery and this Mystery is Graciousness.

D) Self-observation

08) 17.45 - The body as a book (45’)

Observe your body as a book that tells you who you are.

Pain and illness as experiences of disruptions in our being, i.e. in the way we try to be fully.

Q: Observe the pains you feel in your body. Try to see how they are related to emotions, fears, anger, anxiety, etc. or precise (old or recent) experiences in your life. Use your body as a book that reveals to you (makes visible, makes observable) what you are going (or have gone) through. Interpret your pains. 20’.

Summary: Resistance at work and voluntary suffering: we are all so slow to learn... Our suffering is yet our best teacher.

19.00 – DINNER

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SUNDAY MORNING

07.30 – MEDITATION

08.00 – BREAKFAST

09) 09.30 - How to observe oneself? (60’)

With the help of Red Hawk: *Self Observation*. Hohm Press, 2009.

A) How to observe. Four principles or rules:

- 1) Without judgement.
- 2) Without changing what is observe.
- 3) With attention on bodily sensation and relaxed body.
- 4) Ruthless self-honesty.

Q: Sit in silence and practice the 4 principles while observing yourself as if you were someone else. Remain constantly aware of the 4 principles. 10’.

General discussion.

B) The blind spot:

Red Hawk - The Blind Spot: The Capture and Consume Cycle

Everything eats and is eaten, this is the law. It works on every level, from galaxy to atomic particle, from God to creature, from earth to man. Related to this law is another: what gets fed grows stronger; what does not get fed dies. As above, so below, and what is true in physics is true in metaphysics as well.

Our psyche is lawfully constructed around a key element or neurotic fixation, called variously in different traditions, “contamination” or “the cramp” or “chief feature” or “chief fault” or “chief flaw” or “petty tyrant” or “blind spot”—different traditions of Work have different names for the ego's chief or salient or central core, its foundational neurosis or belief system. But it is this flaw around which my psychology is constructed, and it rules the inner world by remaining invisible. What is more, and here is the key: I am addicted to my flaw! I believe in it and give my life to it. It is this which controls the intellectual-emotional-complex. It is this which captures and consumes attention. It is this which must be continuously fed. I like “petty tyrant” because that is exactly what it is and how it behaves. This was the term used often in shamanistic traditions. But for our purposes I prefer to call it “the blind spot” because this so simply and accurately describes its action upon my consciousness: it feeds upon available energy within, but is constructed in such a way as to be all but invisible to me in ordinary life.

In the Gospels, Jesus says, "Easier to see a mote [a speck of dust] in your neighbor's eye than a beam [a log which holds up the roof] in your own." This is a law. We are constructed in such a way that we cannot see our own flaw, but can easily see our neighbor's. Earth is a school for flawed souls. Each of us has a flaw, which is meant to be food for the developing soul. Thus, each of us has a blind spot around which one's psychology is constructed. It is this blind spot which drives our lives and controls our relationships. Others can see it, we cannot. And a wise man knows that if another tells me what my blind spot is, I will deny it and be angry that he could think such a thing of me. Only by the most patient and honest self observation without judgment, over a long period of time, will a person gain the clarity, honesty, and strength necessary to see one's own blind spot.

The blind spot steals the energy of attention for its own food. It does not live in a single center within. It uses intellectual and emotional centers symbiotically and creates of them an interacting complex called the intellectual-emotional-complex (some traditions call this "the labyrinth"). Sometimes it will manifest as a pattern of thought, sometimes as emotional pattern or habit, and often thought will trigger emotion. Thus, they form a complex.

In me the blind spot is self-hatred, and it is well guarded and masked by lying, fear of rejection, panic, fear of relationship, fear of intimacy, paranoia, cheating, anger, and self destructive behavior. So for years it looked as if such habits as lying, then fear of rejection, then other habits were the blind spot. It remained concealed from me, but as I worked through layer after layer, always behind each thing was another. And at the core was self hatred. In others it may be greed, jealousy, lying, impatience, hysteria, happiness, lust, envy, gossip, guilt, blame, vanity, pride, or many other things. For me, "I'm no good" is the way my blind spot manifests in action.

