



PSYCHOENERGETICS

A BODY-MIND APPROACH TO DEPTH WORK AND PROCESS FACILITATION

RADICAL WHOLENESS

The Embodied Present & The Ordinary Grace of Being

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For the PSEN US Training Group



CHAPTER ONE - Feel-Feel-At-Flesh Inside

A Fork In The Road

Every human culture communicates its own story of reality and our proper relationship to it. Each story communicates what it means to be human.

The Story isn't written in words – it's written in the background, in the myriad of particulars found in the culture's architecture, language, hierarchies, customs, values, markets, child-rearing practices, modes of transportation, prisons – everything.

The Story of Western culture asserts through these particulars a range of messages: that humans stand independent of nature as our skyscrapers do; that the head should be in charge of the body, just as a CEO heads a corporation; that we can own trees, land and animals; that self-mastery is the means to success; that what we feel as the 'self' lies within the boundary of the skin; that the pursuit of happiness is the primary goal of our lives; and that money can buy security.

Here's the rub: Organizing our lives in accord with the Story 'feels right' to us, even when it makes us feel bad. Joseph Campbell referred to such a state as 'organized inadequacy'.

The instructions of the Story aren't reasonable or accountable, are largely hidden, and have nothing to do with the truth of the world.

Because the Story is largely invisible, its instructions rule us without our being aware of it.

The deepest impulses of our lives – our curiosity, our body’s sense of truth, our love of the edges of life – tend to clash with the patterns into which we have been molded.

Our lives can feel at stake. Not our literal existence, but the matter of our aliveness. We often watch the adults in our world seem utterly entranced by the fantasylands they live in; none of them seem free or fully awake.

- *What really matters in our lives? When do we ever dare to put this question fully on the line?*

“What people think of as a moment of discovery is really the discovery of a question.”
-Jonas Salk

- *The most difficult thing in the world is to question an assumption you’ve never consciously made.*

Shepherd’s Primary Focus:

1. To understand the nature of the Story of our culture.
2. To discern how it shows up in the body.
3. To acquire freedom of choice in the matter.



The Sense of Balance

Our culture interprets all aspects of our reality.

We all learn what to value. Without necessarily being aware of it, we learn the value system that says ‘up’ is good, and ‘down’ is bad.

It becomes difficult to see that this is merely a part of the Story of what it means to be human in our culture.

We’ve been taught that we have five senses – touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight. This is also a cultural construct, as different cultures recognize different senses.

- *Senses are what activate our intelligence. If we had no senses, our intelligence would literally remain asleep.*

The Anlo-Ewe culture of West Africa has an understanding and experience of the senses that differs radically from ours. They place an emphasis on **balance** as a sense. For the Anlo-Ewe, balance is an essential component of what it means to be human.

- “Culture does not only affect the mind. It changes the body.”
 - Kathryn Linn Geurts

The senses we legitimize in the Western world all conform to the same model: a stimulus from the outside world crosses the boundary of the self and arrives at a receptor.

What each of our sense supports is an aspect of the Story that is foundational to its message about what it means to be human: *the self is contained within a boundary.*

But balance does not work like that. It doesn't impute a personal boundary. It relies on the felt relationship between your center of gravity and that of the earth. The earth itself is massive, but its center is precisely located.



Deliver Nothing, Experience Everything

In the Anlo-Ewe culture, **speech** is considered to be a sense.

Speaking is an experience that is felt in the mouth and the body; and they feel spoken words as something that could be directed “with the intention of hitting a mark”, as your senses might direct an arrow.

Our view that someone speaks in order to communicate what she knows is a reinforcement of our cultural belief that the self is contained within a boundary: our thoughts exist inside us, and speech is what we use to deliver them across a boundary to someone else.

In reality, *speech is not a delivery system – it is a means of discovery.* It enables a speaker to give spontaneous, tangible form to her thoughts and feelings.

Speaking is analogous to the sense of touch: It enables you to feel your way forward through the metaphoric dark towards a beckoning idea, just as your hands might enable your way forward in a dark room.

