

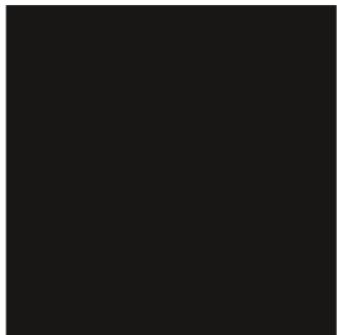
FUCK THE FEAR

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There is nothing but patterns and frames.

Jiří Zbořil, Praha, Lipová 2025

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THE MANUAL



What follows is the essence distilled from the course of my own life which I have written to help myself keep in mind some important things. I used to search for a universal method, for the Philosophers' Stone, something to provide me with a source of meaning to everything, with an everlasting source of purpose. I have walked many paths both bright and dark. At a certain point, I realized that if there was anything like that, it was me. That there would be no purpose to my life unless I generated it. There would be no meaning to things unless I supplied it myself. And that it cannot be made once and for all. I have to do it continuously. Every single day.

Saying so, I am far from denying God or Karma or Heaven or Hell. I have only come to a simple conclusion that freedom we are provided with is somehow bound to certain duties. Religions are not quite sure about whether that freedom of ours has been

meant as a kind of acknowledgment or punishment. Science, which I understand as a special case of a powerful religion, is not even sure whether there is such a thing. Sometimes it all feels just like a joke. But I figure it does not matter at all. It is what it is. If there is no freedom after all, I just had to write the book anyway and you have to read it so what's the big deal, mate? However, should there be a thing like freedom in our lives what directly follows is that you are fully responsible for how you are dealing with it. Me too, naturally. And them? Forget about them. They are just logs in flooding rivers.

This is not a therapist's book. It does not provide you with encouraging cases of miraculous cures that have solved the matter once and for all. It is more of a summary of a journey that has not finished yet but has passed some wild regions already and is heading towards the shore of a welcoming sea, or land, in peace.

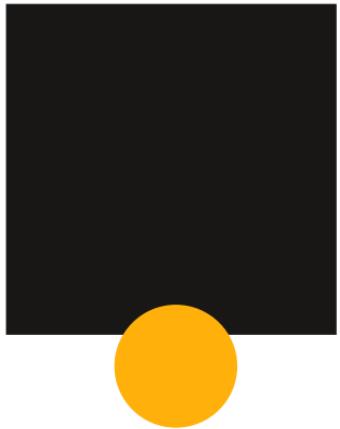
Do you know the story of a Paris dustman who earned his bread by sweeping the small shops of artisans?

„At the end of the day he threw out all the refuse he collected, except the sweepings from the jewellers. These he sifted carefully for he knew that they contained gold dust from the jewellers' file. After many years, he found himself in possession of a sufficient amount of gold dust to make a mould of it and to shape it into a golden rose. Every minute, every chance word and glance, every thought, profound or flippant,

the imperceptible beat of the human heart, and, by the same token, the fluff dropping from the poplar, the starlight gleaming in a pool, all are grains of gold dust. Over the years, we writers subconsciously collect millions of these little grains and keep them stored away until they form into a mould out of which we shape our own particular golden rose – a story, a novel, or a poem. And from these precious little particles a stream of literature is born.“

Thus wrote Konstantin Paustovsky, a Russian writer of the past. If there should be a universal method after all, it's this. You are the writer of your life regardless whether you put it down on a piece of paper or a screen or just act it away. For me, this text is one of my golden roses. For you, it is just a grain of dust. With some luck a gold one.





THE TALE



At the beginning, all was one.
There was no weight and no worry.
Only mild waves.

There was no space and no separation.
No longing and no expectation.

Until something happened.
Something unutterably horrible.

Pressure occurred. And Weight.
The All squeezed.
The All crushed.
The All ground.

The All disappeared.
Instead:

Dazzling Light and Piercing Noise.

Big Bang.

Space. Coldness. Separation.

Horror. Fear.

Then:

Breath.

The All split into Sky and Earth.

Only One Way remained to hold together:

Breathing.

Yet,

when breathing stops

Sky and Earth

become whole again

All the same.

But until then:

It must have been the worst experience of your life.

And yet. Can you remember?

And yet again. You managed! You survived!

How did you do it?

You breathed in.

Breathed out.

Breathed in.

Breathed out.

You had found the Universal Key.

But you did not know.

So you cried.

But that was Then, and now is Now.

Now you are Here.

What brought you here, my dear?

From Then to Now?

Can you remember the way?

The stream?

Can you remember every twist and turn that brought
you Here?

Oh dear...

Sit still.

Breathe out.

Breathe in.

Try to recollect the mill.

Breathe out.

Breathe in.

Was it all your will?

Oh dear...

Things happened:

To you.
With you.
In you.

That was all Then, and now is Now.
The Then You has gone.
The Now You has come.

Since you left your Mum
You are Here.
And there is nowhere to run.

Yet, it is a good place to start.
In fact, the Only One.

So how is this Here?

Look around.
Touch something.
Smell around.
Listen.
Feel the weight.
Breathe out.
Breathe in.
This is Here.

And now for a riddle:

It is always here, but never Here.
What is it?

Are you still here?

Your eyes are open but do not see.
Your ears are open but do not hear.
Your hands are touching but do not feel.
You are cracking the riddle...

Have you cracked it yet?

Thoughts.

They are always here but never Here
them thoughts.
Can you see it, dear?

They jump from then to then.
Can you catch one?
Where and when?

You grasp one's tail
to no avail.
It flinches, it quails, it transforms.
It does not comply with any norms.

And this amorphous creature
without single doubtless feature
never one but always many
popping like a tameless genie
which never leaves you all alone
you consider to be your own.

What? Behold! It's worse than that.
You better sit, that's really sad.
Have you noticed?

That shameless elf
is considered to be Your Self.

Are you Here, my dear?

Let's make something crystal clear.
What is this we're having here?

COGITO ERGO SUM

Boom.

Is it you, René?
Over all these centuries?
That thought! Is it me, or is it you?
Who?

Many voices:

[René Descartes]

*What then did I formerly believe myself to be?
Undoubtedly I believed myself to be a man. But what is
a man? Shall I say a reasonable animal? Certainly not;
for then I should have to inquire what an animal is,
and what is reasonable; and thus from a single question
I should insensibly fall into an infinitude of others more
difficult; and I should not wish to waste the little time
and leisure remaining to me in trying to unravel
subtleties like these.*

[Who]

*... why don't you all fade away (talkin' bout my
generation)...*

[another band]

Should I stay or should I go now?

Bloody hell! So this is you, Cogito?

And where's Ergo Sum?





EPIPHANIES



As a little boy, I was afraid of death. I could not stop thinking about it. I kept trying to imagine how the world would be without me, and it felt funny. On the other hand, I suspected that it must be somehow possible, as, apparently, there was a world without me even before I had turned up in it. So I tried to imagine both: the world before me, as well as the one after.

Once I almost got it. But mostly I just cried at night. I never shared my thoughts and feelings with anyone. I did not know how to and could see no one who might understand a bit of it. Adults were always concerned with different things, as well as other kids.

I also tried to figure out where and how the world ended, and wondered what was beyond that end. And as if it was not enough to crack, I tried hard to find out how the world had begun and what was before that. It all scared, puzzled, and fascinated me at the same time.

At those times, the world was the most frightening, lustrous and interesting place to be. I had a mission, my thoughts were mine, and my feelings were clear. Then it all turned into a blurred chain of worries. I cannot remember when.

Fear and Contempt

I grew up in the 1960s in the Czech cities of Prague and Tabor. In Prague with my parents, in Tabor with my grandparents. I spent more time in Tabor and liked it better there. The apartment we stayed in covered the top floor of a three-storey villa overlooking a valley with a creek at the bottom and a medieval fortification with a towering church on the other side. Our part of the valley was wild, full of bushes, trees and grass, and a waterfall a little bit further upstream where the creek started from a big pond called Jordan. I loved the place.

At the end of August 1968, my parents drove me from Tabor to Prague. It was the end of holidays and the school was about to start soon. Our country was freshly occupied by the Soviet Union, and tanks and soldiers swarmed all over the place. Occasionally, shooting could be heard here and there. We cruised the road bravely. However, just when passing a long line of tanks, a big shot had burst right next to us and our car started bumping funny. As it turned out, no one fired a gun, we only blew a tire. But the fact was not that obvious to the Russians. As we were getting out of the

car, the soldiers drew carefully closer to us with their guns ready. My dad was trying to change the wheel but his hands trembled so much that he was virtually unable to do it. I was seeking some safe place behind my mums back but I could feel her tremor clearly, and understood that the place behind her was no safer than any other place in the country. It dawned on me that face to face with Russians, neither my parents nor anyone else could protect me at all, and that in the world, I was alone. I was eight and that wisdom had stayed with me ever since. Despite of the fact that we were lucky after all. The Russians checked on us and understood what was going on before starting any action.

Meanwhile in Prague, the situation was complicated. People were scared and nervous. At school, we were not allowed to go home on our own and had to wait for adults to pick us up. Which often meant staying pretty late. Teachers kept warning us against the soldiers and implored us not to make any pranks, not look at them, never talk to them and never do anything which might anyhow provoke them. In front of our school, there were two tanks parked which stayed there for couple of months. Eventually, the tanks disappeared. In several months, teachers were explaining to us that all those evil soldiers were actually good because they had come to save us from counterrevolution. Which they had managed and we should love them. I understood that

adults were cowards and liars, and that there was no point in trying to achieve anything in a society because the society was total crap. I was almost nine and that wisdom had stayed with me ever since.