The blind spot feeds and thus grows stronger. It acts in a feeding cycle, that is it has two halves which form a single, symbiotic unit; both halves always work together and one-half follows the other the way the shadow follows the body. Each half serves a very crucial function in the feeding cycle, so if self observation only catches one-half of the cycle, then this is an incomplete observation and the cycle has accomplished its aim. The cycle has only one aim: to capture and then to consume the attention. It feeds on attention (which is all that we are; we are attention = consciousness). Thus, the contamination eats me. Lawfully then, there are only two possibilities here: either the blind spot consumes the attention, feeds off of it, or the attention consumes the blind spot, feeds off of it: that is how soul develops.

To paraphrase Newtonian physics' first law of matter: Energy is neither created nor destroyed, only transferred. I have here substituted the word "transferred" for "transformed" and it is the word "transferred" which I want to emphasize here. Throughout the universe there is a constant transfer of energy, from Sun to Earth, Earth to human, and so on. This is true within as well. And there is a lawful transfer of energy which takes place with the blind spot; it can serve as a food source, was meant to serve as a food source for the development of the soul, thus has real value.

- 1) Thus, handled in the right way, without judgment or interference of any kind, the blind spot feeds attention, its energy is transferred to attention.*
- 2) Handled the other way, through identification with the blind spot and judging what is observed, the energy of attention is transferred to it. One grows, the other is weakened. This is lawful.*

Here is How the Feeding Cycle Works:

I. Capture: *First there is the action—any action will do, so long as it is habitual, therefore well known and recognizable; it may be jealousy or envy, or lust, or greed, or an extra piece of pie, or hatred, or arguing, or interfering, or any habitual action, mechanical, automatic-pilot. The advantage which I have over the blind spot is that such actions are totally predictable, and once I have seen them 10,000 times (or more—I am a slow learner), I can recognize them by their first appearance and know exactly where they will lead me—every time. Therefore, I can be ready for it before it ever arises by keeping attention focused on the body, and remaining present in a relaxed body, no matter what I am doing or what is going on around me: find myself, manage the body.*

Relaxed body = honest body. The attention can't be captured if it is in the right place = focused on bodily sensation and relaxing the body, no matter the action which has taken place (jealousy, envy, greed, lust, sorrow, a second piece of pie, etc.).

But the ego, which is constructed around the blind spot, knows what will catch and capture the attention because it has seen what interests or fascinates it 10,000 times, it is mechanical, repetitious, habitual—it is the body of habits—and the sole function of the first half of the cycle is: to capture the attention.

II. Consume: *The second half of the feeding cycle follows the first half automatically, habitually, thus predictably: it is of the action (which is identification). I am jealous, envious, lustful, angry, hateful, eat too much, say negative things, gossip, etc. Following that immediately is judgment of the action = the second half of the cycle. First the action, then the reaction—this is the law (Newton's third law of motion: For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.) When I try to change the action I observe in myself, I have only made one-half an observation; I have not completely observed the process I am trying to change. I have only seen one-half of that process, and based on incomplete information or observation, I am making a decision which endangers me and places my Work in jeopardy, because I know too little about what is good for me, and I do not understand in what a delicate balance things are in my body. If I change one thing, everything changes and I may be left in a worse condition than when I started.*

What I have not seen yet is that the thing which I wish to change, the behavior or more accurately the habit which I wish to change, exists not as a separate process, but as part of a larger and more complete cycle—that is, it exists in a cycle of behavior in which it is only a part. A cycle is a circle. To observe only the habitual behavior is to observe only half of the circle, 180 degrees, not the full 360 degrees. The reason I wish to change the habit is because I have judged the habit (identified with it) which I have observed. Simple, obvious. I don't wish to change something unless I have judged it bad, wrong, nasty, like that. Here is the interesting thing: the judgment of the habit is the habit. The habit depends upon the judgment of it as bad, no good, in order to derive its power and strength. The judgment of the habit is the other half of the habit. The habit is not drinking, sugar, pornography, gossip—whatever I have observed—the habit is drinking (in this case) and judging myself for drinking = whole cycle, full circle, 360 degrees. This full cycle keeps the self in its place, in line: self-hatred in my case. This is the underlying force behind judging what I observe. The ego depends upon me not being OK, upon having problems, upon being broken and then fixing the problem, repairing the damage. The ego = problem-and-fixing-the-problem. If there were no problems, thus nothing to fix, there would be no ego. Simple.