So speech can be thought of as a sense that facilitates discovery. When we understand speech in that way, the whole of your being is invited to be present to your act of speaking.

By contrast, if you believe that speech is a means of delivering your ideas, your concern will be on the task of *presentation.*

The primary concern of presentation mode is to elicit a certain response in the listener. So your underlying desire is to manipulate a certain reaction in the other. Presentation mode is the default option in our culture.

An extreme version of presentation mode is public speaking. It's the nightmare of being burdened with trying to control the uncontrollable.

- *Every time you speak you face a choice: to be in presentation mode or you can be present.*

We quickly learn that if we are present to our truth, the listener – if they wish – will be able to feel this truth and resonate to it as well.

- *One can learn to experience the present moment as a tangible, borderless, intimate intelligence.*



Seselelame

When we think about promoting our personal well-being, we might think about taking the right supplements, eating organic food, exercising regularly, sleeping well, etc. But this is based on a limiting assumption that personal health will be achieved by doing the right things to the body.

The Story of our culture is to focus on the self as an isolated entity, as though it were a machine requiring upkeep.

In the Anlo-Ewe culture, they experience the self as porous rather than enclosed. *Well-being is understood to be dependent on transactions between the self and others* – including the flow of energy, matter, substances and information throughout many aspects of the individual world.

In short, *well-being is sustained by dynamic relationship.*

Neuroscience organizes human senses into three categories: exteroception, proprioception, and interoception.

- **Exteroception** includes all the senses that inform us about the world outside the body, such as touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight.
- **Proprioception** tells us where the body is in space.
- **Interoception** monitors all that is going on within the body – the heart, the breath, muscle tension, hunger and thirst, our gut.

The Anlo-Ewe culture places the realm of internal sense front and center, as a kind of meta-sense of “*feel-feel-at-flesh-inside*”.

They call this **seselelame**, *all that is perceived through the sensations of the body*, using exteroception, proprioception, and interoception.

The Anlo-Ewe don’t just hear sounds, they feel them resonate through the body. They don’t just see sights, they feel them in the body.

Seselelame is an inner realm in which all the world is experienced and felt.



What The Body Knows

Because the senses activate our intelligence and orient us to the world, a selected set of senses will privilege a certain way of attending to it. We also learn what *not* to sense.

The pre-conscious mind has an ability to process clues from the environment that are undetectable by the conscious mind – and what the pre-conscious mind knows shows up in the body.

What the senses can tell us – especially the interoceptors – is more reliable than our conscious reasoning.

In Western culture, we habitually subjugate the senses to serve the head’s desire to gain objective knowledge about the world around us. Objective knowledge is disembodied knowledge. We need to recover what the body knows.

Seselelame is an umbrella or ‘uber’ sense that freely feels reality reverberate through ‘the cavern’ of the body. It is a holistic, synthesized, non-categorical, subjective wakefulness to the world as it is perceived through the body.

The body and the brain act as a single functioning unit that collects signals inaccessible to the conscious mind. The whole of your intelligence is more astute than any partitioned portion of it could be.

When the body ‘knows’ the world, it is not relying on the abstractions of language: its knowing is nonverbal, unmediated and direct. Its thinking is sensational. Flesh is experienced as a medium that resonates to our thinking as well as to the world around it.



Our Primary Wound

We tend to downplay or pre-organize what we are feeling.

Living our days in the abstract knowledge of things rather than in the intimate companionship of the world promotes a sense of disconnection and anxiety, and is consistent with an underlying schism in our culture: *the separation of our thinking from our being.*

A nurturing of *seselelame* is nowhere to be seen in our formal education of children.

Divorcing our thinking from our being has separated us from the core understanding of all that the body knows: the understanding that *it belongs to the world, expresses the world, is held by the world and shares in all that happens in the world.*

This causes us to think we are superior to the world, distinct from it, and independent from life on earth. This delusion is capable of both deadening and dooming us.



The Boundary & The Borderless Present

'Being' doesn't occupy much of our attention. Yet we long to open ourselves to life and feel it, rather than hold ourselves in check until we figure out how to respond to it.

When our energy does not flow, we cannot be informed by it.