Force Majeure

In spring 1979, I got conscripted into the army. Whatever attempts I made to avoid it had come to no avail. Yet, I must admit, I didn't try particularly hard. I just could not bring myself to believe that the universe would be so mean to have me in an army. And not just in any army at that, but in a socialist army set to promote and defend values I hated from the depths of my heart. I deeply scorned everything related to it. I was a hippie in a communist state.

Regardless, on 28th September 1980, I deliberately packed few things and left for a town in Southern Bohemia to start my two years of mandatory military service. For boys of my age at that time, it was a pretty natural thing to do, nothing worth any particular notice. Of course, many of them would be somewhat scared, while others rather thrilled. Nevertheless, most of them took for granted that by military training, a boy becomes a man, and men they wanted to be. I did not want to be anything. I was just scared to the core. To me, it felt like leaving the world forever. I gave away all my LPs and books. The idea of ever coming back exceeded my imagination.

I walked to the train station, bought a ticket, boarded a train. I got out of the train, and my own feet carried me to the base. No one and nothing was neither pulling nor pushing me. I did it of my own will. All along the way, I was thinking about that exact fact, and could not believe it. Yet I was doing it. All along the way, I was highly present, piercingly aware of what I was doing against all my best instincts. I was pondering my fears. The fear to go. The fear of consequences if I refuse. It was a very pleasant, warm and sunny day. Indian summer. I felt the heat of the sun on my skin, as well as light puffs of cold wind announcing the autumn. Insects still hummed in the air, many treetops turned blue with ripening plums, while others already started their alchemical transformation to gold. The smell of late fruits mixed with petrol fumes of few passing cars. I wore a pair of old jeans and a short-sleeved T-shirt. At times, I shivered, the more so, the closer to the Gate, staying wide awake, while profoundly resigned at the core. I felt like the only living particle in a sheer mechanical evil Universe. Like a snowflake in summer.

I reached the Gate, and crossed the Threshold. Fully awake. Of my own will.

That day, not knowingly, I learned a profound lesson. I would realize only much later, eventually I did. It stayed in my body not in the mind.

I had learned to walk straight through fear.

Dao

Among the horrors of military life, I found a library. It was an extremely liberating and funnily unexpected encounter. Except for the librarian, there was hardly anyone in there any time, even though for a rookie, it was a place virtually inaccessible. Yet I managed to sneak in occasionally. It was just one room smelling of deserted books in metal shelves, and the librarian never gave me away. Despite the little time I could spend there, one day I found something: a Czech translation of Dao De Jing. I did not know what it was, never heard of Dao before. Few seconds of flipping through brought me to this page:

II

*Thirty spokes meet in the hub.
Where the wheel isn't is where it's useful.
Hollowed out, clay makes a pot.
Where the pot's not is where it's useful.
Cut doors and windows to make a room.
Where the room isn't, there's room for you.
So the profit in what is
is in the use of what isn't.*

I did not come back to the library any more. There was no need. Both the book and the few stanzas have stayed with me ever since.

Freedom

Eventually, I adapted to the world behind the Gate. In some ways, it was life like any another only more tightly organized with many routines. However, so long as the routines did not bring much physical pain it was not difficult to go through them after some time. You only needed to find a way to get along with others. It turned out, I was not bad at that. Each day helped. After 365 of them, I ceased to be a rookie, and that helped, too. A lot. The last summer of my service came. I didn't know that the counterintelligence was after me, but I was about to find out in the strangest possible way. The summer was devoted to various outdoor activities for most soldiers, and there were only few left behind to maintain the base. Me one of them. However, soon it turned out that I would not be assigned any standard duties, but helping in the kitchen. People started avoiding me pretty conspicuously. Eventually, someone told me. I did not know what it meant but I found out how to use it. I still had to show my presence at the morning and evening formations, but in between, everybody was just happy not to see me at all. In the morning, I would disappear from the formation before the serge could send me to the kitchen, I sneaked out from the base and wandered around the countryside. I did not do anything particular. Mostly walking, lying in the grass, clouds gazing, swimming in the river, sunbathing. It

was a great summer full of sunshine, mighty white and grey clouds high in the sky and afternoon storms with showers. The army provided shelter, clothes and food, I had neither past nor future to worry about. My past lied too far behind, there was a wide abyss between who I was before coming through the Gate and the person wandering the countryside. Future was so much out of my control that it did not even find a way to my dreams. I felt absolutely free. For two months, I lived the life of Adam in the Garden of Eden before coming of Eve. Naturally, I was kicked out of it eventually. I have never forgotten how it felt, neither where and how I had found it.

Lost Again

When the day had come to cross the Threshold of the Gate in the opposite direction, I was calm to the core. I felt little tingling all over my body, my smile was moderate but unwavering. I came through the Gate, and never turned around. I knew that was it. All the worst things of my life were over. From then on, it could only be better. The best. I had no idea what I was going to do but I did not care. I knew anything must be good. I hitchhiked to Prague, I was in no rush.

The feeling stayed with me for couple of days. Eventually it turned into a blurred chain of worries. I cannot remember when. There was a hidden lesson which took me about thirty years to discover. It is not

the worries that matter whatever they might be. There are always some and the worst worries you ever have are the ones that you are having at any given moment. What matters is how you deal with them. Your worst enemy is the expectation that you may and maybe even should get rid of worries once and for all. That one demand is an endless source of disappointment and bad feelings. As a living being, you can hardly get rid of worries once and for all. But you can get rid of that expectation. And that helps a lot.

Trash

The party took place all over the house, no one counted people coming and going. Music was loud and ceaseless. Dim lights, cigarettes and blue smoke diluted the darkness. Morning brought milky fog and creepy quiet. I woke up lying on the floor and slowly looked around. It was bad. I felt lucky not to have to stay in the house. Surely not longer than I felt like. There was trash everywhere. All kinds of trash identifiable and lots of it completely alien. Or so it seemed. Pieces of glass, fag ends, pieces of food, red spots, yellow spots, green spots, black spots, bottles empty and half full, glasses empty, broken, half full, dirty plates, litter... I projected the view within my eyesight to the entire house, and felt deeply sorry for the owner. I could not see how this should be possibly turned back into a liveable dwelling. And then, without even thinking of what I was doing, I

started to clean up the space nearest to me. I did not keep the big picture in my mind, just went on inch by inch, step by step. It brought me some sense of satisfaction, and of course, I knew I could leave any time. Couple more people woke up and, on seeing me, joined in. We had some fun guessing the origins of some unidentifiable stuff. The owner made us breakfast. We ate but did not stop working for it. In the afternoon, we sat around and had some glasses of wine. The house was clean. The way the sheer desperation had slowly turned into deep satisfaction has always stayed with me.

Peaches

In my family, there was a rule by which a single person was not allowed to consume more than two peaches a day (when there were peaches available) and two eggs for breakfast. No more. No exception. Along with some rational explanation, the limit was passed from one generation to another. I had always loved peaches in general and eggs for breakfast. I was about 26 when it occurred to me for the very first time in my life that as there was no one to check upon me, I earned my own money and stayed at my own place, I could actually buy a pack of peaches and eat them all at once. I did it. I loved it. Despite all the warnings I had received, it did not hurt. It felt great. From that day on, I just eat as many peaches as I feel like, and sometimes I am even having three eggs for breakfast. And I'm fine.

Dreams

Since childhood, I used to suffer with nightmares of two repetitive patterns. The first one was falling down off various kinds of heights. I would always wake up gasping for breath in cold sweat right before hitting the ground. The other one was even more difficult. I would spend the night anxiously hiding some awful (unspecified) crime knowing that someone was after me and just about to unmask me. It would always take me quite some time after having woken up to get rid of the hopeless feeling of a person who had done something and could not undo it.

At the age of about 27, I somehow got hold of books by Carlos Castaneda. I never cared whether they contained accounts of real events or whether they were pure fiction. The ideas simply made perfect sense to me. Inspired, I started to experiment with dreams. It did not take me long to be able to realize during a dream that I was dreaming, at least sometimes. Once I again turned up in the middle of my falling nightmare. Fully aware, if such a term can be used to refer to a dream, I decided not to escape by waking up, but instead rather hit the flat ground. I did so. At the critical moment, all went black and I slept till morning undisturbed any more. Since then on, I have never fallen off anything in my dream again.

Eventually, I got rid of the second pattern, too. For that, I had to find the body of the person I had killed,

dig it out and eat it. The body had been buried for a very long time and almost liquified. I still remember the velvet touch in my mouth, even though I am talking about dreams, of course. I had made the decision in a dream, followed it and accomplished it. By doing so, I have gotten rid of the hopeless guilt forever, even though the price was not low. Still I made it.

Here

In summer 1990, eight months after the gates of the prison of my home country opened, I left for hitchhiking to the Southeast for couple of weeks. I was penniless but didn't care much. I was moving on and on just for the motion's sake. Originally, I set off from Prague to Istanbul but eventually ended up in Crete. I fed myself with water melons and mirabelles along the roads of Hungary and Yugoslavia, with grapes in Crete. And then, at one moment, I got stuck in the middle of the island.

I was sitting on an old stone verge post near a small petrol station on a road with no traffic. It was about 50 °C, no shelter, bare slopes all around. Blurred shapes were dissolving into all-embracing pale blue and khaki and grey vibrations. Melting bitumen slowly moved down the road. I felt down, waiting for a car which was not coming. I sat there for good eight hours in sheer despair. I had nowhere to go and could not see how I should come back home.

And then an idea crepted into me: well, so long as you are you have to be somewhere, anyway, so why not here? And when you are not, nothing matters anymore. Yet so far you are. So you are here. And that's all right because that's where you always are.

I put my backpack on, and walked away towards the south coast of the island and didn't worry any more until some other kind of worries attacked me but that is a different story.