The judgment (second half of the cycle) has only one function which is: to consume the attention. The contamination, the blind spot, feeds on attention and consumes it. Thus, according to law, it grows stronger: What gets fed grows stronger, this is the law.

On the other hand, attention lives and grows stronger by eating ego = feeding cycle: The first half (the action) need not capture the attention, if attention stays at home = attention does not move from sensing and relaxing the body no matter how attractive the image thrown up before it; the second half = the reaction (judgment) need not consume the attention if the attention remains stable, steady, focused on the body and keeping the body relaxed. It is not taken by the action or the reaction. Thus, the feeding cycle feeds attention and my inner attention (which is soul) grows stronger, able to focus for longer and longer periods of time without being caught.

Thus, the first principle of self observation is: without judgment. It does not mean judgment stops. It means that I stop identifying with it, and thus I eat it, instead of it eating me. Inner attention can only grow stronger if it is properly fed on a daily basis; thus the importance of the sitting practice—this gives me a half-hour uninterrupted, without distraction, to practice keeping the attention grounded and at home. Whenever it gets captured, and as soon as I “remember myself,” = become conscious, aware that I have been caught, I “begin again.” We are all beginners here. I am a beginner. Over and over during my day, I begin again. Slowly, slowly, I “remember myself” (= find the body, return attention to bodily sensation and relax the body) before I am captured and consumed by the intellectual-emotional-complex again.

Every unnecessary thought, inappropriate emotion, and unnecessary tension is acting in the service of my blind spot and will inevitably and predictably lead to that blind spot and it will devour the attention once it has captured it. Therefore: observe unnecessary thought, inappropriate emotion, and unnecessary tension in the body. Relax the body = honest body. Don't judge, condemn, or criticize, just observe. Either I eat the bear, or the bear eats me.

The sole aim of the blind spot is to feed itself, and it does so by reenactment of those patterns which feed it best = habit (intellectual, emotional, and physical). And such patterns are always accompanied by unnecessary tension in the body. What would happen if, when such a pattern appeared for any reason, my response was to immediately place attention on the body, keep it there, breathe into the navel, and keep the body relaxed? Find out for yourself, not because some so-called expert has suggested it, even if the so-called expert has diplomas and certificates on the wall and titles after his name. Verify for yourself or continue to be a slave to borrowed knowledge, other people's opinions and your own blind spot.

[...] No effort towards becoming more conscious, no matter how small, is ever wasted. This is a law of the Work. Every time I observe, something conscious (attention) in me is being fed, thus it grows, homeopathically, one grain of observation at a time. Nothing conscious is ever wasted. That is the law. I am not interested in “grand”. I am interested in steady, patient, careful, law-conformable efforts to “know myself”. This is our hope for freedom. Hope placed in the mind is madness. Hope placed in the emotions is sorrow and suffering. Hope placed in self observation is strength and wisdom. It produces more consciousness because it feeds attention. This, I mature.

Reminder how to observe:

- 1) No judgement.
- 2) No will to change.
- 3) Attention on body.
- 4) Self-honesty.

Q: Try to identify your blind spot. 20'. Then discussion.

Summary: Importance of non-judgement to be able to see truly what is.

10) 10.30 - Change happens by itself (45')

A) Self-obsession = the big danger and the 3 damning questions:

- 1) I'm not OK! How can I change? ⇔ I'm perfectly OK, here and now.
- 2) How can I be in control? ⇔ Nothing to be controlled; Life happens to me.
- 3) Where is the path to wisdom, happiness? ⇔ Happiness is the path.

B) Will and attention. Pushing and letting go. The two stages in heart pulsing. Pushing only prevents from moving.

Simone Weil: Attention and will

The following extract is taken out of Gravity and Grace by Simone Weil:

We do not have to understand new things, but by dint of patience, effort and method to come to understand with our whole self the truths which are evident.

