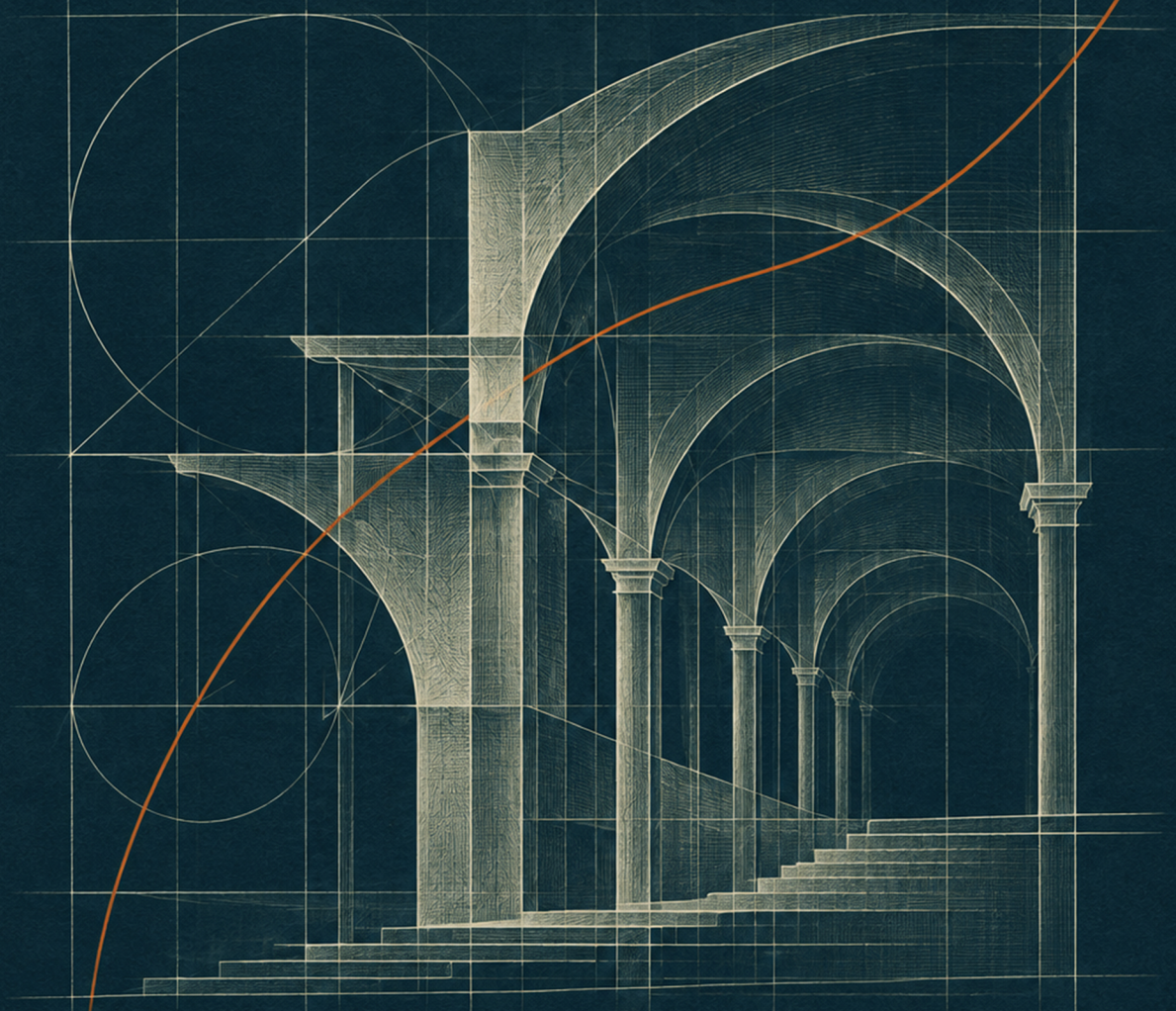
MIKHAEL K. SHAH

The Intelligence of Living



Eight Essays on Health, Human Nature and Creation

COLLECTED ESSAYS / 2026

The Intelligence of Living

Eight essays on health, human nature and creation

Mikhael K. Shah

A NOTE ON THE COLLECTION

What becomes possible when health is understood not merely as the absence of disease, but as the harmony of an entire human existence? That question runs through these eight essays, written from the perspective of more than twenty-five years in the healing arts and a practice that has extended into the development of individuals and enterprises.

The collection begins with the human being: the nature of desire, the meaning of health and the relationship between self-discovery and creation. It then turns to the work of perception — to what a tension holds, what an intention conceals and what the exercise of competence demands. The final essays bring these investigations into the life of an enterprise and the continuing education of its creator.

Though each essay stands on its own, together they reveal the continuity of a single investigation. The professional and the personal belong to the same life; what is discovered in one territory can illuminate another.

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ESSAY 01

A Greater Vision of Health

As a young man working as an orderly in hospitals, I often asked elderly people what they had learned from life. Rich or poor, educated or otherwise, most eventually offered me some variation of the same wisdom.

Health is the most important thing in life.

What fascinated me was that hardly any of them could tell me what health was. They had spent forty, fifty, sometimes sixty years pursuing everything imaginable, often at the expense of the very thing they now proclaimed to be the most important.

There was something rather absurd about this.

I was young enough to have much of my life ahead of me, and it occurred to me that I might benefit from investigating this matter before arriving at the same conclusion under less favourable circumstances.

So I decided to study health.

I could scarcely have imagined where that investigation would lead me. More than twenty-five years later, it has become clear to me that understanding health requires an understanding of life itself. And although the nature of my professional activities has changed enormously over the years, I have never abandoned my original interest.

Health remains the only thing that fundamentally concerns me.

The Intelligence of Life

Much of what we call health is an assessment of how well we are functioning. We examine the organs, measure various parameters, evaluate our physical and psychological condition and establish whether anything appears to be wrong.

These are useful investigations. They tell us something about the condition of an organism. But they do not necessarily tell us what health is.

Through my years in the healing arts, particularly through working directly with the human body, I became fascinated by the relationship between alignment and

circulation. An organism in which the various parts are working in harmony possesses a freedom of movement that is noticeably absent in an organism continually compensating for its own internal disorder.

There is a difference between an organism that is alive and one in which life is circulating freely.

Health is alignment. It is the harmony through which the intelligence of life circulates and finds expression. Disease, in its various manifestations, became for me an invitation to investigate where and how that circulation had been compromised.

But why should this understanding stop at the boundaries of the physical body?

A human being thinks, desires, dreams, loves, creates and participates in the world. He develops relationships, establishes families, builds enterprises and brings things into existence that may continue living long after he is gone.

Are these activities supposed to belong to some other department of life?

The further I pursued my investigation, the less sense these divisions made to me. I could not adequately understand the health of a man without understanding the life he was living. And I could not understand the life he was living without investigating what was moving him.

The Four Puruṣārthas

Indian philosophy offers us four wonderful terms through which to investigate the human experience: *Kāma*, *Artha*, *Dharma* and *Mokṣa*, collectively known as the *Puruṣārthas*.

Desire, material prosperity, the greater order of life and liberation.

What I find particularly unfortunate is the manner in which these are so often presented and understood as separate pursuits. As though we were dealing with four different affairs that a human being needs to attend to, giving each its appropriate place within the curriculum of life.

I have never been able to make sense of this separation. There is only one life being lived, one human being living it, and something moving that human being through every phase of his development.

Consider something as ordinary as a lemon seed.

Within that seed is a concentration of essence. Its desire to become a tree is not something that has been introduced into it. It does not need to attend a seminar on discovering its purpose. Nor does it need to compare itself with seedlings that have become particularly successful mango trees.

Its desire is inseparable from what it is.

This is *Kāma*.

We tend to understand desire through the objects of our desires. But these are often rather superficial expressions of something much deeper. The closer we come to our own essence, the more we discover that what we genuinely desire cannot be separated from what we fundamentally are.

Now, the seed may carry the possibility of producing thousands of lemons, but as a seed, it cannot produce a single one. It must develop roots, establish a trunk, extend branches, acquire leaves and become capable of drawing nourishment from its surroundings. An enormous amount of development is required before what it carries within itself becomes available to the world.

This is *Artha*.

The generation of wealth, in its most beautiful sense, is precisely this movement. Something initially concentrated within an individual acquires the means through which it can become materially available to others.

The development of intelligence, skill, resources and productive capacity belongs to this dimension of life. There is something magnificent about a human being learning how to give substantial expression to what he carries within himself.

But the lemon tree does not exist alone. It belongs to an ecosystem. The soil nourishes it, the insects participate in its reproduction, its leaves alter its surroundings, and its fruit becomes nourishment for other forms of life.

The tree belongs to a much greater movement of intelligence.

This is *Dharma*.

I use the term here in a much greater sense than morality, social responsibility or one's obligations to a community. Human society is only a small part of Nature. And by Nature, I mean the extraordinary living intelligence through which the entirety of this existence is being generated and sustained.

The lemon tree does not need to become charitable in order to participate in the greater life of the forest. Its very existence, when harmonious, is already a contribution.

And then there is *Mokṣa*.

The Sap

Where, in this image of the tree, would we place *Mokṣa*?

At the end of its life? Somewhere beyond the production of fruit? Perhaps the tree ought to spend its younger years producing lemons and devote its retirement to the investigation of liberation.

I would place *Mokṣa* in the sap.

It is the deepest impetus moving the seed from the very beginning, circulating through every stage of its development. It is present within the desire to emerge, to grow, to extend beyond its present boundaries and to give expression to what it carries.

At the very depth of the human being resides an extraordinary desire for freedom.

We are all intimately acquainted with this desire, although very few of us recognize its depth. We want freedom from our circumstances, our inadequacies, our fears and the countless limitations through which we experience ourselves. Every time we encounter a boundary, something within us wishes to go beyond it.

Why do you suppose human beings are so fond of intoxicants?

For a few hours, the familiar boundaries of the individual can seem to dissolve. The man who has spent his entire week being somebody can finally enjoy the experience of not having to be him.

Now that is interesting.

We could dismiss the phenomenon as a weakness of character, but we would miss something fundamental about the creature indulging in it. He is looking for freedom, even if the means through which he seeks it eventually establish another form of bondage.

The aspiration is genuine. His understanding of it is limited.

A man believes that more money will give him freedom. Another believes that acquiring knowledge will do it. Someone else travels the world searching for an experience sufficiently extraordinary to liberate him from the rather ordinary experience of being himself.

The objects of their desires differ. But at a certain depth, something very similar is moving them.

What happens when we pursue this desire to its very source? What is it within us that wants freedom from every form of limitation, including the limitations of the very identity through which we presently understand ourselves?

This is the territory of *Mokṣa*.

And it is not a territory we enter once we have finished living. It is the deepest movement within the life we are already living.

This is why I cannot separate the four *Puruṣārthas*. *Mokṣa* is not the fourth item on a list of human aspirations. The aspiration toward absolute freedom is present within all the other aspirations, however little the individual understands what he is actually seeking.

The sap has been circulating all along.

Learning to Dream Again

One of the great difficulties in working with human beings is that, unlike the lemon seed, they have a rather remarkable capacity to become confused about what they are.