Miracles

Occasionally, miracles happen. But they never come out of blue, nor is it something you can ask for by praying. So far as I can tell by experience, miracles generate from a specific mindset. Or rather a mind-emotion-body set. When you get all those three elements aligned, you generate a certain field. In that field, anything can happen, and you do not have to do anything for it (except for keeping the three in line, of course, which is no trivial task to begin with). I guess, it is something the ancient Chinese called wu wei. Anyway.

In summer 1991, I left for six weeks of literary summer school at the Edinburgh University. I just wanted to go and off I went with 200 Deutsch Marks in my pocket and a sleeping bag in my backpack. I bought a bus ticket to London, and hitchhiked further up. I knew I did not have enough money to stay there for six

weeks, I just hoped I would figure it out on the spot somehow. In three weeks, I ran out of money completely, predictably. I did not find a job. Honestly, I did not try hard enough. I came to study and wanted to stick to it. A homeless person came to me begging with a handful of coins in his hand. Surely I was tempted to grasp the money and run. He was an old man and I always belonged to the football players with good pace. I resisted the temptation. I sat on a bench in a park thinking about my next move. I could not think of any. A passer-by stopped to talk to me, then joined me on the bench. We had a nice long talk. It turned out he had some friends who shared a flat near by. One of the flatmates recently left and they knew they could not find anyone to replace her for summer anyway. They might let me stay there for free until my summer school had finished. And indeed, they did. I always felt that if I could learn to set myself in that particular mood of that day, things would happen for me. But it is not all that simple to get into it. And it is virtually impossible when you desperately want something.

Control

Eventually, I had become the editor-in-chief of a life style magazine, managing a small bunch of editorial staff. Spending most of my working life up to then with shovelling coal into furnaces and some other odd jobs, I had no previous experience with anything like that. Yet,

in the 1990s, anything was possible in my country. I was working day and night, seven days a week for three years. I had made the magazine my child and thought that should I ease off for a minute, no one would know what to do and they would not do it properly. Then I fell ill and feverish to the extent that I could not get out of my bed for a week. I felt so miserable that I did not care about the office at all. When I reappeared there, I had found out that the world did not need me. Everything went on, smoothly and steadily.

Some time later, I was appointed the director of a state owned publishing house. In fact, I was hired as a kind of crisis manager to keep the collapsing firm running until the state would be able to find a buyer and privatize it. The job was meant for couple of months which turned out to be fourteen. Mission accomplished, I had found out that it was perfectly possible to successfully manage a company without even understanding its processes. At that time, I would often lock my office and sleep under the desk. I had made about three or four painful decisions, and apart from that, let the others hate me and do their job.

Once, a funny thing happened to me. I went to another city to negotiate some terms and conditions with a printing house. I went on my own, driving my own car. I was speeding on the motorway and violated some other traffic rules. Police stopped me. The officer asked for my papers. I handed over my driving licence and my ID card along with my corporate ID card which

got stuck between the two. The corporate ID stated the name of the publishing house and my position in it: CEO. I had not realized it. I knew what I did and had no intention to make any excuses. I was ready to accept the consequences. The officer looked at the card then at me. “You are the director of this publishing house?” “Yes.” “Aha! So now I fine you and tomorrow the newspaper writes that the police bullies people.” “No.” “I know you. It will.” “Not at all.” “Take your papers and get out of here.” I swear he did it all himself, I was absolutely ready to accept all consequences of my offences. I did not have to. Wu wei.

Another time, I walked through an empty park. It was an early summer morning, sun kept still low in the sky. After a night shower, the air was fresh with cooling breeze, the earth hadn’t started yet to fill it with the heat of the sun. Except for me, there were only two other people around: a little boy with a school bag on his back and an ageing man with a german shepherd. The city was quiet, the tree tops rustled. And then someone screamed, the dog barked, and the atmosphere got heavy with threat. The boy was running away with the unleashed dog jumping around him, the master was shouting commands in vain. Not being able to find a way to help the boy who was way too far from me and running farther and farther, I started shouting at the master who was apparently helpless and wretched himself. And so we all screamed and shouted for a while, until the dog decided to turn back to his master

and acted as if nothing had happened. The helplessness of the moment however stayed with me for a long time. I could not figure out what else should I have done. But one day the riddle was cracked. I could not reach the boy nor the dog, I could not do anything about the master, but I still should have advised the boy to run to the master, not away from him. Such a simple thing!

Expectations

I started an enterprise which eventually went bankrupt. I did not have any experience with double-entry accounting. I learned the hard way. I found out that if someone didn't pay my invoices it did not only mean that I would not receive money for my efforts, but I still had to pay VAT and income tax of the invoiced sum. Initially, I could not believe it. Then it dawned on me that it was only a way for the universe to draw my attention to the fact that I should be fully responsible not only for what I had done but also for what I demanded and expected.

I also played around with NLP at that time a lot. It worked amazingly well. I wanted money. I was twice divorced and had three children. Permanent fear haunted me that I would not be able to support them duly. Among other things, NLP teaches that when you want something you should visualize it. To make it work, you should be really concrete in doing so. Transform any abstract idea into something

unmistakeably tangible. As a token for money, I had chosen a golden credit card. Banks did not issue something like that easily then. You had to be able to prove due history on your accounts. I was offered one in six months. How successful I felt! The terms of receiving it somehow escaped my attention. In the end, it sank me even deeper.

Free Dive

Total bankruptcy turned out to be another gate to freedom. I did what I could and then just lived day by day. Having literally no money, I finally found time for long walking trips from the city centre through peripheries to the countryside. I always wondered about the shifts, the transition of the city into a landscape. I would walk twenty, thirty, forty kilometres a day. There was nothing else to do. I loved it. I also found out that what I thought a completely empty storage room and fridge kept enough food for more than two weeks. And when there was really nothing left, someone called me and offered a job. I accepted.

Memory

As a little girl, my grandma grew up in Sarajevo, which, at that time, made a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Her father was a senior civil servant who managed the entire mining industry of the newly

acquired territories in Bosnia and Hercegovina. After the Czechoslovak declaration of independence, the family moved to Prague and had stayed there ever since. Attending her fourth year, grandma went through some tough times at school. Even though Czech always remained the prevailing language of the family, she could read and write only in Croatian. She did not understand many Czech words used at school. Yet, she had survived, made up for her handicap, caught up with the class, and eventually, in many following years, forgot her Croatian completely. I only knew her as an ageing lady who kept remembering her youth in Sarajevo, her two favourite stories being how she wanted to drown herself in the local river because she did not receive the best evaluation at the annual school report (and could not drown because there was not enough water in the river), and how her school went to welcome Ferdinand d'Este and so it happened that they had become witnesses of the duke's assassination. She also gave personal tutorials in German and French languages until the age of 88, and every now and then expressed her regret that she had forgotten Croatian forever.

At the age of 95, she came down with flu. Fever took hold of her, and, as if by flipping a switch, my grandma started speaking fluent Croatian to us. It stayed with her for a week. During that time, it had become her only language of communication. Once the fever disappeared, it took the Croatian along. And my

grandma did not even know that she swapped languages. Since then on, I have been pretty sure that we never forget anything. Our memory is an endless storage place. We do not forget by throwing things away from there. We are only closing accesses or losing tracks of them. Technically speaking, any access can be always re-opened or found again. The only question remains how.

Hiddensee

I discovered the island when I was twenty five. I left for East Germany for a week to do something about my German speaking abilities. There was no particular place to visit on my mind. I hitchhiked so far as luck would take me and ended up in Schaprode, which is a village on the west coast of the island of Rügen. In the evening, I got drunk with a couple of holidaying Germans in a local pub, and left to find a place to sleep. It was my first time by the sea, so to the sea I went. In the morning, I woke up in the head of a long queue. It turned out that people waited there for tickets to a ferry to the next island with some limited access, hence the early morning queue. Well, being in the front, the next move came pretty naturally. I bought a ticket and to Hiddensee I sailed. I felt enchanted, spent there a day and promised myself to be back once.

Twenty four years later, feeling totally worn out and wasted, I decided to take some days off. I was totally on

my own. I packed up, sat into a car, ignited the engine, and pondered the direction I should turn to. At the very moment, the memory of Hiddensee bobbed up in my mind. To the North I steered.

It was late September, Indian summer, the end of season. I got myself a room in an empty guest house. For two days, I walked barefoot the fifteen kilometres long beach up and down and collected beautiful stones. The sea was cold, the sun was up, the wind was somewhat piercing. The third day I could not get up from my bed. I was sore all over the body. My bones ached. My joints cracked and would not bend. I felt like dying. I stayed in bed expecting the worst. Next morning, I jumped out of the death bed refreshed and nimble, feeling fifteen years younger. At least. I could not believe it. Then it dawned on me what happened. At many places, the beach was covered with little stones and shells. My feet received the most natural and intense reflective massage ever. I was newly born. I have been using this therapy ever since. And no, I did not ask for your approval, dear Medical Chamber.

Darkness

At the age of 49, I spent my first week in a dark chamber. Dark chamber is a closed space with bed and some essentials where someone brings you food once a day. Apart from that, there is nothing to do except for being with yourself in total darkness and silence.

During that week, apart from many other things, my eye got healed which used to be sore for twenty years. When I later asked a doctor how was that possible, the only answer I received was: maybe, it was just for the first time you had given your body enough time to solve the problem itself.

Coincidentally, some time before, I read Goethe's Faust of which this bit had stayed with me:

Faust:

Why is that old witch necessary!

Why can't you, yourself, make the brew?

Mephistopheles:

What a lovely occupation for me!

And build a thousand bridges, meanwhile, too.

It's not just art and science that tell,

Patience is needed in the work as well.

A calm mind's busy years in its creation,

Only time strengthens the fermentation.

And everything about it

Is quite a peculiar show!

It's true the Devil taught it:

The Devil can't make it though.