Stages of belief. The most commonplace truth when it floods the whole soul, is like a revelation.

We have to try to cure our faults by attention and not by will. [...]

Attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love. Absolutely unmixed attention is prayer.

If we turn our minds towards the good, it is impossible that little by little the whole soul will not be attracted thereto in spite of itself.

Extreme attention is what constitutes the creative faculty in [wo]men and the only extreme attention is religious. The amount of creative genius in any period is strictly in proportion to the amount of extreme attention and thus of authentic religion at that period. [...]

To draw back before the object we are pursuing. Only an indirect method is effective. We do nothing if we have not first drawn back. By pulling at the bunch, we make all the grapes fall to the ground.

Love is the teacher of gods and men, for no one learns without desiring to learn. Truth is sought not because it is truth but because it is good.

Attention is bound up with desire. Not with the will but with desire — or more exactly, consent.

We liberate energy in ourselves, but it constantly reattaches itself. How are we to liberate it entirely? We have to desire that it should be done in us — to desire it truly — simply to desire it, not to try to accomplish it. For every attempt in that direction is vain and has to be dearly paid for. In such a work all that I call 'I' has to be passive.

Attention alone — that attention which is so full that the 'I' disappears — is required of me. I have to deprive all that I call 'I' of the light of my attention and turn it on to that which cannot be conceived.

The capacity to drive a thought away once and for all is the gateway to eternity. The infinite in an instant. [...]

A divine inspiration operates infallibly, irresistibly, if we do not turn away our attention, if we do not refuse it. There is not a choice to be made in its favour, it is enough not to refuse to recognize that it exists. [...]

Method for understanding images, symbols, etc. Not to try to interpret them, but to look at them till the light suddenly dawns. Generally speaking, a method for the exercise of the intelligence, which consists of looking.

C) Le radical change of view (of vision, of mentality): when you have seen, you can't go back to the view of unknowing: change happens by itself. Effort for improvement prevents the change from happening. Is the change happening by force of will or because there is a change of mind (revelation): will ⇔ change of mind.

Q: Examples of radical changes of view in your life, i.e. when you could not go back to the previous way of understanding. The big shift.

Summary: Change happens by a radical change of mentality, not by will power.

11.15 - MORNING TEA

11) 11.45 - Us and them: the monolithic view as mirror of our own violence (45')

Observing our own violence. Discovering what peace truly is.

A) How we view the others.

The monolithic view of the other as the "enemy" or the menace: Them as a frozen monolithic block. Boomerang effect: we are frozen too.

B) How the other is reflecting our own domination or violence. Boomerang effect: you yield what you sow.

Richard Rohr: Jesus Reveals the Lie of Scapegoating – Oct. 2016

If your ego is still in charge, you will find a disposable person or group on which to project your problems. People who haven't come to at least a minimal awareness of their own dark side will always find someone else to hate or fear. Hatred holds a group together much more quickly and easily than love and inclusivity, I am sorry to say. René Girard developed a sociological, literary, and philosophical explanation for how and why the pattern of scapegoating is so prevalent in every culture.

In Leviticus 16 we see the brilliant ritualization of what we now call scapegoating, and we should indeed feel sorry for the demonized goat. On the Day of Atonement, a priest laid hands on an "escaping" goat, placing all the sins of the Jewish people from the previous year onto the animal. Then the goat was beaten with reeds and thorns, and driven out into the desert. And the people went home rejoicing, just as European Christians did after burning a supposed heretic at the stake or American whites did after the lynching of black men. Whenever the "sinner" is excluded, our ego is delighted and feels relieved and safe. It sort of works, but only for a while. Usually the illusion only deepens and becomes catatonic, blind, and repetitive—because of course, scapegoating did not really work to eliminate the evil in the first place.

Jesus came to radically undo this illusory scapegoat mechanism, which is found in every culture in some form. He became the scapegoat to reveal the universal lie of scapegoating. Note that John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin [singular] of the world" (John 1:29). It seems "the sin of the world" is ignorant killing, hatred, and fear. As Blaise Pascal so insightfully wrote, "People never do evil so completely and so cheerfully as when they do it with a religious conviction."