A man spends years watching other people live, listening to other people speak and absorbing images of what a desirable existence ought to look like. Eventually, he assembles a vision of his own future from this material and becomes passionately committed to realizing it.

He may have borrowed absolutely everything in that vision except the enthusiasm with which he pursues it.

This is something I encounter regularly.

An individual comes to me with an enterprise he wishes to develop. He has ideas, ambitions and sometimes a rather impressive collection of spreadsheets. What remains remarkably unclear is what any of it has to do with him.

Before attempting to improve the quality of his vision, I am interested in discovering whose vision it is.

There is a wonderful term in Ayurveda, *Svastha*, meaning to be established in oneself. It expresses something fundamental about health and is particularly relevant to the recovery of our capacity to dream.

When an individual is disconnected from himself, his imagination has very little access to the substance of his own nature. What is it going to work with? Everything that has been introduced into him from the outside.

Part of the work of a healer consists in helping the individual come home.

In my years working with the body, I became particularly attentive to the movement through which a person settles into his pelvis, into that basin of the organism which I sometimes refer to as his home base. There is something beautiful about witnessing a human being gradually relinquish the effort of maintaining the person he believes he needs to be.

Beneath all that activity, he begins to feel himself.

Of course, there is often a considerable amount of housekeeping to be done before he gets there. We accumulate fears, ambitions, emotional tensions and extraordinarily elaborate ideas about ourselves. Some of these we have spent decades maintaining.

But as the noise subsides and the individual becomes more established within himself, his relationship with desire begins to change.

He starts discovering things that actually move him.

These discoveries are rarely as theatrical as popular accounts of finding one's purpose would have us believe. They can be remarkably simple. Something the individual has always loved, something he has always been curious about, a particular quality of experience that has animated him throughout his life.

As this material becomes more accessible, his imagination changes. He begins to see possibilities that have a genuine relationship with his nature.

He is learning to dream again.

My function is not to furnish him with a dream. It is to help him see his own more clearly.

From there, we take a step. Then another.

As he participates in the world, he discovers more of himself and more of the reality within which he is operating. His vision acquires greater substance, and we can begin refining it with an intelligence that would not have been available to us before he started.

A compass is tremendously useful. But it cannot provide you with the experience of walking.

When the Seed Bears Fruit

There are plenty of people who can help an individual develop a successful enterprise. Some possess extraordinary commercial intelligence. They can recognize opportunities, organize resources and understand markets in ways that are of enormous benefit to the people with whom they work.

My concern is with what the enterprise means within the life of the human being creating it.

Is it giving expression to something he genuinely carries within himself? Is he developing through the process of bringing it into existence? Is what he produces enriching the lives of others? Is the undertaking nourishing him, or is he gradually being eaten alive by his own creation?

These are questions of health.

I find it rather strange that we have developed entire professions dedicated to helping people build businesses, alongside entirely different professions dedicated to helping them recover from the experience of building them.

Why have we accepted this arrangement?

An enterprise should be a remarkable opportunity for a human being to discover himself. It presents him with the necessity of developing intelligence, understanding others, taking responsibility, cultivating patience and learning how to bring something from the realm of possibility into material existence.

The enterprise itself can become a work of art, a manifestation of the individuality of its creator and a generous contribution to the world in which he lives.

And generosity, here, has very little to do with how much money he eventually decides to give away. I am talking about the nature of the entire movement.

The tree's development and its capacity to nourish other forms of life belong to the same process. A healthy tree becoming more fully what it is can become increasingly bountiful.

I am interested in helping someone create wealth through a process that enriches him, enriches the people participating in its creation and enriches the world into which that wealth is introduced.

Not simply by becoming more efficient, more resilient or more capable of tolerating the pressure he has generated for himself.

By becoming more fully alive.

For me, there is no separation here between healing, self-realization, self-actualization and the creation of wealth. We are dealing with the development of the same human being.

Beyond the Enterprise

When I was younger, I possessed much of the same enthusiasm that animates me today. What I lacked was perspective.

Give a young warrior a sword, and he may decide that the most interesting thing he can do with it is go to war with his neighbours. The elder understands the enthusiasm of the young warrior, but he also understands something about war, neighbours and the life the young man will have to live once the excitement is over.

The warrior does not need less vitality. He needs a greater vision.

This is what maturity has brought to my practice. When someone presents me with an enterprise he wishes to develop, I see it within the larger trajectory of his life. It may occupy him for five years or fifty. He may become extraordinarily successful through it, or discover something through its creation that takes him in an entirely different direction.

Who is to say what life has in store for him?

There is always something after.

I would be doing him a disservice if, in helping him build his enterprise, I encouraged him to become so identified with it that he could no longer recognize what else life was asking of him.

His business is an expression of his life. It is not his life.

The distinction becomes particularly important when one understands that the deepest thing moving this individual is the desire to become free.

A Bountiful Existence

The seed, the sap, the tree, the fruit and the forest are not separate affairs. They belong to one movement of life. To understand the health of any of them, we must understand something of their relationship with the whole.

This is the vision I bring to the individuals with whom I work.

I have no particular interest in determining what kind of tree somebody ought to become. Nor do I believe that every human being should establish an enterprise, accumulate considerable wealth or dedicate his life to any particular form of activity.

What interests me is the possibility of a man becoming so genuinely established within himself that what emerges through his life is an expression of his nature, rather than a continual compensation for his estrangement from it. That he can give himself fully to the experience of living without being consumed by what he creates. That his existence becomes bountiful, nourishing him, the world and the greater life to which he belongs.

And that, through all of this, he comes to discover more of the extraordinary mystery that has been moving him from the very beginning.

Those elderly people I encountered as a young man were right.

Health is the most important thing in life.

I simply had no idea, at the time, how much life there was in health.

ESSAY 02

The Art of Being and Becoming

My interest in business has never been exclusively entrepreneurial. I have created businesses and participated in the development of enterprises, but these activities have always belonged to a greater undertaking: the discovery of what a human being is and the development of the faculties through which that nature finds expression in the world.

I cannot separate the development of an individual from the development of what genuinely proceeds from that individual. Both interest me, and much of my work concerns the relationship between them.

It is the relationship between being and becoming.

Two Sides of the Same Coin

Consider a seed. Within that seemingly insignificant object resides the possibility of an extraordinary organism. It possesses a particular nature, and through its relationship with the environment, that nature gradually acquires expression. Roots develop, branches extend, leaves appear, and eventually the tree bears fruit.

What it becomes is an expression of what it is.

There are two fundamental movements within the development of a human being. One concerns discovering who and what we are, understanding our nature and establishing a harmonious relationship with ourselves and with life. I refer to this as self-realization.

The other concerns developing the faculties through which our nature can acquire expression and contribute something of value to the world. This is self-actualization.

In the traditional language of the feminine and masculine principles, the feminine movement is inward and the masculine movement is outward. One concerns the discovery of one's nature; the other concerns its manifestation. Like

Yin and Yang, these are complementary movements within the same human being, irrespective of sex.

I cannot conceive of self-realization independently of self-actualization. The distinction allows us to understand their respective functions, but their development is inseparable. As we discover ourselves, something seeks expression. Through that expression, we discover something further about ourselves.

The seed cannot reveal the entirety of its nature independently of becoming a tree.

Discovering Ourselves Through Living

There is a tendency in certain spiritual environments to concern oneself almost exclusively with the inward movement. One meditates, investigates one's thoughts, observes one's emotions and gradually develops an understanding of oneself. These are valuable undertakings, but there are aspects of ourselves that will remain inaccessible until we participate more fully in life.

How does one discover the nature of one's generosity without encountering circumstances in which generosity can find expression? How does one understand one's creative faculties without creating? How does one discover the quality of one's discernment, patience or capacity to assume responsibility without entering relationships and undertakings that require them?

There are things about ourselves that we cannot discover independently of the circumstances through which they become operative.

A person may spend years investigating himself and acquire considerable inner understanding. Yet when he enters an intimate relationship, assumes responsibility for others or attempts to bring something into existence, entire dimensions of himself become available for investigation that were previously inaccessible to him.

His self-realization has not ended. It has entered another territory.

This is where the relationship between the feminine and masculine movements becomes particularly interesting. Something discovered inwardly seeks outward expression, and the experience acquired through that expression returns the individual to himself with a greater understanding of his nature.

Each movement enriches the other.

It is not sufficient to know something of who we are while leaving the possibilities inherent in our nature undeveloped. Until those possibilities acquire expression, much of what we are remains unknown to us.

Being has its activity.

A Culture of Accomplishment

The opposite phenomenon is perhaps even more familiar. An individual becomes extraordinarily active in the world without establishing much of a relationship with himself. He develops numerous skills, acquires knowledge, establishes relationships and perhaps builds an impressive enterprise.

But what exactly is being expressed through all this activity?

Much of contemporary entrepreneurial culture is concerned with developing the individual's capacity to produce, accumulate and expand. Considerable intelligence has been devoted to understanding how one becomes more productive, financially successful, influential and effective in pursuing one's objectives.

Comparatively little attention is given to the individual pursuing them.

What is particularly striking is how often this entire field of activity is presented as human development. A person becomes financially successful and subsequently begins teaching others how to live, how to think and what constitutes a meaningful existence, as though his ability to accumulate wealth had necessarily provided him with a profound understanding of life.

Commercial intelligence is commercial intelligence. It does not automatically confer self-knowledge, emotional maturity or an understanding of human nature.

A person can spend thirty or forty years constructing an enterprise that bears remarkably little relationship to his actual nature. His responsibilities increase, his material circumstances improve, and he acquires greater influence over the world around him.

Yet the deep satisfaction he anticipated never quite arrives.

So he enlarges the undertaking. He enters another market, acquires another business or pursues another form of recognition. There is always something further to accomplish and consequently very little time to examine the absence of satisfaction accompanying what has already been accomplished.

The activity continues, and the emptiness continues with it.

His enterprise may provide employment, generate considerable wealth and produce things of genuine utility. It may acquire substantial value within the world while remaining remarkably devoid of meaning within his own existence.

My difficulty is not with capitalism, entrepreneurship or the accumulation of wealth. They are particular dimensions of human activity. What concerns me is their elevation into a purpose of human existence.

An economic system can function without requiring those participating in it to develop self-knowledge. My work cannot proceed from that separation.

When commercial accomplishment becomes a substitute for selfhood, the relationship between the creator and his creation has been inverted.

The man needs what he has created to tell him who he is.

Where Does the Energy Come From?

One of the things I have become particularly attentive to over the years is the source of the energy moving an individual.

Two people may appear equally industrious. Both may work long hours, possess remarkable discipline and accomplish substantial things. Yet what animates their respective activities may be fundamentally different.

In one individual, the impulse to act proceeds from something genuinely alive within him. There is inspiration, enthusiasm and a deep satisfaction in participating in the creation of something that has meaning for him. The undertaking may require considerable effort and perseverance, but there is a fundamental coherence between the individual and what he is doing.

In another individual, the work itself possesses very little capacity to animate him. Something else must continually be introduced. Anger, competition, greed, lust, attachment or the need to establish his importance provide the stimulation through which he mobilizes himself.

When the effects of one stimulus diminish, another must take its place.