Bodily tension diminishes our sensitivity.

Our sense of self is actually held in its reality by the world to which it belongs. But when our surface tensions disrupt our sensitivity to that embrace, we create our own container through thinking, and we lock the reality of self into that story.

- *The experience of being is affiliated with feeling.*

Our bodies hum to the Present Moment, and as we become aware of that humming, we feel the Present living within us. When we are embodied in this way, all sense of separation fades, and the embodied present moment is the lived divine experience.



Known Relationship, Felt Relationship

The body feels the currents of reality in all their yielding, rich and changeable aliveness; by attuning to these currents, the body attunes to the relationships that guide the unfolding of the Present.

- *The intelligence of the head is its ability to think abstractly.*

Abstraction is properly understood as the act of removing something from its associations and its living context, and considering it independently of all that, on its own.

Here is a truth our culture has yet to accommodate: the essence of something is not a quality that sits within it, sealed off from the world. *Its essence is found in its relationships with the whole.*

Those relationships are infinite and cannot be comprehensively analyzed and wholeness itself has emergent properties that are not material and do not exist in its parts, even though every part participates in them.

- *There is no such thing as independence, period.*

Quantum mechanics ran into this fact head on: the very concept of independence is a fantasy. Everything affects and depends on everything else. Everything leans on everything. As soon as you imagine otherwise, you contract your ability to be informed by the reality to which you belong.



Things & Processes

There is certainly some truth in saying that things have boundaries. *Where we go astray, though, is in believing that a boundary can contain the whole of what something is.*

For example - a tree, far from being a static thing, is actually a process, like a whirlpool, which implicates and reveals the entire cosmos.

“What we are learning from the molecular processes that actually keep our bodies running is that we're far more fluid than we realize, and the world passes through us.”

- *Steven Cole*

Consider breathing, for instance. We are breathing in the exhalations of forests. Oxygen is born of the touch of sunlight on leaves.

Bringing our attention to our breath puts us in touch with not just our life, but with the life coursing through the moment. Our experience of our breath is foundational not just to our life, but to our experience of life.

We can choose to experience our breath carrying the world through us, or we can choose to inhibit our experience of it. Our experience of reality is upheld by the experience of our breath passing through us.

- *Our experience of reality is our experience of the world's energy passing through us – diminish one and you diminish the other.*

The nature of every one of our senses – and not just the 'chosen five' – is also an experience of reality passing through us. And there is no experience of reality without the senses.



Don't Fence Me In

- *We cannot experience reality without becoming sensitive to our very real porous-ness to it.*
- *Our being includes all that we discover when we are fully present.*

When we understand these two intertwined aspects of our very being, we facilitate a shift in allegiance from the abstractions of 'known relationship' towards the presence of 'felt relationship'.

When we cut ourselves off from felt relationship, we divert our thinking from 'What Is' to the endlessly complicated subject of 'What Might Be'.

We are born into two forms of thinking: one is allied with wholeness and the other with parts. Each is necessary. One is abstract knowing and the other is embodied knowing.



The Inescapable Mystery of the Whole

If reality cannot be objectively known, we should appreciate that it *can* be felt. It can be experienced. It lives through us.

- *Wholeness is the primary, inescapable nature of reality.*

Wholeness lies utterly beyond the scope of any perspective. The whole lives through each of its parts, yet its parts cannot be known with any finality.

- *To be desensitized to wholeness is to be desensitized to reality.*

Wholeness is not something we can achieve. It doesn't need achieving. It already, irreducibly, exists.

The idea of *achieving* wholeness is meaningless, though we might recognize that we can *surrender* to wholeness. Undertaking that surrender – what Joseph Campbell called the “self-achieved submission” of the mythic hero – carries us into a softening of the divisions that partition us from ourselves.

We can practice softening ourselves into the borderless Present to which we ultimately belong.



The Template We Live By

Wholeness attunes to wholeness. There can be no renewal of our relationship with wholeness, then, without a broad appreciation of the divisions that live within us and how they are reinforced by the Story.

We tend to notice our bodies primarily when they are not cooperating with what we need from them. Or when they ache, or complain.