We see this in much of the United States in our own time, with churches on every corner.

The Gospel is a highly subversive document. It painstakingly illustrates how the systems of both church and state (Caiaphas and Pilate) conspired to condemn Jesus. Throughout most of history, church and state have sought plausible scapegoats to carry their own shame and guilt. So Jesus became the sinned-against one to reveal the hidden nature of scapegoating, and we would forever see how wrong power can be—even religious power! (See John 16:8-11 and Romans 8:3.) Finally Jesus says from the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they’re doing” (Luke 23:34). The scapegoat mechanism largely operates in the unconscious; people do not know what they are doing. Scapegoaters do not know they are scapegoating, but they think they are doing a “holy duty for God” (John 16:2). You see why inner work, shadow work, and honest self-knowledge are all essential to any healthy religion.

The vast majority of violence in history has been sacralised violence. Members of ISIS probably believe they are doing God’s will. The Ku Klux Klan used the cross as their symbol! With God on your side, your violence becomes necessary and even “redemptive violence.” But there is no such thing as redemptive violence. Violence doesn’t save; it only destroys in both short and long term.

Jesus replaced the myth of redemptive violence with the truth of redemptive suffering. He showed us how to hold the pain and let it transform us, rather than pass it on to the others around us. Spiritually speaking, no one else is your problem. You are first and foremost your own problem. There are no bad goats to expel.

- Q: A) Observe how Trump, Putin, ISIS, all the things we do not like are also reflections of our own collective / personal flaws and the fruit of our own violence. 5’
B) Chose an example at a more personal level: someone who is a problem (an enemy) for you. Observe and see clearly how you and this person have common flaws, and a common humanity. Apply the 4 principles. 10’
C) Form groups of 2: examine how you are both similar, different, in harmony, in opposition, etc. 15’.

Summary: The Other is a mirror of what we are: what we detest most in him/her is often our own image!

13.00 - LUNCH

E) Life as the source

12) 14.30 – Who am I? (45’)

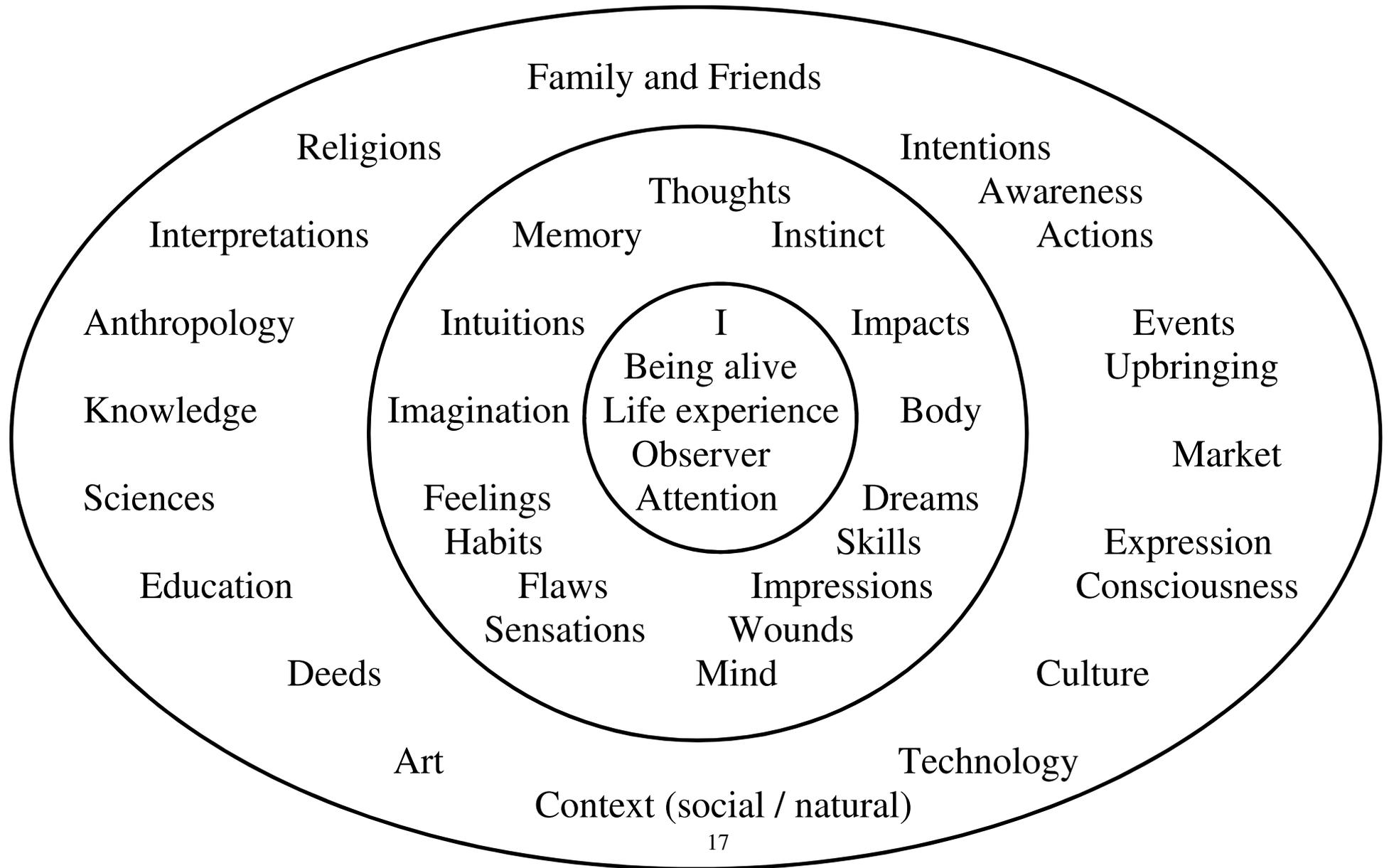
A) Sensations, feelings, thoughts arise in you by themselves, like dreams do. We seem neither to be their creator nor to be in control of them, yet we are responsible for what we do with them. We have to keep them ineffective or to process them.