He may appear to possess tremendous energy. What interests me is the manner in which that intensity is being sustained.

There is energy arising from inner alignment, and there is energy generated through friction.

A person can become extraordinarily productive through continually sustaining a state of inner conflict. The frustration of not being who he believes he ought to

be, the anger associated with what he believes the world owes him, or the appetite for recognition can all become powerful instruments of mobilization.

But his organism participates in that arrangement.

During my years in the healing arts, I repeatedly encountered individuals whose highly productive lives coexisted with considerable physiological tension, anxiety, digestive disturbances and persistent difficulties sleeping. Such symptoms have numerous possible causes, but what became particularly apparent in certain individuals was the extent to which their continual need for stimulation was accompanied by an equally persistent inability to settle.

They could accomplish extraordinary things, yet they could scarcely sit with themselves.

The anger, ambition and agitation were not simply disturbances within their existence. They had become part of the machinery through which they sustained it. To surrender that machinery would mean confronting an emptiness they had spent considerable intelligence avoiding.

There is a profound difference between being animated by something genuinely alive within oneself and continually attempting to produce the sensation of being alive.

One proceeds from an intimate relationship with oneself. The other requires the continual maintenance of a particular distance from oneself.

That distance can become remarkably expensive when maintained over the course of an entire existence.

Giving Expression to What We Are

It is within this understanding that I approach business.

When an individual establishes a more intimate relationship with his nature, certain questions naturally arise. What does he perceive? What interests him? What qualities and capacities reside within him? What does he genuinely have to offer? And how can these things acquire a form through which they contribute something of value to the lives of others?

For some individuals, the answer may involve providing a personal service. For others, it may involve creating a product, establishing an institution or developing an enterprise through which hundreds of people eventually work together. It may have nothing to do with business at all.

Self-actualization does not prescribe a particular occupation or scale of accomplishment. Its significance lies in the relationship between the individual's nature and the form through which that nature finds expression.

But discovering what one genuinely carries within oneself does not automatically establish the competence necessary to make it available to others.

A person may possess a beautiful sensitivity to the human body without having developed the knowledge or technical faculties necessary to become a competent practitioner. Another may possess considerable creative intelligence without understanding how to organize the circumstances through which his creations can become available to the world.

The outward movement requires its own education.

Just as the feminine movement requires the development of faculties through which one can investigate and understand oneself, the masculine movement requires the development of faculties through which one can give expression to what has been discovered.

One must learn how to communicate, establish relationships, organize resources, assume responsibilities and understand the environment within which one wishes to operate. If the undertaking is an enterprise, one must also understand its economic reality.

A beautiful intention does not exempt an individual from learning how to construct a viable business.

Developing these competencies is not separate from human development. It is part of it.

The construction of an enterprise can therefore become a remarkably rich territory of self-realization and self-actualization. Through the practical requirements of giving expression to what he carries within himself, the individual refines his understanding, extends his capacities and develops increasingly intelligent relationships with the world.

Something that initially existed within him gradually becomes available to others.

This is where the undertaking begins to bear fruit.

The Work of Integration

I have never found it particularly useful to establish rigid boundaries between the intimate and commercial dimensions of my work with individuals.

Someone may approach me because of difficulties within his relationships, his sexuality or his understanding of himself. Another may approach me because of a difficulty within an enterprise or an inability to bring a particular vision into existence.

Their circumstances differ, as may the direction in which our work initially proceeds. But the fundamental undertaking remains the same.

An individual struggling to give expression to himself may need to turn inward and discover something about his nature. Someone who has spent considerable time investigating himself may need to turn outward and develop the capacities necessary to participate more fully in life.

What needs to be established is the appropriate relationship between the two movements at that particular moment in the individual's development.

This explains why my involvement in business has never represented a departure from my work in human development.

When I participate in the development of an enterprise, I am interested in its economic viability, its organizational intelligence and the possibilities available to it. I am interested in refining its direction, establishing greater coherence between its constituent parts and contributing to the creation of something genuinely valuable.

But I am equally interested in the individual through whom the enterprise acquires its direction.

What is he giving expression to? What is he discovering about himself through his work? What capacities are becoming available to him? And what is becoming available to others through the development of those capacities?

The enterprise and its creator develop through their relationship with one another.

When this relationship is harmonious, the work acquires a different quality. The individual no longer needs to continually compensate for the distance between himself and what he is doing. Inspiration is not something he must constantly manufacture through stimulation. It arises from his relationship with the undertaking itself.

There is considerable pleasure in this, and a deep satisfaction in recognizing something of one's nature in what has acquired an existence beyond oneself.

It is this relationship between human development and creation that interests me.

The Fruit

The beauty of a tree is that it does not need to become something other than itself to contribute something of value to the world. Its contribution arises naturally through the development and expression of its own nature.

But that expression requires more than the mere possession of a nature. It requires growth, nourishment, development and an intelligent relationship with the environment in which it exists.

The discovery of what we are does not relieve us of the responsibility of developing it. Nor does the development of our faculties relieve us of the responsibility of understanding what we are giving expression to.

Throughout our lives, we turn inward to discover and outward to manifest. Neither movement reaches fulfilment in isolation. Together, they constitute the living process through which we come to know ourselves and make something of what we discover.

This is the relationship between self-realization and self-actualization.

It is the relationship between the seed and the tree, between our nature and what that nature makes available to the world.

The fruit is not a substitute for the seed, nor is it something foreign to it.

It is the fulfilment of something the seed has carried all along.

II / THE ART OF PERCEPTION

ESSAY 03

The Universe of a Tension

It was through my hands that I began to understand certain things about the human mind that years of intellectual investigation had not revealed to me.

Before studying osteopathy, I had explored the relationship between the mind and the body through medicine, nutrition, physical training and various traditional healing systems. I had also encountered it through my own difficulties. As a young man, I experienced physical problems for which conventional medical investigations had provided little resolution, and whose origins I eventually recognized as belonging to a much deeper state of anxiety.

The relationship between thought and physiology was therefore not an unfamiliar proposition. But there is an immense difference between knowing that a relationship exists and developing the faculties through which one can investigate it.

Osteopathy changed the nature of my inquiry. Through palpation, I began encountering the material expression of a person's internal world. What initially presented itself as a physical restriction could reveal an emotional charge, a particular state of mind and, upon further investigation, an entire organization of thought. I was no longer simply examining a body. I was discovering the universe that held it in a particular condition.

Beyond the Anatomy

Palpation requires the development of a rather unusual faculty. One must learn to touch without imposing, to investigate without unnecessarily disturbing, and to distinguish what is being perceived from what one imagines one ought to perceive. As this faculty develops, what becomes available beneath the hands extends considerably beyond anatomy.

A restriction encountered in one region may belong to a constellation of tensions distributed throughout the organism, each participating in the maintenance of the others. What appears locally provides a point of entry into a much larger organization.

In my practice, I discovered that by remaining in contact with a tension, I could sometimes perceive something of the emotional condition associated with it. Going further, I could begin discerning the matrix of thought through which that condition was sustained. The tension had an architecture.

I began referring to this as *the universe of a tension*.

Within the osteopathic tradition in which I was trained, I explored these relationships through the primary respiratory mechanism, perceiving restrictions in the subtle movements of the cranial structures and following their relationships throughout the body. As a release occurred, these movements would sometimes settle into what osteopaths refer to as a still point. Subsequently, I would perceive changes throughout the organism: primary respiratory movement became more apparent, restrictions softened, and a quality of circulation and continuity returned.

Some of my most consequential discoveries came through receiving treatments myself from teachers whose faculties were considerably more developed than mine. Experiencing these phenomena within my own organism gave them a significance that no intellectual explanation could have provided. What I discovered under their hands profoundly influenced my practice of Yoga, meditation and my subsequent investigation of the human being.

But perhaps the most important discovery was not that thought could express itself through physiology. It was that the very tensions causing us to suffer could be performing functions we could not afford to lose.

What the Tension Is Holding

The conventional response to a tension is to attempt to release it. The person is uncomfortable, movement is restricted, and something appears to require correction. Before correcting it, however, one might consider asking a rather important question: what is it holding?

Imagine someone who has spent much of their existence carrying a considerable weight. Their movements have become restricted, their energy is increasingly consumed by the effort, and they complain incessantly about the burden. The obvious solution is to put it down. But suppose carrying that weight has become part of the very arrangement through which they remain upright.

Human beings carry histories, fears, emotional disturbances and conclusions about themselves. They develop personalities through which this material can be accommodated and elaborate narratives through which it acquires meaning.

They can become remarkably romantic about what they are carrying. Their suffering acquires a certain nobility, and the circumstances responsible for it become part of their mythology.

Meanwhile, the organism continues paying the bill.

Beneath an impressive personality, a formidable intellect or an apparently well-organized existence, there may be very little genuine stability. Much of what we recognize as someone's character may participate in the extraordinary effort through which they hold themselves together. The body is intimately involved in that undertaking.

When the roots are fragile, stability must be obtained elsewhere. The person develops structures of compensation, and eventually those structures become so familiar that they are mistaken for the person himself. He complains about the tension, suffers from its consequences and spends considerable resources attempting to relieve it. Yet he may be terrified of its disappearance.

One begins to appreciate the absurdity of telling someone in this condition to relax.

Relax into what?

If the tension participates in maintaining his sense of existence, its disappearance may be experienced not as liberation but as the beginning of a collapse. He has spent years developing the means to remain standing. He cannot simply abandon those means because someone has correctly identified their disadvantages.

A therapist who recognizes a restriction but fails to understand what it supports has understood only part of the situation. The body's discomfort may be apparent; the intelligence of its organization may not be.

Providing Ground

One of the essential qualities of a healer is the capacity to provide stability. I do not mean reassurance, encouragement or the production of agreeable emotional states. I mean the ability to offer something that does not participate in the instability of the person in front of you.

The person arrives carrying an entire world. They have spent years maintaining its structure, defending its logic and sustaining the personality through which they inhabit it. Within the encounter, through touch, attention and the quality of one's presence, different conditions can be established. The person can begin observing what they have been holding without immediately feeling threatened by the observation.

Recognition alone is not necessarily sufficient. A man may realize that the story he has been telling himself for twenty years is fundamentally inadequate. He may recognize the cost of maintaining a particular role and see the absurdity of certain aspects of his conduct. But dismantling a structure intellectually does not provide him with somewhere else to stand.

In osteopathy, I gradually came to appreciate the significance of providing this ground through my hands. Contact was not merely a technical operation upon the tissues. The absence of judgment, the steadiness of the person providing the contact and the stability communicated through it were integral to the encounter.

Sometimes, as a person became conscious of the state of mind associated with a tension, something previously inaccessible became visible. There was a realization and a certain digestion of what had been recognized. If the person was ready, and if sufficient stability was available, they could occasionally permit themselves to do something they had been unable to do for years.

They could put it down.

The healer has not taken the burden away. He has provided somewhere for it to be placed.

The Genuine Exhalation

There is a difference between instructing someone to exhale and witnessing a human being genuinely exhale. The first can be accomplished by following instructions. The second occurs when the necessity of holding begins to disappear.

I witnessed this numerous times during treatment. A person would become conscious of something they had been maintaining, perhaps for decades. Sometimes the realization was accompanied by considerable emotion; on other occasions, very little was said. The face would change, the body would settle, and the tension beneath my hands would undergo a transformation.