Pentagon

At about 50, I set myself a difficult task: to construct a regular pentagon with just a ruler and a compass. The solution has been known for millennia and is

considered easy. My point was not to impress the world but to comprehend what actually was math about. Which is why I did not look up the solution but set to find out by myself. It took me a year but it was worth every second I spent on it. Playing around with the objective helped me to understand what had escaped me for so long: that the whole math was nothing but exploring proportions and why it was important to realize that it could be just anything you chose, but once you had chosen you were bound, you had created the world below as well as the world above. It became clear to me that anything happening above it was mirrored in the interval from 0 to 1. Which kind of suggests that the Universe can be limited and endless at the same time, doesn't it?

Beauty

A white slope shone in the afternoon sun. The roofs of a village down below emanated quiet atmosphere of homeliness. A path was disappearing among tall trees with snowy treetops. Woods seemed deep, mysterious and inviting. Mountaintops were playing merry games with clouds at distance. Unspeakable beauty surrounded me. I was standing on a slope with a snowboard in my hand, and felt totally aimless, totally enchanted. And I wondered how come that I saw the exquisiteness of the world for the first time in my life. Only that I didn't know where I was, who I was and

why I was there. And I didn't care. Until a cellphone rang in my pocket.

The sound of it brought some concerns into the paradise. I answered the mobile reluctantly. A female voice at the other side started telling me things that did not make any sense. However, I gathered that the message was somehow related to the number twenty seven. I told the woman that I would remember the number and call her back once I had recollected my thoughts. I explained that I was riding a snowboard, hit my head against ice and momentarily didn't know where I was and what for. I was enjoying the landscape and waiting for my memory to come. I hung up before she could express any concerns.

The glory of the world around dimmed. All of a sudden I knew I should belong somewhere and that I perhaps had some duties. The world started to look quite ordinary, and I had some things to do. I had gained purpose. But not memory.

I looked at the houses bellow and decided that I most likely stayed in one of them. I thought it couldn't make any harm to descend, have a walk along them and see if anything familiar stroke me. I had set myself a goal: reach the kitchen! For some reason or another, it had occurred to me that once I had reached the kitchen, all my memories would come back.

I walked from one house to another. At a certain moment, my body just turned to a door. Having nothing to lose, I tried my luck. My key fitted the lock. I

opened the door, walked in, opened another door, entered a kitchen. Voila. Memories filled my mind like light fills a dark room when you flip the switch. I called my landlady, calmed her down, confirmed the number of a parking place for the car of my daughter's who was about to come and join me.

And then I thought: God! That was dazzlingly gorgeous! If this is how cats perceive the world, no wonder they are happy to sit and observe most of the time, and live just for a decade and some! You'd have to be an angel to support all that beauty any longer.

Answers

Once again material misery found me. This time it moved me temporarily from the city to lower my expenses at minimum. I found a cheap accommodation in a border town at the foot of rocky hills covered with beech and birch woods with some oaks and pines. I walked the woods and climbed the rocks pondering all the questions of my childhood. I could not understand how I could forget about them. I picked up where I left off. And then one day, a solution bobbed up as a sun over a hill. If you think consistently and go far enough, neither infinity nor limits to the Universe make any sense both time- and space-wise. Therefore there are some limits to my mind. There is always a horizon which I will never be able to cross. And there is always something beyond the horizon about which there is

nothing to think. God? Who cares about words attempting to label the unthinkable.

I accepted the paradox. I calmed down the little boy.

Laughter

Moss was glittering with drops of condensed fog. Traveling through clouds and leaves, most advanced rays of the setting sun were exploring a wet rock. Its rugged surface danced with playful shadows in front of my eyes. Valleys and cliffs and rivulets, a landscape emerged from the rock. Quartz grains shone in the sandstone like stars in the evening sky.

I was staring at the beauty with anxiety creeping all over me. I was desperately trying to capture the precious moment and did not know how to. I was scared that I might forget it. I was imploringly trying to memorize every detail which totally prevented me from enjoying it to the extent that I seized perceiving the beauty. I realized the bizarre catch and burst into laughter. Sun sank over the horizon and the fleeting moment was gone. I still keep it in my memory with some precise details, the feeling of absurd nature of my worries included.

Death

My uncle was dying. Initially, we did not know. I was coming every other day for about an hour to give him a

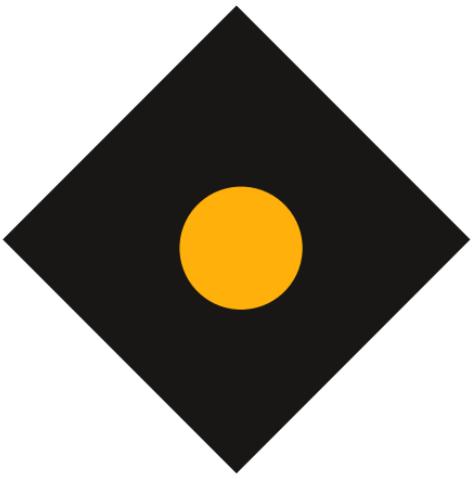
massage and help with some exercises. We thought we might be able to bring him back to normal life after a stroke. Gradually, I would come more often and stay longer. Finally, I moved in. The process took about a year. As the nursing had become more and more demanding, a home nursing service got involved. When there was just me and him we were creating a little world of ours out of actual needs and growing experience of the situation. When the professionals got fully involved, all of a sudden, everything was wrong. They introduced their own agenda and routines. Our interests clashed. I was trying to sooth my uncle and let him pass away in as much peace as available. The professionals kept struggling for his life. One day, when I was not at home, they took him to a hospital with pneumonia. Doctors put him to sleep. He slept for two months then finally left. Judging by his face, in sleep, he found the peace which so much escaped him when awake, the fighter he was.

Breath

At the age of 60, I discovered breath. Not that I would not have tried before. I practiced yoga and pranayama and meditation during many periods of my life. But it always remained just a kind of exercise for me. I did it, I quit it, then started again. It was what it was and it was not bad. But at the age of 58, I started studying Chinese medicine and Tuina massage and

discovered body. Literarily. Until then, my body was just a carrier to me. All of a sudden, it had become a part of me. I did not understand why I could not see it sooner. Anyway, it still took some time to discover breath. It came to me thanks to my tutors in one of the classes of qi gong and overall self development of a potential massage therapist. Funnily enough, the first encounter was not very pleasant as I found out that I was breathing like a complete idiot. I have been getting better ever since.





OBSERVATIONS



Once upon a time, there were two men wandering the Earth barefoot. Often, their feet got so sore that they could not wander any more. Once, fed up with frequent pain, one of them suggested: “How if we kill all cows and cover the ground with leather? Then, we could wander freely everywhere and get hurt no more.”

His fellow-wanderer pondered the suggestion carefully and, really, the idea of walking soft grounds seemed appealing. But then something occurred to him and thus he answered: “It seems like a lot of work to me, mate. How if we kill just one cow and use the leather to cover our feet?”

Do you also feel the satisfaction of the right solution? Think twice. These are but two basic problem solving patterns. Look around. Look inside. Which one do you find prevailing around you? And within?

Fear

Fear does not call for attention, it prefers to operate under cover. Still, it is a very efficient and relentless builder. Brick by brick, it is building its maze of a base. A little decision here and another there. You cannot turn this way because there is too much risk involved and you definitely need to put up a wall over here to prevent people peeping in. There is a little secret here so you need a convenient stash for it and some secret path in case you want to pick it up. And put it all under one roof so that you keep control over it. There is another secret there but that needs to be accessible to some, so you need to keep it separate from all yet still under the roof. People should see you this way, so raise a tower here and some turrets, too, to make it look attractive. There is a nice room for stuff here but it surely must stay closed, so that the stuff does not overflow. You call that order and build barriers to maintain it. Some stairs here and a ladder there so that you can pull it up in case of danger. An invisible fortress is being built around you, until it becomes really difficult to find a way out. One decision leads to another. Link by link a chain is forged. And then one day you say: I simply have to do this or that, there is no other way. With growing age, the barriers and corridors and halls and rooms and turrets become numberless. A ground plan does not exist and the only one who knows about all the passages is lounging about in the control room in the basement.

In Czech, the word for anxiety translates literally as “narrowness”. When anxiety seizes you, you feel “narrow”. Castles of Fear consist of narrow passages only, and no vistas. They are squeezed. Air cannot flow freely, only fear can. So how about breath?

Have you ever noticed how corruption of a relationship begins? Usually, you only realize when it somehow does not feel as it used to. If you think of it though, with some efforts you can trace it back to the first time you lied. Or maybe just did not mention something. Because you were afraid of his/her reaction. But then it was necessary to avoid also other things so that you don't touch the sensitive grounds. You know what thoughts do, they are ceaselessly generating wild chains of associations, a pond touches a bond, and all of a sudden, an issue is born. So if you want to keep bonds at bay, avoid speaking about ponds either. Which however means, that from now on, you should rather avoid trips to ponds, too, because who knows what might cross his/her mind. And how about lakes? You know, lakes look innocent but if it is smaller than expected, someone might say: “Hey, hey, it rather looks like a pond.” Aha. So discard lakes, too. Just to be on the safe side. And whenever she/he suggests a lake, better find some excuse not to. And if he/she insists, fight. Say it is not reasonable. There is always a reason why it should not be so. Because otherwise, she/he might ask about the bond. And then what? Aha!

Everybody has got something to hide – crooked teeth, scars, wounds, mean intentions... Fear inflates some things, pushes others beyond horizon. It distorts landscapes, produces caricatures. Have you noticed the omnipresent pattern of all stories? A person hides something and tries to keep it secret in order to prevent whatever the person imagines might happen if the secret becomes known. It is a universal plot. The Fear of Revelation – an inexhaustible source of deformation.