It's clear that culture changes the body. Once we can recognize that we have established a divided, controlling, isolated, top-down relationship with the body, we can see how that shapes all the relationships of our culture:

- *We relate to the body as though it contains our wholeness within its boundary.*
- *Living in our heads, we feel separate from the body. And so we similarly feel separate from the body of the world.*
- *When we live in our heads, we experience them as the center of our intelligence.*
- *When we segregate the intelligence of the head and privilege it, it deems the body to be without intelligence.*
- *When we live in our heads, we feel the body as something that is not quite us – it's something we 'have'.*
- *Because we prefer the privacy of the head to the porosity of being, we seek the familiarity of that experience in the worlds we create.*

- *To value what the head knows and demean what the body knows is implicitly to turn against not just human nature, but nature itself.*
- *Living up in the head, we feel superior to the body. Eventually that superior position comes to feel safe and familiar.*
- *Our cultural relationship with the body is a top-down relationship. We sit up in our heads and supervise the body from there.*
- *Deaf to the intelligence of the body, and viewing it primarily as our means for getting things done, we generally judge the body – the source of our deepest knowing – as either useful to us or as a problem.*

Our culture has cast such a shadow over the body's intelligence that we require help from other cultures to shed a little light on this matter.



Hara defines a realm of consciousness as much as a region of our anatomy.

- *It is considered to be the place in the body where you come home to yourself.*
- *It is where you rest within yourself.*
- *It is where you come in contact with your deepest understandings.*
- *It is where you feel your most resonant truths.*
- *It is where you most keenly feel yourself cradled in the Present.*
- *It is where you feel most attuned to your life.*



CHAPTER TWO - Our Disabled Sense

Renewing the Story

We have to allow the thinking of the head to get over its sense of superiority and need for control and discover the rich wonder that comes with offering its gifts to the living intelligence of the body.

When you think with the whole of your being rather than with a segregated part of the self, you recognize every sensation in the body as a form of intelligence, and you recognize the state of your body's energy as the state of your mind. *There is an identity between them.*

- *When the body's energy is unsettled, our mind is unsettled.*
- *Reclaiming our ability to think with the whole of our being is largely a process of undoing.*

Embodiment isn't about quieting the thoughts in our head and noticing the sensations in our body from there – it is about bringing the abstract intelligence in our head into relationship with our body's intelligence.

We must go beyond the mind's directive to “notice the breath” and “listen to the body” to foster embodiment, as this actually reinforces the very divide that it's seeking to overcome.

- *Embodiment is a state in which our entire intelligence is experienced as a coherent unity attuned with the world.*

Embodiment is about feeling the world through our breath, and listening to the world through our body. When we are embodied, any distinction between ‘mind’ and ‘the body's energy’ becomes meaningless.



The intelligence of the mind offers the huge advantage of being able to think about what isn't present.

But the more time we spend thinking about our thoughts about the world, rather than feeling the reality of the Present Moment, the more we inhabit our private world of abstraction, rather than a realm of being.

To live in the abstractions of the mind is to live as though independence were a real possibility; but independence is the very basis of abstraction: separating things from their context.

When we no longer put our ideas in charge – or no longer need to be directed by them – we can come back to the body and its attunement to *What Is*.

Without abandoning our facility for abstraction, we can learn once again to feel the world with sensitivities that fall far beyond the realm of our five basic senses.

There is a limitless capacity for attunement within the body.



The Body Is a Resonator

Proprioception is a sense that tells you where your body is in space.

- ***Spatioception*** is the sense that tells you where space is in your body. It is a sense we are all born with.

We all know the difference we feel when we are able to harbor a wide-open, easy flow of spaciousness inside our bodies, available to the world. This sense of spaciousness allows us to know our bodies with a new awareness.

As we practice undoing the habitual tensions and holding patterns that constrict a sense of spaciousness, our sensitivity to the Present Moment can grow until there is room in our bodies for the world to live.

- *Experientially, the body is like a bell.*

A bell will resonate to the sounds around it – and what makes that humming attunement possible is the spaciousness within it. Its intelligence hums as the energies of the whole, to which it belongs, hums to it.