Nobody had instructed the person to relax. The relaxation emerged spontaneously because the person no longer experienced the same necessity to hold. What had previously required continuous effort could, for a moment, be relinquished without the anticipated collapse.

It was in this context that the still point acquired a much greater significance for me. Through my hands, I could perceive the quieting of movements that had

previously been restricted or disturbed. But what interested me most was what this quietude made possible for the person.

The organism was no longer entirely occupied with maintaining a particular condition. There was an opportunity for integration, for something previously held in tension to find a different relationship with the whole. This required neither the suppression of what had become conscious nor the immediate construction of another narrative through which to accommodate it.

For a moment, the person could remain with what had been recognized.

Stillness, in this sense, was not merely the absence of activity. It was a condition from which a different activity could emerge.

The Restoration of Choice

We frequently confuse knowing that an alternative exists with possessing the freedom to pursue it.

A man knows perfectly well that his response to a particular situation is inappropriate. He understands the consequences of his conduct, has read extensively about his difficulties and may even be capable of providing excellent advice to someone experiencing something similar. Yet when the circumstances present themselves, he responds in precisely the same manner.

His knowledge has not liberated him from the conditions governing the response.

This is where a genuine release becomes particularly interesting. Through recognition, integration and the temporary cessation of the necessity to hold, an alternative that was previously inaccessible may become available. Before, the man could only go left. Now he can also go right.

The significance of this is easily underestimated. The alternative is no longer merely an intellectual proposition. It has become a possibility within his actual organization.

What he does with that possibility is another matter. He may return to the familiar configuration. Other aspects of his existence may continue requiring it. He may need further assistance or the development of faculties through which a different way of living can become established. A treatment can introduce a possibility that the person has yet to learn how to sustain.

A moment of release does not signify that the intelligence responsible for the previous condition has been fundamentally transformed. Nor does the

disappearance of a symptom necessarily establish that its origins have been resolved. These are distinctions that deserve to be maintained, particularly in a profession where the immediate experience of relief can be mistaken for the completion of the work.

But where there was previously compulsion, there is now, to whatever degree the release has occurred, a possibility of freedom.

This is an important dimension of what I understand by healing. The power returned to the person is not the power to control everything that happens to them. It is the power to participate differently in what happens next.

Beyond the Hands

As my practice developed, I discovered that I no longer required my hands to enter certain dimensions of the universe I had initially encountered through palpation.

I could approach them through a conversation.

The manner in which someone spoke, the movements of their attention, the peculiarities of their reasoning and their reactions to a particular observation revealed something of the same organization I had learned to investigate through the body. Sometimes a look was sufficient. Sometimes it required an elaborate exchange, a dance of language through which we could approach something the person had been holding without unnecessarily disturbing them.

Words became another instrument of contact. There were occasions when much of the work took place through these exchanges, and when touch served primarily to ground what had occurred.

My hands had taught me to perceive. I was no longer confined to them.

Today, I may spend several hours with someone investigating an enterprise, a relationship or a consequential decision. We may discuss circumstances that appear to have absolutely nothing to do with osteopathy. And yet I recognize the movements.

A man is exhausting himself attempting to resolve a situation whose organization he has never properly understood. His thinking continually reinforces the necessity of his effort, and he has developed increasingly sophisticated explanations for why things must remain as they are.

Through our investigation, he begins to recognize relationships that previously escaped him. An entire situation acquires a different meaning. What he

experienced as an obligation reveals itself as only one possibility arising from a particular understanding of his circumstances.

And he exhales.

I recognize this exhalation. I spent years encountering it beneath my hands.

No contract has been renegotiated. No enterprise has been reorganized. Nothing has necessarily changed in the material circumstances of his existence. But the man sitting in front of me is no longer relating to those circumstances through precisely the same intelligence.

There may be an enormous amount of work ahead. He may have to develop new faculties, reconsider fundamental decisions and reorganize considerable portions of his life. But something that was previously unavailable to him has become available.

He has a choice.

When I first began studying osteopathy, I was learning how to recognize restrictions in the human body. What I eventually discovered was something considerably more interesting: the human being's capacity to remain imprisoned within a reality he is continually exerting himself to sustain.

And the extraordinary possibilities that emerge when he discovers that he no longer has to hold it together.

ESSAY 04

The Hidden Objective

When someone speaks to me, I am listening to two things simultaneously. There is what they are telling me, and there is the intelligence producing what I am hearing. The first informs me of their situation. The second tells me where that situation is going.

Consider a website. What appears on the screen is the visible expression of an underlying architecture. Behind the images, words and functions is an arrangement of code, written according to a particular language and logic. Someone familiar with that architecture can anticipate what the system will produce without necessarily waiting for the result to appear on the screen.

I listen to human beings in much the same manner.

While someone describes their ambitions, relationships, difficulties and circumstances, I am examining the logic through which their reality is being constructed. Frequently, I can recognize that the programming directing their actions is incapable of producing the outcome they claim to desire.

It will produce something, certainly.

But what interests me is what it has been organized to produce.

When the logic of a system leads consistently toward a particular destination, why should I regard that destination as a failure?

Perhaps the programming is functioning perfectly. Perhaps we have simply misunderstood its objective.

The World We Must Prove Exists

We each inhabit a particular conception of reality. Throughout our lives, we develop conclusions about human nature, relationships, society, justice, love and our place within existence. Together, these conclusions constitute a world within which we recognize ourselves.

Our identity has meaning in relation to that world.

Consider a man who regards society as fundamentally hostile to people like himself. Others cannot appreciate his intelligence, his sincerity is rarely recognized, and the world generally rewards the wrong people.

He behaves in a particular manner. Eventually, people rebuke him, distance themselves from him or exclude him from their activities.

You see? I always knew.

What escapes his attention is the extent to which his own conception of the world has participated in producing the response he now receives from it. His expectations, interpretations and defensiveness enter the relationship before the other person has had much opportunity to reveal themselves.

The resulting rejection possesses extraordinary value. It preserves the integrity of his worldview.

And in preserving that worldview, it preserves him.

But something else occurs. The rejection awakens him. Anger rises, his imagination becomes active, and an enormous quantity of energy suddenly becomes available. He must prove himself, demonstrate his superiority or accomplish something sufficiently impressive to establish that the world was mistaken about him.

For a man accustomed to deriving his vitality from such experiences, being rejected can be remarkably stimulating.

Now imagine depriving him of his adversaries.

Where would he obtain his fuel? What would become of the extraordinary movement they continually awaken within him? Who would he be in a world that no longer required him to fight?

The man protests against the very circumstances that animate his existence.

I am not suggesting that every misfortune is secretly desired, or that we exercise control over everything that happens to us. I am concerned here with the circumstances we actively participate in creating and repeatedly reproduce through a recognizable structure of thought.

An entire existence can develop around proving something its author has never seriously investigated.

The Romanticization of Appetite

I use the expression *hidden objective*, although there is often very little that is particularly hidden about it. What someone repeatedly organizes their existence to produce becomes rather apparent once we stop granting so much authority to their explanations.

Human beings possess a remarkable talent for romanticizing their appetites.

Consider love.

A man may aspire to a profound relationship with a woman while possessing only a rudimentary comprehension of what such a relationship involves. Much of what he recognizes as love may have been established through previous experiences of emotional intensity. Anticipation, uncertainty, jealousy, reconciliation, the fear of loss and the relief of being desired produce powerful sensations within the organism.

He learns to associate these sensations with love and becomes increasingly proficient at creating the conditions through which they arise. The tension must be produced before the release can be experienced. Something must be threatened so that its recovery acquires the desired intensity.

He has become involved in the production of his own chemistry. The relationship provides the environment.

Give the arrangement a sufficiently beautiful narrative and he may never recognize the nature of his appetite. He speaks of passion, destiny, extraordinary connections and the peculiar difficulties that seem to accompany profound love.

Meanwhile, he is getting high.

Two people can spend years becoming exceptionally proficient at stimulating one another without ever developing much understanding of love.

And yet, beneath all of this, the aspiration toward a profound relationship may be entirely genuine.

A human being can aspire to something considerably greater than their present intelligence permits them to create. Therein lies an extraordinary difficulty. Our conception of what we desire is largely derived from experiences we have already had. We attempt to reach something we do not yet know through the means available to us within the world we already know.

The vehicle is inadequate to the destination.

For as long as that vehicle delivers a sufficiently satisfying experience, however, the deeper aspiration can remain dormant. The man has something to consume and a rather convincing narrative through which to justify consuming it.

Why investigate further?

The Intelligence of Contraction

One of the people with whom I work possesses considerable technical knowledge. Whenever a new project presents itself, however, I observe a familiar movement in his thinking.

He begins by making the world smaller.

A commercial undertaking involves numerous relationships: the nature of the industry, the organization of the client's business, the people involved, the actual commercial objective and the various means through which that objective might be realized.

Rather than examining the whole, he selects a narrow collection of elements and becomes intensely occupied with them. He accumulates information, investigates increasingly minute details and develops elaborate solutions to problems whose significance has yet to be established.

When I begin expanding his field of investigation, he becomes uncomfortable. Suddenly, there are relationships he has not considered, questions he cannot answer and possibilities for which his considerable technical knowledge provides inadequate preparation.

His immediate inclination is to return to the details.

Within the territory he has established, he feels competent. He possesses information, knows what to do and experiences a sense of control.

Outside that territory, he encounters his ignorance.

The contraction of his perspective serves a function. It provides security, while the intensity of his activity within that confined space generates a familiar internal state. The commercial undertaking is merely one environment in which this occurs. I recognize the same movement in other areas of his existence.

The subjects change; the programming does not.

He can spend enormous quantities of energy trying to succeed while continually reproducing the conditions that limit his possibilities of success.

There is nothing particularly mysterious about this once we recognize what the process provides him. He is obtaining something from it. But what he obtains is not necessarily what the project requires.

Giving him another thousand pages of information might simply provide him with more material through which to perpetuate the problem. He needs to learn to think on a different scale.

When we examine the undertaking from a greater perspective, the relationships between its different elements begin to emerge. He recognizes which problems deserve his attention and which were generated by his incomplete conception of the project. He sees what he needs to learn, where his capabilities are insufficient and where another person's intelligence could contribute something of genuine value.

The agitation subsides.

Notice what has just occurred. No additional resources have been acquired. No technical problem has been resolved. The external circumstances remain essentially the same. Yet his physiological state has changed, and an entirely different course of action has become available to him.

What has changed is his relationship with reality.

There is a correspondence between the clarity of his perception, the condition of his nervous system and the possibilities he can recognize. What appeared to require extraordinary effort may now require considerably more learning and considerably less activity.

I am not particularly interested in making someone more efficient within a corridor that should never have been so narrow.

The First Degree of Harmony

When someone begins recognizing the intelligence behind their own conduct, there is no immediate necessity to change it.

A man may finally acknowledge that rejection stimulates him, that conflict provides him with vitality, or that the frustration surrounding his enterprise serves a purpose he has never been willing to admit.

There is already a degree of harmony in this recognition.