For the greatest part, you are using reason to rationalize actions you take in order to run from your fears, not to do anything reasonable. After all, what really sounds more reasonable than running from fears? But really, if you are being honest with yourself (you do not have to tell anyone) you find some kind of fear (or narrowness) behind a great number of decisions you make. Mostly the decisive ones, in one way or another.

However, the solution is not to get rid of fear. For a living entity, that does not seem to be ever possible. The point is to be aware of your fear and learn to live with it consciously with dignity, not as an ignorant slave. Hang around with fear, yet keep the landscape clear. Let it form, but not deform.

Perspectives

It is not things that bear meanings, it is only the relations among them. Coordinates are nothing

inherent to the world. They are your chosen way of finding your bearings in it. However, once the coordinates are set, they are binding. And they create worlds.

What is the opposite to fear in your opinion? Courage? It is a very common way of understanding fear. But not the only possible one. You can create a world based on the fear–courage polarity. It will have more to do with power than comprehension, and it will offer no deep insights. The system of interpreting things will bring about a lot of pain and it might be a difficult one to both live in and leave. You can create a world based on the polarity of fear–joy instead.

There are always weak and strong points to you. Anxiety (narrowness) forces you to defend your weaknesses. Yet, you may always choose to focus on employing and developing your strengths. When you give your full attention to problems, you are developing the problems, narrow things down. If you give your full attention to your strength, you are developing the strength. Open up. There is also another way to put it: so long as you live there is always something to worry about. To expect that you can put an end to problems by solving some is totally hopeless. By solving a problem you only make space for another one to come. So it makes not much difference to concentrate on the problems. It makes only sense to find a way how to enjoy living with them regardless.

According to a legend, St. Procopius of Sazava, teased by devil, tamed the creature and harnessed it to a plough. If you ever come to Prague, you can see them both on the Charles Bridge, it is the tenth sculpture on your left hand side when going from East to West.

Expectations

To keep control over you, Fear uses many ingenious means. Expectations belong among its most sophisticated reins. Moreover, unfulfilled expectations turn into the most delightful feed to it. Nevertheless, as much as Fear likes them, it cannot create them. Expectations are products of minds.

So, if it is just your mind who manufactures expectations, it should not be difficult to quit the production. Or do it properly, stop feeding Fear. After all, you are the master of your mind, are you not? What? Who is the Mastermind?

Can you think of a reasonable reason why there should be a unifying Theory of Everything? The golden rule, a short set of simple rules at worst, which would solve it once and for all? The ideal cluster of conditions? The Method, Holy Grail, Philosopher's Stone?

Hey, you... Try a reasonable reason, not a one growing from your fear what to do if there were no such a thing. Yet, in one way or another, you expect

some to be there. It is only a matter of discovering it, you think. There is progress, there is evolution, and even if you personally may not live up to it, one day, the humankind will find out. Because progress cannot be stopped. You think so, even if you do not realize it. It is so deep in you that even if you deny it now, your behaviour gives you away. In fact, it is your common day expectation.

*You expect that when you have succeeded, your worries are going to disappear once and for all. You expect that when you have made enough money, your life is going to be solved once and for all.

You expect that when you have met the ideal partner, you are going to be happy once and for all.

You expect that if *fill in for yourself*, you are going to *fill in for yourself* once and for all.

Repeat.

What a pattern! Truly, the only thing that matters here. The Holy Grail of Fear!

And you fail.

And you fail.

And you fail.

The ground floor of every tale.

You expect science to get you the Pill for a disease.

(Fail) You just have to find the right one. (Repeat)

You expect a Sage to show you the Way. (Fail) Just find the right one. (Repeat)

You expect Reason to introduce Order into the world. (Fail) Please, leave emotions aside! (Repeat)

Think about all the details left out in “and they lived happily ever after”.

Think about people who make great discoveries about themselves in therapists’ books, and completely change their lives. Do they “live happily ever after”?

Think about scientists who have finally discovered how it really is. Until the next generation discovers how it really is. This time really.

Meaning

There is a simple set of questions:

Where do I belong?

What is the purpose of my life?

What is the truth?

Will someone love me?

You can imagine them as computer game controls. Fear is the player, you are the character. Back and forth, right and left, up and down, shoot.

Even if you do not ask them explicitly, they keep coming under cover in common-day worries. You may be so used to them that you hardly ever realize the core issue. Dig deep, you will see. Sometimes it feels like you know. But it never lasts. You want the answers once and for all.

The entire concept of meaning is like a swamp. The more you insist to know for sure, the more you are sinking into depths of insecurity. Things become very

tight around you. You need some Grand Meaning to reach out, grasp your hand and pull you out of the mud. So you insist even more. Repeat.

Narrowness brings about more narrowness, but how if someone yanks you out and puts you into a vast plain? Into the sea? Into the space?

Anyway, have you seen The Cube? It is a science-fiction horror film by John Hensen with multiple ways of interpretation. Apart from other things, it nicely shows how indispensable can be various peculiar qualities of individuals. Anyone can be important under some circumstances. The rest is up to you. Give it a try. Cry.

Settings

There is one universal answer to the question where you are at the very moment. Any moment. The answer is: Here. It is no pun, no play on words. It is a universal truth, one of the rare kind you can always rely on without having to put up fight over it. If you ever looked for something hundred percent reliable, true, which would always stay the same way, and you could experience it with your own body and mind, Here is your thing.

There is no need for anyone to tell you “be here and now”. You are already there and, in fact, you have never been anywhere else, and never will be, regardless of where you imagine yourself to be in five, ten or twenty

years. Wherever you go geographically, whatever position you happen to place yourself socially, at any given moment, you always turn up Here. Regardless of how much you might wish to be somewhere There, Elsewhere. You will never get there, as you never get over the horizon. Any There turns into Here as soon as you get there. You are stuck in Here forever, and you better put up with it. Which is not to say that Here is a stable place. Far from that. It is never the same. It changes, it transforms. But it is the only place where you can actually do something.

When you do not know where you are, just look around. Whatever you see is the result of a long chain of your own decisions that made the Here look like as it is. So Here is also your Mirror. The picture of Dorian Gray. You can see yourself in your surroundings, your kids, in your parents, your friends, your lovers. Or the absence of them. Whenever someone upsets you, whenever you go mad about something out there, it is only because you have caught the mirror reflection of your Here. Where lurks your Fear.

Are you trying to find the Truth, fit in some predesigned Place or Role, or are you ready to take responsibility for co-creating the world?

Thoughts

You can achieve or have or become whatever you want if you give it enough efforts and perseverance. Of

course, the implications of “enough” can be a little tricky but surely: when enough becomes enough you can do or have or be whatever you want. The real catch is: Can you want what you want?

You can only want what you can think of. And you can only think of what your thoughts allow for. And you are not free to think of whatever you want unless you learn to stop your thoughts first. Can you stop your thoughts?

Why should you stop your thoughts? To prove that you are the one in control to begin with! If you cannot do it, the control is surely not yours. But whose? And who is this You without control?

Thoughts are parasites. They sneak in from all sides pretending they are yours. They settle in without asking for permissions. Immigrants. They love to procreate, too, always produce more thoughts. They swarm about like insects. Have you ever tried to control insects?

On one hand, thoughts constitute an enormous pool for all people to share. They pervade minds like floods flat lands. On the other hand, they are tightly interwoven with emotions. Thoughts stir emotions, emotions provide patterns for thoughts. Without emotions, thoughts tend to dissipate and proliferate. Harnessed by an emotion, they become streams. The stronger the emotion, the more intense the current with eddies and swirls and vortexes. Do you know any stronger emotion than fear? Can you stop thinking?

Yet, you cannot ever put up a wall against thoughts.

They pass through as easily as ghosts. The emotions they stir settle in your body. And when it comes to pain, you are lost. Thoughts are always with you. Once you have accepted them as your self, you have forwarded control to the unknown, to wherever the thoughts are coming from. Cogito ergo sum. Boom.

Three Bodies

Actually, from certain perspective, there are three bodies to you: One made of thoughts, your mind. Another one made of emotions, your heart. And yet another one made of flesh, your guts. Think about it, but do not trust those thoughts blindly. Try it out. Give it a feel. Listen.

Your physical body is a vessel, a carrier. You only think about it when you ask for performance, or pleasure. You also notice when it hurts or fails to perform. You treat it as a servant and mostly force pleasures out of it. Then it sometimes becomes a broken device that needs to be handed over to an expert to fix. Or sometimes you become the expert for yourself but treat it more or less the same way. How about another perspective?

Your physical body is just the most material part of you, the most patient one which both accepts and provides shapes, allows for and collects signals, it is your endless memory which never forgets anything. You

were taught to think about memory only as a part of the brain functions, but that is just a small part of what memory is. Your whole life is stored in your bones, muscles, sinews, veins, nerves, tissues, organs. All your sensory perceptions, your feelings, all your thoughts are there. The body is so much more than just a thing to move you from place to place, provide you with offspring, allow you to enjoy flavours of the material world or toil to keep it alive. It is a place of transformation. It is similar to stars that transform simple elements into more complex ones. Only the body works the opposite way, it transforms gross matter into more subtle energies. You do not have to go to any mystical depths to ponder that and marvel at that and be amazed. You can start with food to energy transformation but can go much further than that. However, you should rather have some control over your body to enjoy that. The more control, the more joy. Can you control your body?