Once the body's spaciousness is compromised, it loses its resonance.

When we cannot feel and resonate with the present moment, its information and guidance for us may also not exist. When we are cut off from being guided by a felt sense of the world around us, we are compelled to take on the endless task of guiding ourselves.

- ***Spatioception*** dissolves the boundary between the self and world, allowing what is outside to live within, allowing the Present Moment to be embodied.

Spatioception has no identifiable sense organ – no mechanism to receive a stimulus and transmit it for interpretation to the head.

The spaciousness of the body will not be noticed and felt if our awareness is stuck in our heads. *Spatioception* can lay the groundwork for a reconciliation between our thinking and our being.



Our Primary Sense

Sapience means 'to know'.

- *Holosapience is an inner sense that allows us to feel the wholeness of our experience.*
- *Holosapience is our primary sense because it attunes us to reality.*

When we feel the world only as an arrangement of individual things, we miss the mindful sensitivity that holds everything together, and we are divided from the world's reality.

When do we actually think with the whole of our being, or speak from the whole of our being, or feel a question with the whole of our being?

Every living thing is in the midst of a dance of accommodation, integrating the stresses and enjoyments of the environment as it seeks to fulfill the encoded promise of its inheritance.

Every wild part of nature is actively helping the whole to harmonize, weaving the wholeness of the world into newness.

When we can feel our belonging to the wholeness of the world, we are better able to serve it by continually responding to it.

- *Our deepest nature yearns to reach beyond the fragmentation we feel in our lives, and seeks to surrender into the borderless reality of wholeness.*

The journey towards wholeness is counter-cultural, though, and will necessitate some concerted effort to swim against the tide.

The nature of wholeness is that it excludes nothing – and the purpose of a boundary is to explicitly exclude.

Our sense of wholeness is inseparable from our relationships with friends, family and community. It depends on all the transactions in which we participate, consciously and otherwise.



Radical Wholeness

Our personal wholeness is indivisible from all our felt relationships with the world around us. There can be no sense of wholeness without the Present Moment, which is the limitless cradle of being in which wholeness itself rests.

- *If we take the counter-cultural journey of disclaiming the fantasy of independence, and growing into a remembrance of your deeper reality, the bearing of our entire life with re-orient itself.*

Wholeness is not something that we can achieve. We can't determine what it looks like, or where it might take us.

Wholeness is not a destination or a goal – it is a beginning that can only be initiated with a surrender to the Present Moment, and a sensitivity to what is asking of us in the here and now.

- *A surrender into wholeness is a letting go into the ceaseless creativity of the Present Moment - It invariably takes you someplace new.*
- *A surrender into wholeness is an invitation into the rich paradox of reality.*

When we surrender into wholeness, we are fully active and fully at rest; fully yourself and beyond yourself; experience of grace without possessing it; grounded in security while feeling somewhat at risk. We will feel the world with a striking intimacy that is at the same time non-personal.

What we most deeply crave are qualities that can never belong to us and yet are always found in the Present Moment – *spaciousness, the joy of being, connectedness.*



Radical Attunement

- *Our sense of personal wholeness is found in our ability to attune to the Present Moment.*
- *The essential purpose of inner work is to discover and remove the obstructions that desensitize us to the wholeness around and within us.*

Our personal wholeness is felt by feeling the wholeness of the Present Moment. This view of wholeness is radical – rooted in and alive to the world around us.

A sense of radical attunement births us time and again a timeless newness, and a borderless experience of our lives that are beyond our control, and we become alive to the world in ways that are unlikely to leave the status quo intact.

When we are radically attuned, we walk through the world sensing that the universe feels it, in the way a pond feels the skitter of a water spider across its surface.

Living with an inability to feel wholeness leaves us fundamentally ill equipped to know reality.

- *The specific, living reality of anything abides in its relationships with the whole.*



Are We Are Brains?

The body is the unconscious mind. Repressed traumas caused by overwhelming emotion can be stored in a body part, thereafter affecting our ability to feel that part or even move it. The new work suggests there are infinite pathways for the conscious mind to access – and modify – the unconscious mind and body.