He no longer needs to maintain a fictional account of his relationship with what he has created. He can acknowledge that he is obtaining something he desires, even if it bears little resemblance to what he has been telling himself.

And perhaps, for the moment, he is perfectly content to continue.

There is little intelligence in persuading him to pretend otherwise.

But sometimes the appetite begins to exhaust itself.

The Exhaustion of a World

We may eventually reach a point at which the experiences we have spent years reproducing no longer provide the same satisfaction.

This does not necessarily bring about a change of direction.

The man who can no longer obtain his familiar high may become intensely occupied with recovering it. The frustration of not obtaining it generates another kind of stimulation. He increases the intensity, changes the circumstances or searches for increasingly sophisticated alternatives to what he previously consumed.

He believes he is looking for something new.

But the entire search may still belong to the same universe.

The failure of the drug can itself become another drug.

Even the pursuit of transformation can be recruited into this process. The man becomes fascinated by his difficulties, continually investigates himself, acquires new explanations and develops an increasingly sophisticated vocabulary through which to describe an existence that remains fundamentally unchanged.

He has discovered another way to occupy himself within the same world.

Occasionally, however, something more consequential occurs. Not merely the exhaustion of a particular experience, but the exhaustion of the entire universe of experiences available through an existing conception of reality.

The alternatives no longer possess much appeal. Greater intensity changes very little. Even the search for another source of satisfaction begins to lose its significance.

The man finds himself confronted with an extraordinarily sobering realization.

This does not work.

And for perhaps the first time, he is not particularly interested in making it work.

This is not disappointment. Disappointment may provide the impetus for another attempt. What I am describing is the exhaustion of the very framework within which all those attempts have taken place.

Here we encounter one of the more interesting possibilities of disharmony. The difficulties we spend our lives attempting to eliminate can occasionally bring us to a threshold we would never otherwise have encountered.

At that threshold, a deeper aspiration, long obscured by the continual movement of our appetites, may awaken.

We begin to suspect that what we have spent our lives consuming is not what we fundamentally wanted to experience.

Such moments are considerably rarer than the industry devoted to human transformation might have us believe.

The Upgrade

Someone arriving at this threshold requires something beyond another strategy for obtaining what they want.

They require what I sometimes refer to as an upgrade.

By this, I do not mean the acquisition of additional information within an existing framework. I mean an expansion of the framework itself.

Return to the man who aspires to a profound relationship.

Teaching him to communicate more effectively, regulate his emotions or behave more agreeably toward a woman may be useful, but these developments do not necessarily alter his fundamental conception of what a relationship is.

We must expand his comprehension of human nature, of man and woman, of the movement of Life and of what can actually be created through their association.

As this greater territory becomes visible, he begins to see himself differently. He discovers faculties he has yet to develop, limitations he previously mistook for natural characteristics and possibilities that his earlier conception of existence could not accommodate.

The direction of this movement is fundamental.

We are not attempting to persuade the man to think differently about himself. We are expanding his understanding of the reality within which he exists.

A different understanding of himself emerges in relation to that greater reality.

This can be extremely demanding. Alongside the discovery of new possibilities comes the discovery of one's ignorance. What appeared relatively simple may reveal extraordinary complexity. Faculties one assumed one possessed may require years of cultivation.

It is frequently here that assistance becomes necessary. Someone with a greater perspective can introduce relationships and principles that the man could not discover through the continued operation of his existing programming.

Whether this expanded perception subsequently becomes an operative intelligence, integrated within his nervous system and stabilized through his participation in the material world, is another undertaking altogether.

Recognition is not transformation.

Seeing the territory and developing the faculties through which one can inhabit it are two very different accomplishments.

The Appearance of Success

It would be a mistake to assume that this investigation concerns only those who fail to accomplish their stated objectives.

A man may establish an enterprise of extraordinary commercial significance, accumulate billions and realize almost everything he once imagined.

The accomplishment is undeniable.

But has he obtained what he was fundamentally seeking through it?

Perhaps the enterprise has been a magnificent expression of his nature, continually opening new territories of existence. Or perhaps he has spent thirty years developing an extraordinary vehicle in pursuit of something that the vehicle was never capable of delivering.

His financial statements cannot tell us.

A man can fail to build the enterprise he wants and successfully preserve the world he knows. Another can build the greatest enterprise imaginable and remain profoundly distant from what he originally sought.

The distinction between these two men may be considerably smaller than their respective accomplishments suggest.

Both have exercised intelligence. Both have brought something into existence. Both may have arrived precisely where their programming was organized to take them.

This is why, before becoming particularly interested in helping someone succeed, I prefer to establish what their intelligence is already succeeding at.

The answer is not always flattering.

But it may be the beginning of an entirely different life.

ESSAY 05

The Hierarchy of Function

If someone else can do what you require of me, I am probably not the person you need.

It has taken me a considerable portion of my life to appreciate the implications of this statement. There are numerous things I remain perfectly capable of doing that no longer awaken any particular interest in me. They require only a fraction of the faculties I have developed.

Somewhere, however, there is another individual for whom that same undertaking represents a meaningful responsibility and an opportunity to establish mastery within their discipline.

Why would I deprive them of that opportunity? And why would I occupy myself with their work when there are undertakings elsewhere that actually require mine?

There is an aspect of hierarchy that we seldom address: the relationship between the development of intelligence, the distribution of responsibility and the creative expression of mastery.

The Question of Depth

During my years in the healing arts, I became increasingly aware of the different degrees of depth at which human difficulties operate. Two people may present remarkably similar symptoms, yet the faculties required to assist them may differ enormously. What one practitioner can adequately address through a straightforward intervention may, in another individual, belong to an organization of relationships that the same practitioner is incapable of perceiving.

There are differences in knowledge, competence, perception and depth of understanding. Pretending otherwise serves nobody.

For the sake of illustration, imagine ten degrees of depth within a particular discipline. A practitioner operating at the third degree may perform excellent work within that territory but cannot adequately address relationships belonging to a depth they have yet to discover. Someone operating at the tenth degree may possess the capacity to intervene at all ten.

The question is whether it is their function to do so.

If my faculties correspond to the tenth degree and I encounter someone requiring assistance at the fourth, nothing prevents me from meeting that person with kindness, affection, attentiveness and genuine human interest. My presence may allow them to relax. A conversation may provide considerable clarity. We may develop a beautiful friendship.

But I do not need to introduce myself into their existence as a teacher or healer.

Somewhere, there is a practitioner whose development corresponds to what that person requires. Their encounter has a significance of its own, and I have no reason to appropriate it.

I can meet someone heart to heart without assuming a professional responsibility in their life. There is considerable freedom in being able to relate to people without continually exercising the functions for which one has been trained.

The ten degrees are illustrative, of course. I am speaking of differences in developed faculties, not proposing a numerical classification of human beings. The equal dignity of human beings does not establish an equality of capacities, any more than the dignity of a student requires us to pretend that he possesses the understanding of his teacher.

The Proper Place of Intelligence

Consider the organizational structure of the Catholic Church. Whatever one's religious convictions, the distribution of its responsibilities illustrates an interesting principle.

An archbishop can celebrate Mass in a small parish. His presence may constitute a significant occasion for the congregation. But suppose he permanently assumes the responsibilities of the parish priest. What becomes of the priest? And who assumes the responsibilities of the archbishop?

The archbishop's competence is not in question. The intelligence of the arrangement is.

Imagine Einstein spending the greater portion of his professional existence teaching elementary mathematics. He would presumably have been quite capable of explaining fractions, and his students might have enjoyed the distinction of being taught by Einstein. But the world did not particularly need Einstein to explain fractions.

There were questions requiring his particular intelligence. There were also teachers for whom teaching mathematics represented a meaningful expression of their abilities and an opportunity to develop them further.

Both functions were necessary.

An intelligently organized hierarchy recognizes the relationship between available capacities and the responsibilities that need to be assumed. But it also recognizes something more: responsibilities provide the circumstances through which knowledge becomes operative, experience accumulates and mastery finds its expression.

We are not simply distributing work. We are distributing opportunities for development.

When individuals remain within territories they have outgrown, they occupy positions through which others should be developing. Meanwhile, the responsibilities corresponding to their own capacities may remain unattended. What appears to be an abundance of competence in one part of the structure may conceal its absence elsewhere.

Hierarchy, properly understood, is an architecture of human development.

The Responsibility of Not Intervening

I apply this principle in business, in my family and in practically every environment in which I participate.

If someone is capable of assuming a particular responsibility, I expect them to assume it. I may provide resources, instruction, encouragement or a greater perspective from which they can understand what is required. But I will not make their responsibility mine simply because I can discharge it more efficiently.

Imagine someone confronted with a difficulty within an enterprise. Resolving it requires them to investigate unfamiliar territory, consult the appropriate people, reconsider certain conclusions and develop a more comprehensive understanding of their work.

I could intervene and resolve the matter in twenty minutes. The immediate difficulty would disappear.

But so would the opportunity.

The next time a similar difficulty presented itself, the individual would presumably return to me. We could eventually establish an extraordinarily efficient arrangement for keeping both of us occupied at the wrong level.

There is something curious about the individual who continually demonstrates his competence by assuming other people's responsibilities. He may appear generous, indispensable and exceptionally effective. But are the people around him becoming more capable? Or has he organized an environment through which he can continually experience his own importance?

The proper exercise of authority requires recognizing which responsibilities belong to whom.

Naturally, there are circumstances in which immediate intervention is necessary. But helping someone assume a responsibility is a fundamentally different undertaking from assuming it on their behalf.

The former develops the individual. The latter may simply develop one's reputation.

The Pleasure of Being Exceptional

One encounters a peculiar phenomenon throughout the healing arts, education, business and numerous other disciplines. An individual develops considerable competence and then proceeds to organize his existence so that he rarely encounters anyone more competent than himself.

He becomes a large fish in a conveniently small pond.

The environment is agreeable. People are impressed by his knowledge, seek his guidance and attribute considerable importance to his observations. The difficulties presented to him rarely require more than a fraction of his abilities.

He can spend decades enjoying the experience of being exceptional without developing much further.

Someone can spend thirty years repeating what took him five years to master. The accumulation of experience, measured in years, does not necessarily correspond to an accumulation of depth. Eventually, the very competence through which an individual established himself becomes a refuge from further development.

To leave that environment would require encountering people who know things he does not know, perceive things he cannot perceive and whose faculties reveal possibilities beyond his own.

He would have to become a student again.

This reveals something about his actual interests. Is he interested in his discipline, or is he interested in the experience of being exceptional within it?

I have continued entering disciplines in which my previous accomplishments afford me little advantage. There is considerable pleasure in encountering someone whose faculties exceed my own. Their existence reveals possibilities that would otherwise have remained unavailable to me.

I have teachers. There are individuals through whom my knowledge of myself and my understanding of existence continue to develop. As this understanding becomes integrated and acquires expression in my life, the nature of the responsibilities I am capable of assuming also evolves.

There is no contradiction between being a master within a particular territory and remaining a student beyond it.

But if one genuinely values development, there is little intelligence in arranging one's existence exclusively around people who are impressed by oneself.

Eventually, one must find someone who is not.

The Creative Expression of Mastery

There is a particular pleasure that becomes available through mastery.