Your emotional body is less material, yet still perfectly tangible. It might be difficult to get the shape of it but you are very familiar with its imprints in the physical body, as well as its power over the mental one. Regardless of your actual physical shape, emotions can make you extremely strong and invincible, as well as weak and helpless. It is also emotions that make your life worth while or miserable. When you think of it, everything you do, every single little act has no other

ultimate goal than to make you happy. You may have various ideas about happiness but in the end, it is the only and single objective of your entire life. All the things you do, however painful or uncomfortable, you do them only because you expect them to take you to some kind of happiness one day. Often, however, you do things only because you are afraid of something which is no contradiction. It only means that you seek your happiness in the absence of suffering. Like Buddha. Either way, emotions are the essence of living, and you should definitely wonder about all those claims that call for solutions without emotions. Yet, there is an interesting thing to consider: can you control your emotions? Not suppress or hide. Control. Choose.

Your mental body. Oh, dear. It is You, at your best. As you think... Do you mean those amorphous associations, blurred babble, ceaseless conclusions, deafening inner dialogues, endless flocks of fancies, grains of greed, heaps of incredulities, jerks of knowledge, lumps of loathing, moulds of memes, notorious notions, obsessive opinions, pretentious presumptions, quenchless questions, random reflections, steaming streams, tottering tropes, universal views, whispering whys, x y z? This is you? Well, try to write yourself down so that you get a glimpse of your shape, so that you can see who you truly are. Difficult? Oh, surely. You are a difficult one. A thinking animal some might say. Have you listened to them? Or maybe

you have different ideas about yourself. Can you trace the origins of them? For the most part, they are other people's thoughts, anyway. What made you adopt them for yours? And you know what is the best part? Where from do you think those others get the ideas of their own? Yet, there is something much charming about thinking. Magic, indeed. And so powerful. Creative if you can get the hang of it. Destructive if you cannot. Can you trace the sources of your thoughts? Can you touch the grounds of your decisions? Have you heard about the good old René Descartes? A philosopher who started from scratch and found the only firm spot upon which he could stand in the conclusion that he existed because he was thinking. *Cogito ergo sum*. Further on, he derived a lot of things like optics, or analytic geometry. And because many of his ideas proved truly powerful in manipulating the world, through various handy dealers, most people bought the whole package. In one way or another, his thoughts have been occupying so many minds that you mostly accept them as natural truths. But however honestly he may have tried to build on clear grounds, however meticulously he constructed his castles, how if he had failed to make the very first essential distinction? The one between thoughts and awareness? And by the way, he dissected animals alive and claimed that they could not suffer because animals did not have souls. Look whose ideas gained your permanent residence. Can you stop thinking?

Awareness

Have you noticed a peculiar thing? You have thoughts, you have emotions, you have a physical body... but who, the hell, is that You who has all these things? Do you recognize the Perpetual Traveler? Now lost in thoughts, next moment riding the dragon of an emotion, then whining about pain or chasing pleasure of some kind. You have so much at your disposal. If only you could enjoy the gifts!

Gift. By the way, have you noticed what happened to the old Germanic word in modern languages?

A present (in English), a poison (in German), a marriage (in Swedish). Now, stop it!

Do you get the point?

This is exactly what thoughts do.

Proliferate.

And where are you?

Just shut up and wait
for the most distinctive trait.

Awareness.

Try it. To be aware is different from thinking. It is different from being angry, scared, happy, pleased either. It is even different from pleasure and pain. Can you feel the difference? The tiny little gap between you and thoughts, emotions, feelings. You do not need to push those anywhere, they can stay with you, why not.

They are yours! But once you have gained a wee little space, you are aware. No, there is no other body. You have got three ones already, do not be greedy.

But is this enough to control the three? Honestly? Not. But it is a good start. The basics. And it actually feels good, too. Meet yourself. At least a glimpse of it. Before it disappears again.

Control

It is so funny how obsessed you can become about having control outside without having any inside! You can control neither your thoughts, nor emotions, not even your own body, yet you suppose you should run the world. You can be really good in manipulating the world though. But do you ever ask an interesting question: What for?

To secure your wellbeing, of course. To secure some position or maybe love. To secure some or all of those for others. Can there ever be any end to securing?

There can be no doubt about productivity of thoughts. Just look around. All those things around you were born in someone's mind before they have materialized in the world. They had come into existence as thoughts, only then became things. They are there to secure your wellbeing. Do you feel safe among them?

Things take after thoughts in some aspects like kids after their parents. For example there is never enough of

them. Things call for more things. They proliferate. You are producing them to make your living easier, the world more predictable, yet they only make it more and more complicated. Do you feel safer or happier when life is more complex? Do you feel more in control? Do you fear less?

You may always conjure up more things. But how do you maintain them? They require energy – steady feed of energy. How will you provide for it when most of your own energy is spent on acquiring more things? More importantly, each thing brings along commitments you may not have any idea about beforehand.

You have become extremely efficient in manipulating the world, the outside. You are so dazzled and impressed with your successes that you even keep trying to manipulate your inside from outside to secure control over it. You invite experts to fix your thoughts, emotions, body. You keep trying to turn everything into outside because you feel so successful in there. Yet, you are not getting an inch closer to the desired level of control. You do not feel any safer. Only more complex. And down there in the maze, the same old Fear rules. Which is why you need to keep securing.

Have you ever noticed how science works? It never provides any answers to why. It only seeks answers to how. Some would say that people developed religions to

get rid of the fear of nature which they did not understand properly. So they explained its mechanics with stories. Now that you have science you do not need such stories. So you do not have them. What you have is continual flood of thoughts with many eddies and swirls and vortexes. You call them progress and disciplines. They keep you busy, they take you along. Can you see a bank? A shore? A harbour?

Have you ever noticed how exam anxiety works? You have studied a lot but you are not sure whether you remember it all. So you keep scanning your memory to check whether everything is in its place ready to pick up if need be. However, every single moment, you can concentrate only on one thing, and yeah, it is there. But how about all the other things? So you jump elsewhere. It is there, too. But how about other things? Repeat. Your lust for control always exceeds the limits of your conscious mind. Fear comes from There.

When you sail the sea you can only control the ship, not the water and wind.

Acceptance

It is difficult to get some clear view from that maze of Fear. It is possible, though, once you have become aware of it. The first step is simple. You just accept all you see As It Is. Stop throwing judgements. Stop forging opinions. Watch. Listen. Touch. Let go.

There is a rule in martial arts: first listen to the situation, act only when appropriate. Otherwise you do what you want, and not what is needed. Moreover, unless you stop your wants, you cannot even want what you want in the first place. To stop your wants requires to stop your thoughts.

There is nothing more to say about it. Words only tend to bring about more words, thoughts bring about more thoughts. Most thinking is done for thinking's sake anyway.

Axis

Unmaintained, your three bodies tend to live their own respective lives regardless of one another. Each of them receives impulses from their own layers of reality and interact mostly exclusively at those levels. Unless you bring them to cooperation, they are tearing you apart. Part of you drifts away with torrents of thoughts, another one flutters in blasts of emotions, while the third one patiently sways in recording all that tumult. Every now and then it gives you some feedback. But you take the pain for a disease, and call an expert to fix it. Is it you, though, who orders the expert? Or is it someone else's thought?

Sometimes, however, the three bodies of yours click into place. They centre around an axis and become one. Fleeting moments as they may be, you know how it feels. If you have forgotten, recollect. At moments like

that, miracles happen. But the moments do not last.

Yet so long as you live, the axis is always there. Keep looking for it. In fact, it is always Here. The more often you manage to put it up, the longer the magic moments stay. And maybe one day... When you cultivate your inner space, the outer space grows organically out of it with a structure corresponding to your capacity. And you do not need any control over the latter.

Freedom

Narrowness brings about narrowness. A thought gives rise to thoughts in an endless chain of associations with patterns similar to streams of liquids. An emotion seizes you and drags you to its own ends. The longer you neglect your body, the more limits it sets for you. Unless you do not make space between thoughts and you, there is no place for managing the stream, for choice. Unless you do not make a space between you and an emotion, there is always something giving you a flight. Or fight. Unless you do not feel comfortable in your body, there is always something clutching you tight.

So can you make that space? Can you stop thinking? Can you choose whether you allow an emotion to give you a ride? Can you accept whatever you have become?

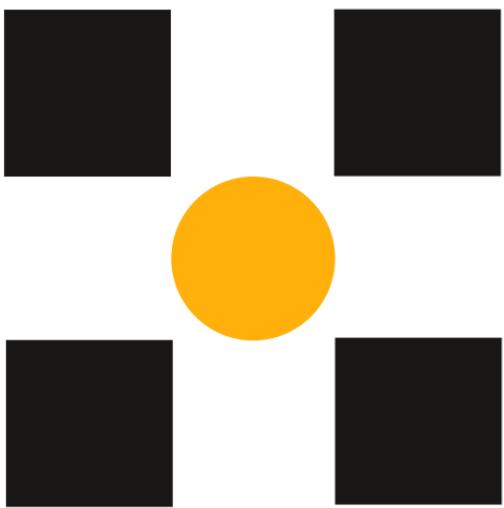
Breath

In the meantime, you breathe.

You fill in and clean out narrow paths of your body in a rhythm mirroring the actual state of your mind and heart. Your xin. Did you know that the Chinese perceive it as one thing? Xin – heart/mind.

By breathing, you let the sky (mind) suffuse the earth (body). In and out. Repeat.





PRACTICES



Disillusions and disappointments never come from outside. They are discrepancies between what you expect and what you get, and you can fine tune only one side of the equation: the expectation. The rule of disappointment is one of few unbreakable limits of the world, similar to a horizon. Which is why it needs to be simply accepted.

You've been programmed to make unreasonable expectations all the time so you definitely should not expect that you'll quit once you have realized. You should accept that, too. Make ready for more disappointments. Only each time remember they are not failures, just stepping stones in white waters. And carry on.

Find the Fear

Find it. Lose it. Find it again. Lose it again. Repeat. The losing part never means that you've got rid of it.

It only means that you've lost sight of it. So find it again. Get used to it. Make it your companion. Never make important decisions before you have touched the grounds of the fear involved. Never run from it.