- *Candace Pert*

We are actually born with three brains – one in the cranium, one in the heart, and one in the pelvic bowl.

The more deeply inquire into the nature of reality, the more difficult it becomes to separate mind from reality in any way other than the purely theoretical.

- *Modern (quantum) physics has shown that the universe is fundamentally non-local – particles and physical objects that appear to be isolated and separate are in fact deeply interconnected, regardless of distance.*
 - *Mario Beauregard*

The reality of our humanness is indistinguishable from the reality of our wholeness.



Chapter Three – Homo Ex Machina

Our Model of Understanding

(CHAPTER NOTES FORTHCOMING)



Chapter Four – Stepping Outside The Story

Moving Beyond Adolescence

When we are unable to move beyond our culture's interpretation of reality is just a story. This story organizes us, and the world around us, in ways that make sense to us, even when the story itself doesn't feel right.

Because the Story feels so familiar, we take refuge there, even though life often calls us to live beyond what we are given. When we can't or won't answer that call, our lives take on the quality of *'organized inadequacy'*, as Joseph Campbell coined it.

Every culture is an aggregate of customs, language, beliefs and technologies that, taken together, construct its own particular version of what it means to be human.

There comes a time when we arrive at a certain threshold of our adulthood – needing to leave behind the *'organized inadequacy'* of the Story we have grown up with and encounter directly, day to day.

- *The transition into an authentic and true adulthood takes us beyond the reinforced container of the Story, and into encounters with the unmediated presence of being itself.*
- *The journey into this type of adulthood is the core journey of a lifetime, through which we realize the promises of our humanity, and experience the felt sense and mystery of wholeness.*

As our responsiveness to the world grows, we also deepen into the responsibilities it elicits.

Letting go of the Story doesn't mean letting go of reality. It enables a surrender to nature herself – behind which the felt whole of the world's companionship might be discovered.

Vision quests, nature-based pilgrimages, and spiritual journeys take us beyond the familiar embrace of our culture – and the container of the Story that interprets every aspect of the world around us, for us – and places us into unmediated solitary encounter with the limitless reality of *What Is*.

When we encounter directly the boon that can be realized from a profound experience of living into the hero's journey myth, the vibrant reality of that exchange is too subtle, too radiant, and too paradoxical to ever be captured in the structure of a Story.

Instead, we harbor a deep inner remembrance of such encounters, and carry it within the depth of our being, for a lifetime.



The Recovery Of Choice

*“Not everything that is faced can be changed,
but nothing is changed until it is faced.”*

- *James Baldwin*

When something feels normal, it resists further examination or scrutiny. But there are two mutually supporting adventures that can loosen the constraints of 'normal' enough to liberate us into new choices:

- *We can undergo a new experience that cracks open our view of what is possible.*
- *We can tunnel down in the assumptions we hold in our bodies that divide us from our wholeness, and confront them.*

We can learn to acquire a new sense of choice experientially, especially through our bodies, or we can learn to more actively challenge the assumptions we have made about our realities.



Merging the Two Worlds

Remember that *seselelame* feels the presence of the world through the world of our flesh. It is where wholeness is felt and lived.

Wholeness and reality are two sides of the same coin – find one and you find the other. To live in reality means to live with an awareness of wholeness.

Wholeness is unknowable. It has no objective meaning; it cannot be grasped the way you 'grasp' a concept.

Objective knowledge of something provides a shortcut that relieves you of any need to feel it, or to be a part of it.

Mental 'grasping' at knowledge will show up as tension in our body tissues. We tend to spend our days in a body that subtly – or not – clutches against the whole in which we abide.

When we soften into the present moment, we soften into wholeness. We surrender to it, so that the fluid reality of '*What Is*' might touch our core and live there – clear, tangible, resonant.

When we do so, the feeling we have is not that we are 'living in the present moment', but instead, that the present moment is living within us. It is a vivid, wordless intimacy within which we feel the kinship of wholeness. We feel attuned to it, and guided by it. We embody this reality.



Redefining Intelligence

Reason can't help us feel wholeness.