Consider a musician who has spent decades developing his instrument. His knowledge of rhythm, harmony, melody and composition has become sufficiently integrated that he no longer needs to consciously assemble each element of what he is playing.

One evening, he encounters another accomplished musician. They begin playing together. Each introduces something into the encounter to which the other responds. Their respective musical intelligence finds expression through combinations neither could have entirely anticipated.

Something new comes into existence.

The significance of the encounter lies precisely in the mastery both musicians bring to it. Had they not developed the necessary faculties, much of their attention would have been occupied with the elementary mechanics of playing their instruments.

Mastery has liberated their intelligence for creation.

Learning how to exercise a faculty and discovering what can be created through its exercise are two different undertakings.

The latter is of particular interest to me.

Over the course of my professional life, I have investigated human beings from numerous perspectives. Each discipline has contributed something to my

perception, understanding and capacity to intervene. But the most interesting work rarely consists in applying these disciplines independently.

An individual arrives with a particular situation. Its nature requires knowledge acquired in one territory to be brought into relationship with perceptions developed in another. Experiences that may have appeared unrelated become relevant to the same undertaking. What I understand about the human organism may illuminate something I perceive within an enterprise. My knowledge of human relationships may reveal something about the organization of a business.

The faculties themselves are established. What is original is their orchestration.

This is why two undertakings for which I possess the necessary competence can awaken entirely different degrees of interest in me. One requires the isolated application of something I know. The other mobilizes the full spectrum of what I have cultivated.

The intelligence is not occupied with learning how to perform its function. It is free to explore what can be generated through its performance.

The more integrated the faculties, the greater the freedom with which they can be combined. And the more interesting the undertaking, the more extraordinary the combinations it may bring into existence.

This is the creative pleasure of mastery.

The Movement of an Order

A hierarchy that serves human development cannot remain static.

Imagine an order of practitioners in which each undertaking is assigned according to the degree of competence it requires. The person entrusted with the work possesses the faculties necessary to assume the responsibility. Through practice, those faculties become refined, integrated and increasingly available for creative expression.

Meanwhile, the practitioner continues receiving instruction from those whose understanding extends beyond his own.

These relationships are complementary, but their functions are distinct. Through his teachers, the practitioner acquires greater knowledge and develops new faculties. Through those he serves, his established faculties find their expression.

As the practitioner integrates a greater order of understanding, he becomes capable of assuming responsibilities that were previously beyond his competence.

His function within the hierarchy evolves accordingly.

His previous responsibilities become available to someone else, for whom they represent an appropriate field of experience and development.

This movement needs to be respected. When individuals remain attached to functions they have outgrown, they obstruct the development of those prepared to assume them. When they assume responsibilities beyond their competence, they expose others to the consequences of their ignorance.

Both represent a disorder in the distribution of responsibility.

This is as relevant to an enterprise as it is to a school of healing or a spiritual fraternity. The intelligence of the arrangement lies in recognizing where each individual belongs at a given moment in their development while preserving the conditions through which their position can evolve.

Hierarchy is not merely an arrangement of authority. It is an organization of power through which intelligence can develop, circulate and find its appropriate expression.

Where I Belong

After more than twenty-five years of working with human beings, I have become increasingly precise about the undertakings in which I wish to participate.

The social importance of an individual tells me very little about the depth of the work we might undertake together. Someone directing an international enterprise may require assistance that any reasonably competent practitioner could provide. Another, whose circumstances appear entirely ordinary, may present a situation requiring the convergence of faculties I have spent decades developing.

Nor is the commercial magnitude of an undertaking necessarily related to its intellectual significance. A small enterprise can present an extraordinarily interesting project, while a much larger one may require little more than the application of established procedures.

What interests me is the quality of the demand.

There is an important distinction between being necessary and needing to be needed. The latter may require the preservation of another person's dependence. The former arises naturally from the relationship between what a situation requires and the intelligence available to address it.

If another person can adequately perform the function, I am perfectly content to leave it to them.

But occasionally, an undertaking presents itself for which the particular combination of faculties I have developed becomes genuinely necessary. Knowledge, experience, perception and understanding acquired across radically different disciplines suddenly find a common purpose.

The undertaking becomes the meeting place of faculties whose eventual convergence I could not have anticipated when I first began cultivating them.

There is tremendous pleasure in this. Something that no individual faculty could have generated independently becomes possible through their orchestration.

This is what makes the work alive for me.

My development continues, as does my relationship with those from whom I receive instruction. As greater knowledge becomes integrated into my existence, new territories of responsibility become available to me. At every degree, however, the principle remains the same: I serve where I possess the competence to serve, and I invest myself where that competence can find its fullest expression.

There are people from whom I learn. There are people with whom I create. And there are countless others with whom I have the simple pleasure of sharing a human existence.

I value all three relationships.

I have no need to confuse them.

ESSAY 06

The Anatomy of an Enterprise

I approach an enterprise much as I once approached the human body. I observe its organization, investigate its relationships, identify where friction occurs and establish the level at which its various functions have lost their alignment.

I do not consider this a particularly unusual application of osteopathy. What I learned through my investigation of the human body concerns something considerably more fundamental than anatomy: the principles through which intelligence organizes matter in the service of an intent.

The human body comprises an extraordinary number of parts, each possessing particular characteristics and performing particular functions. Yet what confronts us is an organism. Its parts participate in a greater order through which something becomes possible that none of them could accomplish independently.

When I reach for an object, I am not concerned with the innumerable physiological events that make the movement possible. I have an intention. An extraordinary organization of intelligence participates in its manifestation.

The construction of an enterprise involves the same fundamental principle.

The Organization of Intent

An enterprise begins with an intent. Someone wishes to bring something into existence, and an organization gradually develops through which that intention can acquire material expression.

The mission establishes why the enterprise exists. The vision establishes where it is going. From these proceed the decisions concerning its structure, its activities, the people it requires and the resources necessary for its development.

Consider the central nervous system of the human body. It coordinates activities occurring throughout the organism, establishing relationships between functions that might otherwise operate independently. The administration of an enterprise performs a comparable function. Information must circulate, decisions must be communicated, resources must reach the appropriate places, and the consequences of those decisions must become available to the coordinating intelligence.

The significance of this elaborate arrangement lies in its capacity to translate intent into action.

Yet in many enterprises, the original intent becomes increasingly difficult to locate. Departments develop their own concerns, management becomes occupied with management, and employees concern themselves with the particular responsibilities through which they earn their livelihood.

There may be considerable activity. Whether that activity constitutes the coherent expression of an intention is another matter altogether.

A business can be exceptionally busy without being particularly alive.

Sharpening the Blade of Intent

When I begin investigating an enterprise, I am often considerably more interested in its founder's understanding of what they are attempting to accomplish than in the apparent efficiency of its operations.

If the originating intent lacks clarity, what exactly are we attempting to organize?

Over the years, I have encountered individuals capable of articulating their mission and vision in remarkably sophisticated language. They could describe their objectives, their market and the future they imagined for their enterprise.

Yet there was very little life in what they were expressing.

An intention possesses a certain quality when it arises from something genuinely alive within a human being. There is a tonus to it. It has substance, direction and an organizing power of its own. As the person speaks, the relationships between the various elements of what they are expressing become increasingly intelligible.

One can follow the intention into greater depth without discovering that it is being held together by a collection of unrelated aspirations.

The individual does not need to continually reinforce it. He can breathe within it.

This quality is particularly interesting to observe because a person may speak with tremendous enthusiasm while expressing something that possesses remarkably little vitality. Enthusiasm can be generated through anticipation, imagery and excitement without necessarily proceeding from a genuine intent.

The distinction becomes apparent when one begins to investigate.

A few questions may reveal that the mission consists of borrowed ideas, the vision of borrowed imagery, and the ambition of something the individual feels compelled to prove.

One can construct an elaborate organization around such an intention. One can employ competent individuals, acquire sophisticated infrastructure and refine the efficiency of its operations.

But the organizational apparatus cannot provide the intent with a substance it does not possess.

I have discontinued my involvement with enterprises for precisely this reason. I could perceive where the work needed to begin, but the individuals concerned preferred to remain occupied with the activities of the business rather than undertake the investigation from which those activities ought to proceed.

They wanted to build.

I wanted to establish what we were building, and why.

I sometimes describe this work as sharpening the blade of intent. It involves establishing a more intimate relationship with what one genuinely wishes to accomplish, removing what obscures it and bringing increasing precision to its direction.

This is not an exercise one completes during an afternoon spent drafting a mission statement. The intent needs to be continuously refined as one's understanding develops and the enterprise acquires substance.

A sharp intent provides an organizing intelligence for everything that proceeds from it. Decisions that would otherwise appear complicated become considerably more intelligible when their relationship to the original purpose can be established.

Vision and Fantasy

There is an important distinction between a man who possesses a vision and one who inhabits a fantasy.

In the course of working with human beings, I have observed how much imaginative activity can arise from an individual's reluctance to experience what is actually occurring within them.

A man may have difficulty bearing his own desires, anger, appetites or emotional circumstances. He establishes a distance between himself and what he feels. Within that distance, an imaginary existence begins to develop, assembled partly

from things he has seen, people he admires and circumstances in which he imagines himself finally becoming someone he could respect.

An enterprise can emerge from such a fantasy.

The individual may believe he wishes to establish an international brand, construct a particular kind of institution or become a prominent figure within his industry. But does he genuinely wish to undertake the work involved in bringing these things into existence? Or is he principally attracted to the person he imagines himself becoming once they exist?

The distinction is often palpable.

A fantasy needs to be sustained. Remove certain flattering elements from the narrative and much of its apparent vitality disappears. Further questions do not necessarily lead to greater depth; they may simply require the invention of additional explanations.

A genuine aspiration, on the other hand, tends to acquire greater substance as one's relationship with it deepens.

Much of my work in such circumstances consists in helping the individual relax sufficiently to establish contact with what he actually feels. What does he genuinely want? What is he afraid to acknowledge? What would he find worth undertaking if he were no longer concerned with what the undertaking communicated about him?

Sometimes he discovers that the enterprise he has been constructing is fundamentally inappropriate to his aspirations. In other instances, there is something genuine within it, but it has been distorted by his desire to make it into something it is not.

A modest aspiration may have been dressed in an unnecessarily grandiose vision because the individual felt ashamed of its simplicity. Something genuinely beautiful may have been distorted by his conviction that it would not be sufficiently impressive in its original form.

The enterprise has inherited his discomfort with himself.

Once he becomes more at ease with what he actually is, the undertaking can assume a considerably more coherent shape. It no longer needs to fulfil functions that have very little to do with its stated purpose.

A genuine vision does not need to compensate for the man who possesses it.

It can proceed from him.

The Anatomy of Friction

One of the fundamental things osteopathy taught me was not to confuse the location of a symptom with the origin of the disturbance.

A restriction encountered in one part of the body may belong to a much greater organization of relationships. Its significance becomes apparent through understanding what precedes it, what sustains it and what other structures have become involved in accommodating it.

I investigate an enterprise in much the same manner.

Imagine an organization experiencing persistent difficulties within its production department. Deadlines are continually missed, employees appear inefficient and management has become increasingly frustrated.