Imagine yourself a teenager who beseechingly wants to join a forbidden party. Parents are not at home so there is a good chance they won't find out. Should you stay or should you go?

Find the fear and make it real. Imagine that parents are going to find out. Then consider the other part. Is it worth it? Are you ready to accept responsibility for breaking a rule? Are you? Go. Are you not sure? But maybe they won't find out after all... Forget it. If you can't do it face to face with your fear, don't do it at all. Accept. Because if you don't, you'll have to lie. You'll have to cover. You'll have to do many things you didn't mean to. You'll be building the maze of Fear's base. You'll become a prisoner in it. And you won't enjoy the party either.

You do not have to be a teenager and the issue might be different, yet the pattern stays the same most of the time.

Sometimes the fear is stronger. There is no shame in acceptance. It is the excuses that enslave you in the end, not the fear itself. The fear of fear.

You can't build or change habits overnight.

Try. Fail. Try again. Repeat.

This is a lifelong program, nothing for next week, month or year. Accept that.

Success

There is only one way to tell whether you are succeeding. It has nothing to do with achievements. It has all to do with how you feel. Regardless of age, do you feel each year or two better than the year or two before? If yes, you are on the right track. If not, you are wandering astray. At any age. Literarily.

There is only one ultimate success: to die in happiness. Until you have died, there is always time to practice.

Practice is anything you do. Practice is all you do.

Awareness

Where there is awareness, there is qi, says Traditional Chinese Medicine. It does not mean that there is no qi without awareness. In some form or another, qi is everywhere in the world. The awareness helps qi to flow. Wherever qi gets stuck, pain occurs.

The more you understand the process of whatever you are doing the better you get at it. When you do not understand it properly, regardless of how diligent or even efficient you become, you may accomplish a lot but hardly feel better. And there are always going to be undesired side effects.

Aware-ness heals, amalgamates. Aware-less leaves you exposed regardless of how hard you press to control the outside.

Only one thing matters: transformation. It is happening regardless of your will or preferences. You may let the world transform you to its own ends. Or you may become involved, enjoy the process, and bring it to the happy ending.

You can start at whatever state you currently are. Young or old, strong or weak.

But what does it mean to start when you are always Here, anyway? It means to start employing awareness. To create little spaces among thoughts, emotions, feelings – places of free choice. Opening narrownesses, letting qi flow. When you lose it, start again. Over and over. There is no shame in losing. The only shame is not to start again.

There are things you need to do, and there are things you must let ripen. And there are things you must let rot, too.

Stop fighting for truths. Truth is there regardless of you. Truth does not need you. You need truth to prove the world to be wrong. Forget it. Seek harmony.

Create spaces!

When you lose it, get back to it.

Maintain the axis, balance your three bodies.

When you lose it, get back to it.

Do it any time you remember.

Breathe.

Let go. That's it.

Ok, fine. There is always a longer way to put it. Let's have some more fun.

There are many ways to create spaces.

Mirrors

As any commander, Fear does not like open spaces. Where there is a space, there is a possibility to change direction, to choose. Space breaks the action-reaction chain. It provides important insights, too. Think about metaphors. By spotting hidden similarities between two different ideas, metaphors break the habitual way of thinking, give you a new angle, different perspective. It is the space between where inspiration is born. Therefore, metaphors are important allies of a healthy mind. Which is also why it is so good to read poetry. Or write it. Or both. Not to pretend to be a poet or intellectual. Not to pretend that you understand stuff other people do not. But to play around, practice, create spaces, gain insights. Do you like poetry?

Anyway, there are other ways to have fun with metaphors, too. Look around. Keep catching reflections. Develop metaphors. Ponder them. They are like mirrors that let you see behind a corner.

The mirror principle applies on various scales. Have you ever noticed how human-shaped landscapes reflect some modern times diseases? Maybe studying concrete housing estates may help to understand cancer. Maybe

ecology of regulated streams provides important insights into vascular diseases.

Or how about this? Your eyes are actually a part of your brain, the only external part of it so to speak. And you believe what you can see... and fear what you can't. Science operates on the same principle, have you noticed? It does its best to make everything visible and kill or at least deny all that defies the ability of the eyes/brain system to capture its existence in particular images.

No, you don't have to become a scientist, and you don't have to look for any Truth. There is nothing to fight for. The only thing that matters are those spaces. Just keep opening them but do not try to fill them in instantly. They have their own powers. Let them work in their own manner. They will work for you.

Do you want some food for thought to begin with? Think about various forms of distributing energy: Blood, electricity, water, money. They have many things in common. Observe. Ponder their qualities and modes of operation. See where it takes you. Play with it. Don't take yourself too seriously. Keep opening spaces and let them work for you. Don't try to control them. Essentially, to control means to close, to freeze, to narrow down. The very contrary of what you want at this point.

Weir

Had you ever been canoeing or kayaking, you were certainly urged not to paddle anywhere close to the crest of a weir. Particularly a high one with abundance of water. All of a sudden, the current can get pretty strong there, and once you have been drawn over the crest, you can get stuck in the rolling waters underneath and be drowned. As it had happened to many before. It can be a dangerous place, yet somewhat attractive to watch.

The rolling waters are wild. Sometimes, your thoughts and emotions can be the same. Equally stuck in vicious circles. Look up the stream. Seemingly nothing is happening there only a long stretch of almost motionless waters is quietly building up momentum. Then you glide close to the crest and things begin to happen. And then boom and roar and sucked you are in. What shall you do?

Maybe, you will try your best and swim and keep your head up as much as possible so that you can breath. Most people do so. They fight their way up. And they are drown. You can never win over the roller. It keeps pushing you back.

Essentially, there is only one way out – down. You need to understand the place and accept it. Watch the water closely. There is an outgoing current right along the riverbed. If you reach it, it will take you away. So even though your instincts push you up towards the

sky, in order to reach the way out, you must dive to the bottom first.

And how shall you do that in a life vest?

Can you, too, see the same pattern in so many other challenges of life?

Borders

Are you scared of the Other? Then you are most likely prone to be obsessed with fortifying borders. Are you scared of being deprived of Freedom? Then you are prone to be obsessed with erasing borders.

But how will blood flow in your body, if it loses its borders, your veins? And what will happen with blood if the borders are impenetrable? Think of your skin as your borders, too. Aha!

Decisions

You may sometimes feel in the corner, not seeing more than one way to act, and you do not like it but you do not see how to avoid it. At the moment it actually happens, there is nothing much you can do about it, let's be honest. But you can practice other times, so that you can always see paths behind those corners.

Sit or stand still and try to get as much as possible from your surroundings. Try to feel yourself involved as

if you were all the surroundings and your physical body just a part of it. Now start listing things you can do at the very moment. All the things the surroundings, the world, allow you to do at this very second. Don't stop at anything because it might seem nonsensical or cruel or redundant or embarrassing. For instance, you can walk away and go for miles and days. Somewhere, anywhere. Maybe you can collect all the money on your account and leave for any place you fancy. Maybe you can kill someone you hate. (Yes, if you have anything like that in your heart, it is much better to admit it and know about it than suppress it and pretend it does not exist. It will always live within your subconsciousness until you do something about it, and you cannot do anything about it unless you admit it etc.) Maybe you can go and tell someone that you love her/him. Maybe you can jump off a cliff, maybe you can jump into a river and swim away. Maybe you can strip all your clothes, walk along the street and watch the reactions of people. Maybe you can ask the first lady/man you come across to dance with you. Maybe you can wash the dishes if only you'd feel like it. Maybe you can splash a cake over someone's face. Or kill yourself. The world will surely not stand in your way. Go on with the list. There are many more things you can realistically do, wild or mild, mad or reasonable, ridiculous or hilarious. At the very moment, nothing can prevent you from doing any of it but ... your mind.

All the barriers are just in your mind, and you might

consider some of them reasonable or moral or natural ... Natural? Track them back to where all those concepts, ideas, notions really come from. You will see for yourself.

The point is to realize to what extent you are bound by the external world and to what extent by prejudices, biases, presumptions, morality, anxiety, love, desires, and black holes in your mind.

The point is not to say that you should go and do something horrible because you can.

The point is to show you that it is not the external world that prevents you from doing things, but your mind. Your action is always a matter of your choice. Because even under the most unfavourable circumstances, there are always more options than just one. And reading this text, you certainly are not surrounded by the most unfavourable circumstances.

Repeat this exercise any suitable time. Do it for as long as it suits you. You can do it in public transport, waiting for a meeting, walking through a park, sitting on the top of a mountain, anywhere, anytime when you do not need to interact with other people or concentrate on some actual work.

If you do it often enough, it will allow you to open up various possibilities when eventually facing a difficult decision.

It will also help you to understand, that your way is the one you are choosing all the time, that the place you

are standing right now is the result of many both small and big decisions you have made all along.

Writing

Your thoughts are like a stream, a brook, a rivulet, a river that takes you relentlessly away and down to the sea. Thoughts keep coming and going. Depending on the landscape, they run faster or slower, make eddies and swirls and vortexes and back-currents. There is no way to stop them and ponder, to see what they bring unless you make them stop. At least for a short while. Unless you find a nice broad place and build a weir and turn the stream into a pond for some time so that the surface can reflect the sky, clouds, the sun, the moon, the stars. And maybe even some deer that comes to have a sip.

One way of building a weir for your thoughts is writing. By writing you provide thoughts with distinctive shapes. You forge their ephemeral, liquid substance into a solid form that can be approached from different perspectives and kept for later use or improvement.

You can note down the moments of instant understanding something, unexpected insights, your epiphanies as they come. You surely have some now and then. And it is a great loss if you lose them. Not just for you, perhaps for your children, too. Why don't you collect them?