Abstract thinking cuts itself off from what the body knows – and what the body most deeply knows is that it is of the world, is sustained by the world, and belongs to the world.

When we rely on disembodied knowing to investigate the world around us, it can only reveal a mechanical world made up of bits and pieces.

- *Human intelligence is born of the whole, is sustained by it, and is naturally attuned to it.*

Our human sensitivities need a complementary opposite that can ground its charged energies and give them a place to settle and integrate within the body.

Grounding

If our sensitivities open us to the resonances of the world, it is another capacity that enables us to collect and contain what has been gleaned, rather than being overwhelmed or knocked off balance by it – a capacity that enables us to be 'collected' – to deepen into our wholeness and assimilate *What Is*. This integrative quality is '*groundedness*'.

Our sensitivities can only be grounded as the information they access is brought into contact with our being. This happens in the realm of our intelligence that feels the wholeness of our being – deep in the pelvic bowl.

Being grounded in the present moment enables a spacious quality in which all of our relationships are welcomed and felt in our embodiment.

Issues are not taken personally, because the self is not experienced in isolation. It is being held by the body, which is being held by the world.

Supported by the earth itself and by its vast stillness, we can process the energy of the present moment as we feel it passing through us and informing us, rather than having to build it up within us like a wayward electrical charge.

- *We might re-define intelligence as 'grounded sensitivity'.*

Grounded sensitivity fuels curiosity and a need to engage bodily with the world, and find out more about it.

Because each of us is born with a unique set of sensitivities, and are grounded in the world in different ways, each of us will be uniquely attuned to and informed by the world.

The intelligence of ‘grounded sensitivity’ often runs contrary to the larger values and aims of our culture. This can be especially true in our public educational systems.



When Knowledge Becomes Toxic

Our mental thinking typically inflicts itself on our embodied being.

The realm of our ideas will often overrun our experience of wholeness.

If an idea remains unintegrated, it will thwart our wholeness. It will stand like a road sign between you and the world it supposedly represents. When an idea is integrated, it will be reborn as a new sensitivity to the world.

Integration is what our body’s intelligence does well. It is what helps us to feel our way forward, guided by the pulse of the present moment, rather than simply thinking our way forward through abstractions.

In many ways, knowledge has become the modern god. We believe in it, celebrate it and depend on it. We have become obsessed with learning *about* the world, and we have lost sight on how to learn *from* it.

In fact, we now face unprecedented problems of our own making. History suggests that the more knowledge we have, the more in need of saving we become.

When we over-emphasize knowledge to solve all of our problems, the law of unintended consequences comes into play, and makes them behave like the mythological Hydra – we slay one problem, only to create two more in its place.

Our personal lives seem more deeply mired in fantasy than ever before. We devote ourselves to the illusion of independence; we demean the female within us; we accept entitlement as sane and normal; we carry a burden of overwrought stress in our bodies; we are driven by a zeal for acquisition; we over-dedicate ourselves to distraction.

As a result, we end up feeling alone and fragmented from the wholeness that surrounds us.

- *The more our abstract knowledge grows, the more our self-knowledge needs to grow.*

We cannot learn and accept something new about ourselves without initiating change. We all want to progress and grow, but who really wants to change?



Mapping Identity

The Menu vs. The Meal

Objective knowledge is disembodied knowledge. It stands apart from the present moment. It helps us to map out the structures of our worlds, seen and unseen.

Once we identify the various structures of our reality, we can create a static, detailed, reliable map of the world, and use as the basis for our plans. The more energy we put into this project, the more we confuse the map for the reality.

The need to be secure in our identity is a need to immunize ourselves from self-knowledge. We substitute the map of the self for the experience of being alive in the present moment.

This disguises the real choice we face – we can be ‘who we know ourselves to be’, or we can be present to the moment. It is one or the other.

The Spaciousness of Self-Knowledge

Self-knowledge is imparted when ‘who you are’ is illuminated; but we cannot illuminate ourselves for ourselves, any more than we can see our face by shining a light on it.