It means the chain of transformation: 1) Observe. 2) Perceive. 3) Interpret. 4) Chose and (re)act.

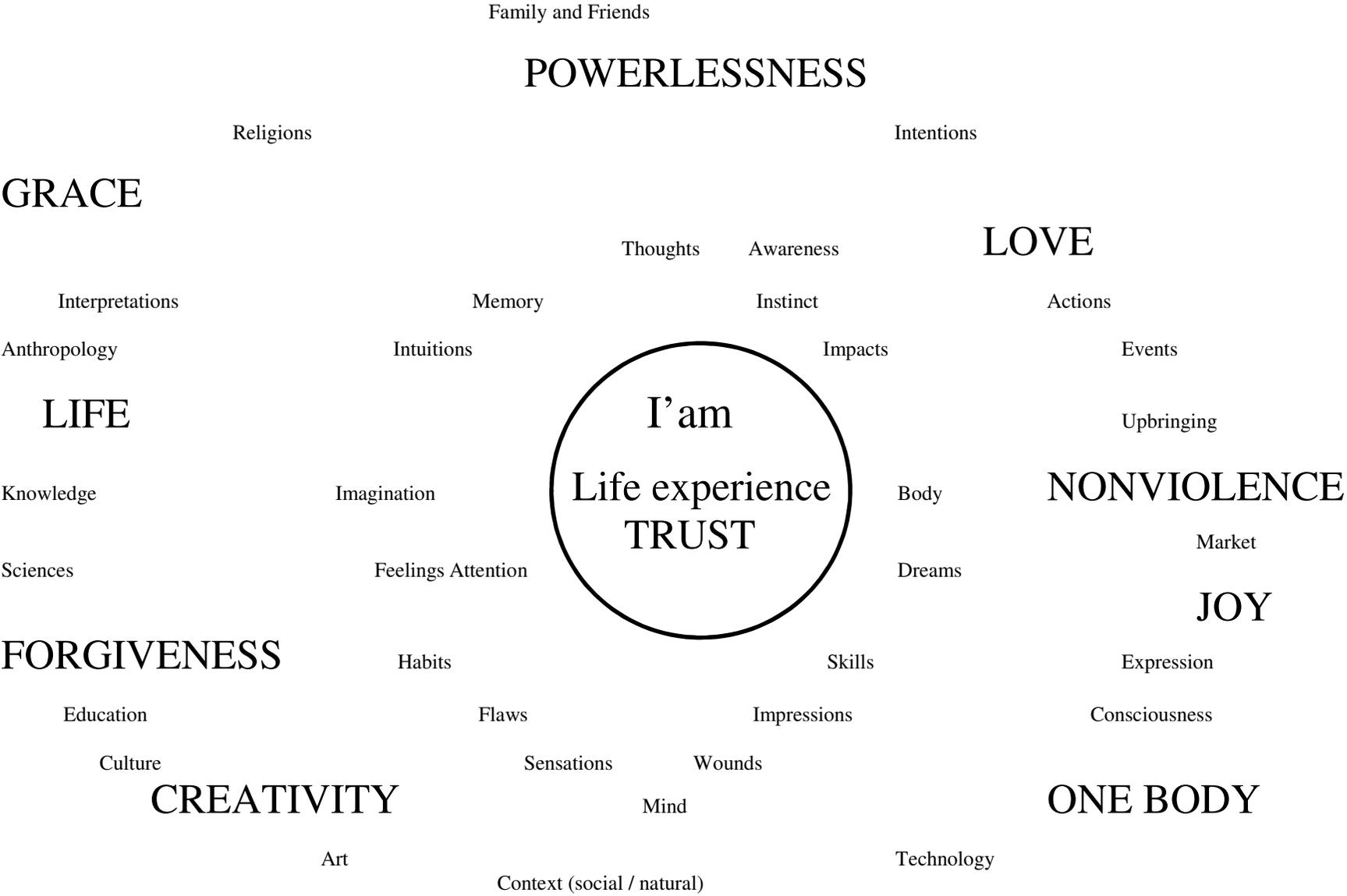
B) Who am I? Observe how you can observe your body, your mind, how you may behave as if all what happens in you is indeed external to you: how thoughts and dreams and emotions and intuitions seem to arise in you as something that happens in you but you cannot control, i.e. something that is foreign to what you are truly.

Reminder from one of last workshops: the spectator, the actor and the screen.

13) Being alive... and other facts – where is our true Self?



And then...



Q: Here I'm asking you to do the contrary of what we have done so far. You have to observe what is told to you instead of observing what you may see.

- 1) Diagram p17. First try to see what I describe here: that we are indeed only the first circle of the diagram (I am) and that other facts happen outside us. Observe genuinely how you feel when practising this other way of looking at yourself.
- 2) Then observe diagram p18. Is it not your reality? Things happen in the background. Emphasis is on another dimension of reality (capitals) that can be experienced, even if it is not visible.
- 3) Koan (enigma we cannot solve with our rational mind – we have to sit on it and let the answer arise from our heart-mind): What is the essence / nature of Life? How does it affect the way you live?

Summary: Life is just being: breathing in and out and marvelling about it. Nothing else. Disappointing? No, it opens us to true peace and joy. The rest still exists but does not matter so much.

13) 15.15 – Five stones in your shoe (45')

I believe we are often in a state of struggle because of discomfort. We are not well in our shoes. I identify 5 stones in my own shoe. Do you feel the same? These stones are the following:

- A) Three fears: 1) Fear of suffering / death. 2) Fear of what I am. 3) Fear of life = not knowing where it will lead me.
- B) One anxiety: Do I go the right path? And if not how to find the right path? Anxiety created by our representation of hell and paradise.
- C) One expectation: Enlightenment has to come. Something important must happen: enlightenment, the 2nd coming of Christ, Life in the other world, etc.

Numbness and paralysis to decide about our own life and what to commit to.

The solution is simple: remove these 5 stones from your shoe.

Jump in! The fundamental choice is not a rational choice made in considering information and perspectives, like a plan for professional career. It is simply and radically a change of mind about what matters: Life. Nobody knows where we are going!