You can write a journal just to provide yourself with the opportunity to examine your thoughts, to be able to trace their origins. To see what they reflect.

You can write a book. You should write a book. Everybody should write a book at least once in her or his life to sum the experience up. Not to gain fame or inflate libraries. Just as a matter of personal hygiene. Instead of looking at the mirror.

Once you have the weir, you can build a mill race, too. And a mill. And you can build a world. Just look around and try to count all the things that have been forged in such like mills. All those materialized thoughts. They are numberless, are they not? Is it not amazing? Materialized thoughts of the others! Everywhere. Do you like them all? Do you feel safe among them?

But you know how it is with weirs. They cannot keep the stream forever. So be careful at the crest. You can pass through a sluice. But if you are sucked into the rolling waters underneath the dam, don't forget to dive. Sink. Go to the bottom. It is the only way out.

Dreams

Dreams make up about one third of your life. They are like deep pools in the streams of your thoughts and perceptions and emotions. Their higgledy-piggledy nature is actually extremely valuable as it liberates you from all kinds of order imposed on your mind during

daylight. They look nonsense because they do not follow your accepted logic. Which is why so many well disciplined people don't pay much attention to dreams and rather choose to lose about a third of their lives. Or more. Yet, dreams are real. Remember the good old Carl Gustav Jung? Wirklich ist was wirkt, he wrote. Literarily: Real is what works. It doesn't sound so well in English but the meaning is clear: Whatever makes a difference in your life, you'd better take it for real. You only need to be able to make use of the freedom provided which is never easy. Ask a released prisoner.

Start with writing dreams down. It can get pretty difficult as you cannot stick to a storyline. Don't you care. Just jot down whatever you recover. Do it in any haphazard way, gradually, you will find your own method if you stick to it.

Look for pieces that reflect simple encounters of your daylight life. Get use to the way they appear. Approach it as a puzzle and enjoy the discoveries.

Follow feelings. How did you feel under what circumstances and what does that reflect? Don't push for interpretations. Let it ripen in you.

It will all pay off in due time. You do not need any more instructions. Just pay attention to your dreams and they will themselves reveal what is needed.

In dreams, your three bodies exchange all they cannot exchange under the supervision of your adopted mechanisms of control, your consciousness. If you want to meet the You that has them, this is a good space.

But really, don't push at all. If you insist to dig out some important meaning from every shit you dream about, you only make the castle of your Fear more complex. Just observe and wait. The dream world will unfold itself eventually, the meanings will blossom like rare flowers. Care and patience are all it takes.

Emotions

Do you often try to solve problems without emotions? You know, without emotions, problems actually do not exist, as well as meaning to life. So cool down. Fear is always there. You won't fool it by denying. It outsmarts you just any time.

There is no direct way to control emotions. Particularly not by thoughts. Don't you believe? Try for yourself. Observe how thoughts stir emotions. Try different thoughts and compare. Then try to pick an emotion and stir it by thoughts. Then pick another one. Play with it. You won't be able to achieve much, but it is a useful exercise. Firstly, it provides you with some insight. Secondly, it creates tiny spaces between you and emotions. In this respect, any help is welcome. Because the first thing you can do for yourself is not to jump on an emotion instantly.

When it comes you need to stay put. Welcome it. Address it. Call it by its name. Hello, Anger! Hi, Fear! Then observe the feelings it creates in your body. Focus at the physical side of it exclusively. Observe the pain,

the flame, the rush or what not. Observe its intensity, quality, motion. Feel it to the extremities of your body. Realize its paths. Go into minute details. Give it names of colours, textures, shapes, sounds. Follow the feelings so long as you manage. Do it any time with any emotion that tends to overwhelm you, with any emotion you realize. Pleasant or painful, don't discriminate. Do it often. See where it takes you.

Enjoy the gaps between you and emotions.

Meditation

The most powerful tool of all. But only if you know what you are doing and don't choke yourself with fancy expectations. Actually, it is best not to expect anything.

Just sit still, upright. Keep your spine and head straight. Relax muscles. Feel gravity pulling down. Feel your spirit raising up against it. Feel the two opposite energies merge. Feel breath as a weaver that knits the two together. This is how your body is created. Every moment. Again and again. Anew and anew.

Then observe your thoughts. Wait for them to stop. If you forget what you are doing and your thoughts give you a ride, never mind. It is a part of the game. It is exactly why you do it. Because your thoughts are like that. Just start observing them again and wait for them to stop. It will be a very long wait. But it does not matter. Waiting for your thoughts to stop is good. It provides your brain, heart and guts with time to align

along the axis. Let it happen. Don't control the process. Don't do anything. Wait. Learn to wait for a long time.

Or don't sit upright just observe your thoughts. Meditate anywhere. Anytime. Short times, long times. Observe your thoughts and wait for them to stop. Create a space between you and your thoughts. Let the space grow. Make it a habit.

Enjoy the gaps among thoughts. Enjoy the gaps among emotions. Enjoy the gaps between you and all of them.

Sit still and listen. There are many layers of sounds. Distant sounds and close sounds. Noises and songs. Listen to all of them, make them a symphony. Listen to the sounds within your ears. Whistling, humming, buzzing, rustling, crackling. Listen to your heart beat underneath. And still deeper, there is silence. Sink through all the layers of sounds and touch the silence. You can do it anywhere, regardless of whatever noise around. Deep down, the silence is waiting anytime.

Enjoy the silence as you enjoy the gaps among thoughts and emotions.

Don't concentrate on any presumable results. Your objective is to do these things not to achieve defined goals. Taming fear may take different shapes with different people. Moments of deep quiet joy are the

only signs that announce its coming. However, those are only born from activities, while achievements bring about moments of shallow wild joy. The latter is a different story. Fleeting moments of shallow wild joy always come with price tags. Deep quiet joy is priceless.

Breath

In the meantime, breathe. Allow the sky to mix up with the earth of your body. Feel the air clearing inner passages, creating spaces. Feel for blockades and learn to release them gently. Feel the air finding more and more spaces filling the body. Do it any time. Short times, long times. Don't control, don't press, don't push. Release and let go. Develop a habit.

Keep your nasal cavities clear. All the time.

Find a way.

Breath is the key to all three of your bodies. It reflects their precise states at any given moment. Do you want to know about the state of mind/emotion of someone else's? Just check their breath. Make it a game to play when you are bored in public. Check the way people breathe, see what it tells you about them. Learn to distinguish rhythms and depths, speeds and gaps. Compare their breathing patterns to the patterns of their gestures, of their speech. Make it a habit. Apply for yourself.

But the relationship between breath and bodies is

mutual. Through breath you are constantly creating spaces. It is the key to understanding the rhythm of emptying and filling which applies to all things in the universe.

Through breath you can also concentrate thoughts so that you can more easily think about what you want to think about, rather than what your stream of thoughts brings you to think about.

Through breath you can tame your emotions so that you can drive the ride they are giving you.

Through breath you can ease off or even get rid of physical pain.

Through breath you can align all three bodies along the axis.

Breath control can be learned to an important extent. Start working on it anytime. Practice it any time. Keep getting back to it anytime.

Whenever you don't know what to do, concentrate on your breath.

To concentrate on your breath means to be aware of it to begin with. Don't try to teach it weird tricks until you can enjoy it. Be aware of how it works. Be aware of its passing and be aware of the places where it gets stuck. Try to release the blocks from within. Gently. It doesn't matter that you don't know how initially. Just concentrate on the block and relax. Feel the breath pushing a wee bit further. Then further again. If it doesn't happen, don't give up. Try another time. Keep practicing. It is all that matters.

Axis

Keep returning to the axis. It is an ancient ritual known to any culture. You may call it a pray time, a mass or what not. There are many forms, however the traditional ones often turn out to be somewhat void. If you regularly repeat a mantra or a prayer the meaning of which you've forgotten long time ago or even may never even have perceived properly, well yeah... it may help with time management. If you stick to a particular time strictly, that is.

On the other hand, if you do it with full awareness, it helps you realize what you are doing any time of day or night. And that helps a lot. Which is why it can be better not to formalize it much, so that you avoid the empty mechanics. There are very few things of real importance. Remind yourself often that it is good to:

Accept the Horizon.

Find yourself between your thoughts, not in them.

Maintain the axis.

When caught under a weir, sink to the bottom.

Keep your nasal cavities clear.

Keep wondering.

Breathe.

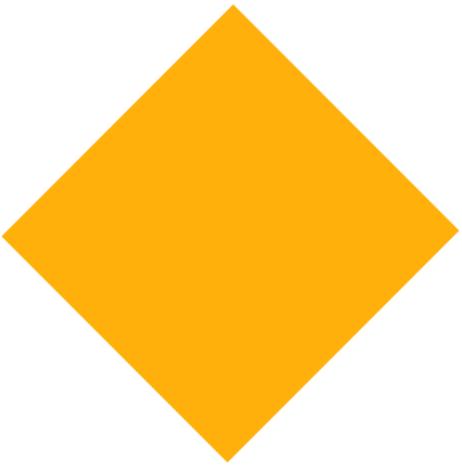
You can do these things or you don't have to be bothered. The choice is always yours. If you keep getting back to doing them, eventually, your fear will

become more of a guide rather than an enemy. It will allow you to step outside its castle, to enter parallel worlds. Step by step, you'll start gaining control over your inner life. Along the process, the need to control the outside will be fading away. You will learn to steer your ship even in stormy weather on rough seas. And if you lose control, you will just trust the ship. Which is all you need.

Betra er að þurfa lítið en að hafa mikið, say the Icelanders.

There is not much more to say. You like to read because it keeps you from doing things. But there is time to read, and there is time to act. There is time to let ripen, and there is time to let rot. There is always time to breathe, until there is no more time to breathe.

Then you are perfect.





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