- *‘Who we are’ is illuminated by our felt relationships with the world around us. The more deeply we come into felt relationship, the more clearly ‘who we are’ is illuminated.*

Unlike objective knowledge, self-knowledge is not something that we can possess. It is not something that can be contained, held still, or pinned down.

- *Ultimately, true self-knowledge is born of an experience of our wholeness.*

Our permeability to the whole of the world around us becomes an intimate gateway to the self.

Objective knowledge is a kind of *self-centered understanding of the world*. We acquire it, possess it, accumulate it. Self-knowledge is a *world-centered understanding of the self*.

The insights of self-knowledge are offered to us by a kind of kinship with the world to which we belong.

- *When our attention is surrendered to the world without self-consciousness, we deepen into felt relationships that activate and illuminate our being.*

This is the *'self-achieved submission'* that Joseph Campbell spoke to, that makes self-knowledge possible. In fact, it is the defining characteristic of the mythic hero.

A hero without self-knowledge – without that inner availability to what the world is asking of us – is no hero at all. There can be no hero's journey for those who are deaf to the world calling to them to it.

- *The attention of the tyrant is self-focused; the attention of the hero is world-focused.*

The mythic hero learns to feel the whole of the world, and seeks to harmonize with its guidance. The heroic task is to embrace a form of self-knowledge that identifies with currents of being.



The Failure of Success

Our pursuit of success can thwart of experience of wholeness.

The pursuit of any vision of success that is out of touch with wholeness will distance us from reality.

For the Anlo-Ewe culture, one of their foremost markers of success is balance. Our primary measure of success is not balance but the accumulation of wealth.

- *The most dangerous or ineffective people are those who feel their ideas about the present moment more keenly than they feel the present moment itself.*

Entitlement is one of the darkest fantasies to take hold of us, because it displaces gratitude. It reveals a world of commodities rather than gifts, a world whose center is the self.

Entitlement carries us out of felt relationship as surely as gratitude carries us into it. Self-absorption in any form is an impoverishment of being.

- *What if we redefined health and wealth in terms of our grounded sensitivity to the whole?*



Freedom As Disconnection

Our images of success and wealth create a sort of splendid isolation. It liberates us from mundane chores, and also dislocates us as well from the mundane.

We get lost in the fantasy of imagining freedom as the ability to disconnect from the obligations, the intrusions, the drudgery and the inconveniences of living.

We can indulge the fantasy of disconnecting from all of our responsibilities, and not having to care about anyone's needs but our own.

We can then care *about* things, without having to actually care *for* them. But caring requires connection – reaching out, getting our hands dirty, being inconvenienced, being needed, being entangled in relationships.

When freedom is misunderstood as the ability to disconnect, it is then understood as the ability to step out of reality, and stepping into a forgetfulness of the world, and of ourselves.



The Forgetfulness of the Tyrant

Myth resonates with the predicaments of our human condition, and one of its prominent themes is the age-old struggle within us between the desire to forget and the desire to remember.

The tyrant, in opposition to reality, denies wholeness and enforces forgetfulness. The hero, by surrendering into wholeness, facilitates a deep remembering.

The tyrant seeks to accumulate enough success and wealth to be able to detach altogether from *what the world might be asking of us*, and instead, devotes the self to a distracted indulgence of *what we want from the world*.

The function of the world is to knead us like dough, that we might eventually rise into our fullest possible embodiment of compassion, clarity and engagement.

- *Our systematic neglect of wholeness has led us to confuse the role of the tyrant with that of the hero.*

Yet the fantasies of the tyrant lives within us all, as does the call of the hero.

Our alienation from the wholeness of the world and the anxieties stirred up by that alienation could justifiably be deemed the deepest crisis of our age – for it leads to a corrosion of our social support systems.

*“The inflated ego of the tyrant is a curse to himself and his world –
No matter how his affairs may seem to prosper.
Self-terrorized, fear-haunted, alert at every hand to meet*

*And battle back the anticipated aggressions of his environment,
Which are primarily the reflections of the uncontrollable impulses
To acquisition within himself, the giant of self-achieved independence
Is the world's messenger of disaster, even though, in his mind,
He may entertain himself with humane intentions."*

- Joseph Campbell