Drink. Do not study drinking: how to open the tap? how does water taste? how to swallow? why do you have to drink? Just drink! Escape numbness, paralysis.

Q: Reflexion about your fears, anxiety and expectations:

- 1) Observe the 3 fears in you and how they prevent you from living fully. 10min.
- 2) Observe your anxiety about choosing the right path. 5min.
- 3) Observe your expectation for something to happen. 5 min.

And the deep desire for change, accepting not to know where we go.

Summary: Life cannot be planned; it can only be lived. Experience. No manual!

14) 16.00 - Just life - The joy of being a witness

Richard Rohr: Practice - Boats on a River

Most people have never actually met themselves. At every moment, all our lives long, we identify with our thoughts, our self-image, or our feelings. We have to find a way to get behind this view of ourselves to discover the face we had before we were born. We must discover who we are in God, who we've always been—long before we did anything right or anything wrong. This is the first goal of contemplation.

Imagine you are sitting on the bank of a river. Boats and ships—thoughts, feelings, and sensations—are sailing past. While the stream flows by your inner eye, name each of these vessels. For example, one of the boats could be called “my anxiety about tomorrow.” Or along comes the ship “objections to my husband” or the boat “I don’t do that well.” Every judgment that you pass is one of those boats. Take the time to give each one of them a name, and then let them move on down the river.

This can be a difficult exercise because you’re used to jumping aboard the boats—your thoughts—immediately. As soon as you own a boat and identify with it, it picks up energy. This is a practice in un-possessing, detaching, letting go. With every idea, with every image that comes into your head, say, “No, I’m not that; I don’t need that; that’s not me.”

Sometimes, a boat turns around and heads back upstream to demand your attention again. Habitual thoughts are hard to not be hooked by. Sometimes you feel the need to torpedo your boats. But don’t attack them. Don’t hate them or condemn them. This is also an exercise in nonviolence. The point is to recognize your thoughts, which are not you, and to say, “That’s not necessary; I don’t need that.” But do it very amiably. If you learn to handle your own soul tenderly and lovingly, you’ll be able to carry this same loving wisdom out into the world.

Nothing else than being.

Q: Let’s have 10 min meditation doing the exercise that Richard Rohr proposes, yet with a difference. While being aware of the thoughts that are passing by, rejoice on their creativity and inventiveness, as if you would rejoice the sight of firework. Do not get onto the boats but admire their beauty. Rejoice without judging; landscape, people, images, thoughts,... = big cinema is on.

Most important: Observe how observing the boats consists in much more than just mindfulness. It consists rather in becoming aware of the Source of Life when our own mind “produces” all these images, the flow of thoughts and of impressions in us. The Source is personal, even if we do not experience “it” as such. It is Mystery and Graciousness. Love is the main stream in which we are moved. Observing the boats and rejoicing in their beauty helps us to feel the flow of life in us: breathing in and out, with joy and wonder and being aware of the “proximity” of the Source.

16.30 – AFTERNOON TEA

Observation, most powerful tool

19-20 May 2018

A) What is observation?

01) 09.30 – Introduction

02) 09.45 - What is observation? (45')

03) 10.30 – Three main models and the opportunity to be truly free (45')

11.15 - MORNING TEA

B) Observation of our natural context

04) 11.45 - Natural trends vs cultural trends (60')

13.00 – LUNCH

C) Observation of our social context

05) 14.30 - The laws of our global western society (60')

06) 15.30 - Technology and market and politics (45')

16.15 – AFTERNOON TEA

07) 16.45 – Resistance and surrender (60')

D) Self-observation

08) 17.45 - The body as a book (45')

19.00 – DINNER

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SUNDAY MORNING

07.30 – MEDITATION

08.00 – BREAKFAST

09) 09.30 - How to observe oneself? (60')

10) 10.30 - Change happens by itself (45')

11.15 - MORNING TEA

11) 11.45 - Us and them: the monolithic view as mirror of our own violence (45')

13.00 - LUNCH

E) Life as the source

12) 14.30 – Who am I? (45')

13) 15.15 – Five stones in your shoe (45')

14) 16.00 - Just life - The joy of being a witness

16.30 – AFTERNOON TEA