The obvious response would be to investigate production. Perhaps better equipment is required. Perhaps certain individuals lack competence. Perhaps the department needs to be reorganized.

But production may be attempting to accommodate contradictory instructions from management. Management itself might be responding to commercial commitments incompatible with the organization's actual capacities. Those commitments may ultimately belong to a founder whose vision of the enterprise bears little relationship to what he has established.

What appears to be a difficulty in production may be the material expression of a confusion occurring several degrees above it.

Replacing the employees will not resolve that confusion. Indeed, they may have developed remarkable ingenuity in compensating for it.

When I encounter friction within an enterprise, I want to understand its anatomy. Where is it expressing itself? What function is being performed? What relationships determine its activities? Are the instructions coherent, the resources appropriate and the responsibilities adequately distributed?

The disturbance may originate in the periphery. There is no reason to search for a profound explanation when a relatively simple one accounts for what is occurring.

But one must possess the faculties necessary to follow the disturbance through the entire organization, including the intelligence through which its direction is established.

Sometimes the administrative apparatus is functioning perfectly well. The difficulty lies in the decisions it has been instructed to execute. At other times,

even the decisions are coherent when considered individually, yet they proceed from an intent comprising contradictory aspirations.

An organization may be asked to pursue several incompatible directions simultaneously.

The resulting friction is not necessarily evidence of incompetence within its constituent parts. It may be evidence of the intelligence with which those parts are attempting to accommodate an impossible arrangement.

This is why I am not always particularly interested in discussing a person's business with them.

Sometimes I am considerably more interested in discussing the person from whom the business proceeds.

The Heart of the Organization

The heart, lungs and liver perform radically different functions. Their contribution to the organism cannot be measured according to a single criterion. Their differences are precisely what make their collaboration possible.

Within an enterprise, however, individuals frequently lose sight of the significance of functions other than their own.

Management may regard those working in production as relatively insignificant. Those in production may regard management as an unnecessary complication. Departments begin protecting their interests, and relationships that ought to be functional become increasingly political.

The abuse of hierarchy can occur in either direction.

Much of this confusion arises when the significance of a position is established independently of what the organization exists to accomplish.

When a genuine intent occupies the heart of an enterprise, its various functions acquire their meaning through their relationship to that intent. Authority exists to facilitate its manifestation, as does the work being performed at every other level.

The position itself is secondary.

Naturally, establishing such coherence becomes increasingly complex as an enterprise grows. Hundreds or thousands of individuals cannot be expected to possess the same intimate relationship with its originating intent as the founder.

I understand why larger enterprises invest considerable intelligence in creating a common ethos. They are attempting to establish something through which their constituent parts can recognize themselves within a greater whole.

In smaller enterprises, where the founder remains intimately involved, these relationships are often more palpable. Something of the intent can be communicated directly, and the consequences of alignment or misalignment become more readily apparent.

But a culture of care cannot be established simply by asking people to care. The organization itself must provide intelligible reasons for doing so. Its various functions must be compatible, its responsibilities appropriately distributed and its relationships conducive to collaboration.

A living intent at the heart of an enterprise is fundamental. It does not, however, absolve us of the responsibility of assembling an organism capable of expressing it.

Harmony and Efficiency

I have often described harmony as the absence of friction.

Within an enterprise, this does not imply the absence of difficulty, disagreement or considerable expenditure of energy. The manifestation of an intent may require enormous effort.

The question is whether the energy being expended participates in that manifestation or is being consumed by compensations within the organization.

An enterprise can expend an extraordinary amount of energy simply maintaining its existing arrangement. Employees compensate for management, management compensates for contradictory decisions, and the founder continually intervenes to resolve difficulties that the structure itself perpetuates.

Everyone works harder. Very little becomes more intelligent.

When the relationships within the enterprise are progressively clarified, activities that previously required considerable intervention may begin to take place with relative ease. Information circulates more freely, responsibilities become intelligible, and decisions no longer need to be endlessly reconsidered because their relationship to the intent has become clearer.

The organization becomes more capable of directing its resources toward what it exists to accomplish.

This is a form of efficiency considerably more interesting to me than simply demanding greater productivity from its constituent parts.

The organism is no longer expending so much of its intelligence compensating for itself.

Work as Devotion

There is another possibility within the construction of an enterprise that interests me considerably more than the accumulation of wealth or the achievement of professional distinction.

It becomes available when the individual establishes a sufficiently genuine relationship with what he wishes to bring into existence.

The work itself can become an art.

I am reminded of a spirit of craftsmanship found within traditional Japanese culture, where the manner in which something is undertaken can possess as much significance as the object ultimately produced. The attention given to each detail, the refinement of one's faculties and the quality of one's relationship with the work introduce another dimension to an otherwise ordinary activity.

Work can become a form of prayer.

When an individual develops an enterprise that proceeds from something genuinely alive within him, the daily activities of its construction acquire a different significance. Establishing a relationship with a supplier, refining a product, training an employee or reconsidering the smallest detail of its organization can become expressions of the same aspiration.

Each is an opportunity to give material substance to something he carries within his heart.

The enterprise is no longer merely a vehicle through which he hopes eventually to arrive somewhere more desirable. Its very construction becomes a meaningful part of his existence.

This requires patience.

Something beautiful can be built one step at a time, through a succession of decisions that may appear entirely insignificant to an outside observer. Their significance lies in the intelligence and dedication with which they are undertaken, and in their relationship to the greater undertaking.

Naturally, an enterprise may eventually acquire a life that extends beyond the individual who founded it. Other people enter, circumstances evolve and possibilities emerge that could never have been anticipated at its inception.

Its originating intent may find expression through forms considerably different from those first imagined.

That, too, belongs to its life.

What interests me in working with the founder of an enterprise is the possibility of participating in the construction of something coherent, something whose parts increasingly reflect the intelligence of the whole and whose existence possesses a genuine significance for those undertaking it.

The commercial success of such an enterprise is certainly relevant. Its material viability is part of the intelligence with which it must be constructed.

But there is something else worth accomplishing.

A man can spend thirty years building an enterprise and discover that he has spent thirty years avoiding himself. He can also spend those same years giving increasingly beautiful expression to something he genuinely carries within him.

The outward accomplishments may appear remarkably similar.

The lives through which they were accomplished are entirely different.

ESSAY 07

Outgrowing One's Creation

There came a point in the development of one of my businesses when I realized, without the slightest doubt, that my continued involvement would eventually destroy it.

There was nothing particularly wrong with the business. It was solid, intelligently constructed and provided something of genuine value to a considerable number of people. It had the potential to continue growing for many years.

The difficulty was that I had outgrown it.

My interests had evolved, my understanding had deepened, and the intensity with which I wished to engage in my work no longer corresponded to what the organization could accommodate. Had I insisted on giving full expression to the person I had become within the confines of that enterprise, I would have placed an enormous amount of pressure upon something that did not require it.

I needed to leave, not because the business had failed, but precisely because I wanted it to continue succeeding.

Two Directions of Growth

We generally speak of growth as though it were a movement occurring in a single direction. An individual grows, a business grows, and we assume that these movements will continue to complement one another.

But an enterprise can grow horizontally while its founder is developing vertically.

Horizontal growth involves extending the activities of an organization, serving more people, developing its infrastructure and increasing its presence within a particular field. Its fundamental nature may remain relatively unchanged throughout this process.

Vertical growth concerns something different. It involves the acquisition of greater depth, the development of new faculties and the discovery of territories of understanding and creation that were previously inaccessible.

There is no reason why the horizontal growth of an enterprise should necessarily accommodate the vertical development of its founder.

The enterprise I had constructed served a particular clientele and responded to a particular order of demand. Its methodology, structure and personnel had developed accordingly. It could have continued expanding horizontally without requiring any fundamental alteration of its nature.

But expanding an undertaking I had already mastered held very little interest for me. I wanted to investigate new things, develop new faculties and discover possibilities that belonged to an entirely different order of experience.

The business needed more of what I had already created.

I needed something else.

When Greater Capacity Becomes a Disturbance

There is an important distinction between improving something and asking it to become something it is not.

An organization may be functioning exceptionally well within the territory for which it was constructed. The fact that its founder has developed beyond that territory does not establish that there is anything deficient in the organization. Nor does it establish that the organization ought to follow him.

I was becoming increasingly aware of this in my own business. The depth at which I wished to investigate things, the intensity with which I wanted to work and the possibilities I was interested in pursuing were becoming disproportionate to the nature of the undertaking.

What would have been an advantage in another environment was becoming a source of pressure within this one.

The business did not need to become a more sophisticated expression of my evolving intelligence. It needed to continue performing the function for which it had been created.

To insist otherwise would have been to subordinate the needs of the organization and the people it served to my own developmental interests.

I had no desire to do that.

But neither did I have any desire to arrest my development in order to remain indefinitely within a structure I had outgrown.

The solution was to change my relationship with the enterprise.

Preparing My Departure

I had recognized the necessity of withdrawing several years before my eventual departure.

Toward the end of 2010, someone entered the organization whom I identified as capable of eventually assuming my responsibilities. My intention was to develop her capacities, prepare the team and gradually withdraw from the foreground while remaining available to support the continued development of the enterprise.

This was not a conventional managerial succession.

The organization operated in the field of human development. Its work required an understanding of a particular methodology and the science underlying it. Those who would eventually assume responsibility for delivering it needed considerably more than administrative competence.

They had to learn the work itself.

And learning the work involved living it. The knowledge had to become integrated into their own existence before they could competently make it available to others.

There are things one can explain in an afternoon that may require years for another human being to genuinely understand. The transmission of information is relatively straightforward. The development of the faculties through which that information becomes operative is another matter altogether.

I had anticipated that the preparation would require approximately six to six and a half years, with the transition taking place during the summer of 2017.

By 2018, I was still there.

I eventually withdrew in January 2019.

More than eight years had elapsed since I began preparing for this succession.

The Discipline of Remaining Small

The latter years were particularly difficult for me.

I knew where I wanted to go. I knew what I wished to investigate, and I was increasingly impatient to give myself to new undertakings. Yet I remained responsible for an organization whose people were taking longer than anticipated to assume the full extent of their responsibilities.

I had to keep myself small.

I use that expression quite deliberately. The intensity and depth with which I wished to participate in my work had become inappropriate to the environment in which I was still operating. I could not give full expression to myself there without placing considerable pressure upon the organization.

And I could not simply leave without considering the consequences.

Several years of my existence were consequently spent exercising a degree of restraint that I found profoundly irritating. I was occupying a position I had already outgrown, concerning myself with matters I had long since understood, and waiting for others to become capable of assuming their responsibilities.

There was nothing particularly noble about how I felt during this period. I was bored. I was impatient. I wanted to move on.

But my impatience was not sufficient justification for compromising something capable of providing considerable value to thousands of people.

Had I simply stood up to the full extent of what I had become, I would have broken the organization. Had I withdrawn before the necessary conditions were established, I might equally have compromised its capacity to continue performing its function.

So I restrained myself.

It was a sacrifice, and one I made consciously.

The fact that something no longer provides a meaningful territory for one's own development does not diminish the significance it may continue to possess for others.

Becoming Unnecessary

One of the more interesting responsibilities of a founder is to develop the intelligence through which his own presence can eventually become unnecessary.

This is considerably more complex than delegating tasks.

An individual can execute instructions for years without developing the understanding necessary to generate those instructions independently. He may become exceptionally reliable in performing particular functions while remaining entirely dependent upon someone else for direction.

A business organized in this manner can become quite substantial without acquiring any genuine independence from its founder.

Preparing someone to assume responsibility requires the development of their capacity to perceive, understand, discern and act within the territory they will eventually occupy.

In my particular circumstances, this also required a considerable degree of personal development on the part of those receiving the work. They needed to become capable of performing something whose quality depended upon the intelligence and depth of the person performing it.

This cannot be accomplished simply by appointing someone to a position.

Nor is the purpose to produce another version of oneself. The people assuming responsibility will inevitably bring their own intelligence, personality and particular characteristics into the organization.

What interests me is establishing the conditions through which they can assume the function competently and develop the enterprise through their own faculties.

There is considerable freedom in an arrangement of this nature. The founder becomes free to pursue other undertakings, while those assuming responsibility acquire a territory within which their own intelligence can develop and find expression.

Business Is Secondary

I have acquaintances who have been performing essentially the same professional activity for nearly twenty years and continue to derive satisfaction from it.

I am not one of those people.

Once an undertaking becomes primarily a repetition of what I have already accomplished, I become bored. I enjoy entering new territories, discovering things I have yet to understand and participating in creative processes through which something unfamiliar comes into existence.

The development of a business interests me because of what can be discovered, developed and created through it.

But business is secondary.

My principal undertaking has always been my own development as a human being. The enterprises I create, the disciplines I study and the relationships in which I participate all belong, in one way or another, to that undertaking.

This gives me a particular freedom in my relationship with what I create. I do not need an enterprise to remain the centre of my existence simply because I have devoted a considerable portion of my life to constructing it.

Nor do I need to continually reinvent it in order to remain interested in it.

Something I created twenty years ago may remain entirely appropriate to the people it serves, even though I would have absolutely no interest in creating the same thing today.

Its continued relevance does not require my continued involvement.

Allowing a Creation to Live

An enterprise and its founder do not necessarily have the same destiny.

There may be a period during which their respective development is so intimately related that it is virtually impossible to distinguish one from the other. The individual develops through constructing the enterprise, and the enterprise acquires substance through the development of the individual.

But eventually, their paths may diverge.

Recognizing this requires understanding what the organization actually needs, rather than assuming that it needs everything its founder has become.

Sometimes the most valuable contribution a founder can make is to prepare the circumstances of his own departure. To develop the people, establish the necessary conditions and allow what he has created to continue its existence without obliging it to remain the instrument of his own development.

The enterprise may have decades of growth ahead of it.

So may the individual.

There is no reason to confuse the two.

I did not create a business in order to spend the remainder of my life being its founder. I created it because there was something I wished to bring into existence.

Once it existed, and others could assume responsibility for it, there remained something considerably more interesting for me to attend to.

What else might I become?

III / CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT

ESSAY 08

The Refinement of an Instrument

At forty-eight, I find myself devoting a substantial portion of my days to learning how to fight. After more than twenty-five years in the healing arts, there is something rather beautiful about this turn of events.

I have been athletic since my youth and have always wanted to study martial arts wholeheartedly. It is only now that I have the freedom to give this pursuit the attention it deserves. Alongside my training, I study music and *Jyotiṣa*, and spend much of my time in solitude and nature.

To someone familiar with my professional history, these activities may appear to have little relationship with one another. To me, they belong to the same investigation.

I have spent much of my life studying the human being, and I happen to have at my disposal a remarkably sophisticated instrument through which to conduct that investigation: myself.

The more intimately I come to know this instrument, the more of humanity becomes available to me. This relationship between self-knowledge and perception has shaped my education for much of my life.

The Composition of a Human Being

One of the things I particularly appreciate about *Jyotiṣa*, the traditional Indian system of astrology, is the richness of its language concerning human constitution.

Consider Mars. There is within each of us an intelligence through which we initiate, confront, penetrate, defend and exert force. Whether we are performing surgery, engaging in combat or asserting ourselves in the world, something of this intelligence is operative.

Venus introduces us to another quality of human experience: beauty, affection, pleasure, refinement and harmony. Mercury concerns our capacity to distinguish, articulate and establish relationships between ideas. Saturn acquaints

us with labour, endurance and time, while Jupiter brings us into the territory of expansion, understanding and wisdom.

What fascinates me is that we all possess these components.

The warrior possesses a Venus. The artist possesses a Mars. The intellectual possesses a Saturn. What they have done with these aspects of themselves, how intimately they know them and how they relate to the rest of their nature are entirely different matters.

A musician does not require an endless supply of notes to produce an endless variety of music. The possibilities arise through their composition, their relationship, their intensity and timing.

Human nature fascinates me for much the same reason.

Ayurveda also offers a sophisticated understanding of constitution. Both traditions provide valuable means of investigating the particular organization of an individual. Through genuine *sādhana*, however, this investigation becomes something much more intimate than the study of a system.

One gradually discovers one's own architecture.

Certain aspects of our nature occupy a central position. Others develop in relation to them. As our understanding deepens, we begin to distinguish what is fundamental to us from what is secondary, what has been cultivated from what remains dormant, and what has developed in harmony from what has developed through compensation.

There is an intelligence to this composition that cannot be reduced to the strength of its individual components.

I have no reason to develop every aspect of myself to the same degree, any more than a musician has reason to play every note with the same intensity. My development must respect my nature.

But I am interested in becoming intimately acquainted with everything that nature contains.

The Portion We Mistake for the Whole

A man who has become intimately acquainted with sadness can develop an extraordinary sensitivity to it. He may recognize expressions of sadness in another human being that remain entirely invisible to others.

The trouble is that, having become so familiar with this particular territory, he may begin encountering it everywhere. Spend enough time with him and even your happiness may become something he wishes to investigate.

The ambitious man encounters a similar difficulty. He understands initiative, competition, power and the acquisition of wealth. Introduce him to someone who has no particular interest in any of these things, however, and he may have absolutely no idea what he is looking at.

He mistakes the absence of something familiar to him for the absence of something that ought to be there.

A man can spend his entire life investigating Mars and develop an exceptional understanding of its intelligence. But Mars is not the truth of human existence. Neither is Venus, nor Jupiter, nor any other component of our constitution, however magnificently we have developed it.

This becomes particularly important when one's profession consists in understanding human beings.

If I am sitting with a man whose martial nature is particularly developed, my capacity to perceive him is directly related to how intimately I know that aspect of humanity within myself. I do not need to be more martial than he is, nor do I need to possess his constitution. But I must know the territory, and I must know enough of the remaining territories to understand how his martial qualities fit into the whole.

Otherwise, I may simply find myself admiring his strength, intimidated by it or fascinated by something I have yet to develop within myself. None of these reactions necessarily tells me very much about him.

The extent to which I see myself determines the extent to which I see another human being. Every discovery I make within myself makes something more of humanity intelligible to me.

Eventually, I become capable of recognizing the same components in configurations vastly different from my own, without needing to rearrange those configurations according to my personal preferences.

And behind this extraordinary composition of capacities, strengths, weaknesses and peculiarities, there is an individual expressing himself through them.

That is the person I am interested in meeting.

An Education Through Participation

There are things one discovers about oneself in solitude. There are others for which solitude is practically useless.

I can investigate the structure of music for years, but there is something I will discover only when I sit down with an instrument and attempt to produce music myself. The same applies to the martial arts.

Having spent decades studying the human organism, I find it particularly fascinating to rediscover the body under an entirely different set of demands. Timing, distance, rhythm, power, precision, the relationship between relaxation and explosiveness — there is an extraordinary universe of intelligence within combat.

The organism is the same. What becomes available to my understanding through it is different.

But something else happens in the process, something I find equally enriching.

When I enter a martial arts gym, whatever I may have accomplished in the healing arts is of relatively little interest to a man attempting to kick me in the head.

We have other matters to attend to.

Through my participation in this discipline, I have entered a human universe with its own language, humour, values and understanding of respect. I am establishing relationships with individuals whose lives I might otherwise have encountered principally through my profession.

I could have met these men as patients. I could have listened to them, investigated their difficulties and offered them something of the knowledge and experience I have acquired over the years. But the relationship would have been of an entirely different nature.

Here, we meet as peers.

I train alongside them, share something of their experience and gradually come to appreciate the subtleties of their discipline. I discover what moves them, what they find beautiful, what they demand of themselves and what they recognize in another man.

They also discover aspects of my nature that would have remained largely invisible had we met in a professional setting.

Something of my world becomes available to them, just as something of theirs becomes available to me. Whatever I have developed through my years in the

healing arts can now find expression within a relationship founded upon mutual participation and respect.

I am not standing outside their universe, attempting to understand it. I have acquired the means to enter it.

This is one of the more beautiful consequences of developing different aspects of oneself. We acquire far more than additional capacities. We acquire new possibilities of relationship with humanity.

An entire group of people who may previously have remained somewhat foreign to us becomes familiar. We begin to understand their language, appreciate their humour and recognize the meaning of experiences we once understood principally through observation.

It is extraordinary how much larger the world becomes when we develop another part of ourselves.

The Man Beyond His Profession

One of the peculiar consequences of professional success is that the world begins organizing its relationship with us around a particular aspect of our nature.

People discover something we do well. They recognize it, value it and seek it out. Over time, an increasing portion of our lives becomes devoted to the expression of that capacity.

There is a great deal of satisfaction in mastering a discipline, but there would be something rather unfortunate about allowing that mastery to determine the limits of one's subsequent development.

I have spent much of my life giving expression to a particular part of my nature. It has been an enormously rich experience, and I continue to enjoy exercising the faculties I have developed through it.

But there is more to me than that.

At this stage of my life, I have deliberately created the space to discover and develop some of those other qualities. I am on a personal retreat. I train, study, play music, take long walks in nature, attend to my family and continue working privately with a small number of individuals.

Very little of what occupies my days is dictated by the necessity of maintaining a position in the world.

I can spend years learning something without needing to become known for it. I can devote myself to an activity without considering how I might eventually

monetize it. And I can enjoy the company of people who have absolutely no interest in what I have accomplished professionally.

I find this freedom immensely valuable.

Not every capacity needs to become a profession, nor does every pleasure require an audience. Some things deserve to be developed simply because they belong to us and have yet to be fully lived.

There is something within me that has always loved the martial arts. There is something within me that responds to music. Both deserve a place in my life, quite independently of what either may contribute to my professional competence.

I would find it rather impoverishing to justify the development of my humanity exclusively through its usefulness to my profession.

The Instrument

My education has never been confined to the acquisition of knowledge. It has involved the discovery and development of the different ways in which I experience life.

The more intimately I know these aspects of myself, the more I appreciate their relationships within me and the extraordinary variety of forms they assume in others.

Human beings have not become less interesting to me through this investigation. Quite the contrary. Every discovery seems to introduce me to another territory, another quality of intelligence, another way in which life can be experienced and expressed.

And I am under no particular obligation to conclude the investigation.

I am, after all, the principal beneficiary of my own education. I get to live the life that becomes available through it.

The practitioner is merely fortunate enough to inherit what the man discovers along the way.