

**— BRIDGING THE GAPS —**  
**INTRAPERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL**

*“The man who cannot question his own preconceptions when survival is at stake will not live long enough to enjoy his prejudices.”*

— Zatar the Magnificent” in “The Wilding” by C.S. Friedman

**Bridging the Gaps —**

From an evolution of consciousness perspective, conflict is an indicator that a “gap” has emerged between our perceptions of how we want to be regarded and treated (by our selves and others) versus our perceptions of how we are experiencing being regarded and treated (by our selves and others). It manifests as our choice and reaction to pursue discord — as a response to feeling that our need to be heard, seen, and loved has been thwarted. And the consequences can be significant — possibly resulting in the loss of life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness.

In my experience, we tend to feel least heard, seen, and loved when we perceive that we are being physically, emotionally, cognitively, and/or spiritually threatened. The “threat” may be experienced as a challenge to our self-image, integrity, assumptions, perceptions, views, intentions, meanings, values, beliefs, norms, communications, behaviors, causal impacts, and/or resources. The “threat” may come from within us — “intrapersonal”, and/or it may come from other people, organizations, communities, and cultures — “interpersonal”. Regardless, the “threat” draws our attention to the experience of our own suffering.

One of the most powerful “amplifying” agents in the cultivation of conflict is the belief that betrayal has occurred, or is about to occur. The alleged betrayer may be ourselves, and/or other people, groups, deities (“God”), etc. Betrayal is the conviction that a trusted relationship has failed or deserted us — especially in a time of need — and/or has proven false to an obligation or duty. A common response to the experience of betrayal is despair and rage. When the amplifying power of betrayal is present, then bridging the conflict “gap” becomes more difficult because the focus becomes retribution, not the reduction of suffering.

Yet the causal essence of conflict “gaps”, is our inability and/or unwillingness — at an individual and collective level — to rigorously inquire into our own preconceptions about who, what, where, when, how, and why we feel that our need to be heard, seen, and loved is being or has been thwarted. We fail to challenge our unchallenged assumptions and processes, and fail to cultivate the capacity to hold multiple perspectives and perceptions. These failures and our inability and/or unwillingness to inquire — result in physical, emotional, cognitive, and/or spiritual damage at an intrapersonal and interpersonal level.

In my experience, the most efficient and effective way to “bridge” intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict “gaps” is to discern and challenge our unchallenged assumptions and processes, and to cultivate our capacity to hold multiple perspectives and perceptions. We can then integrate our resulting awareness, insights, wisdom, and experience of shared connection — into a process that reduces suffering.

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My observation is that in general, most solutions that are effective and /or efficient in bridging intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict “gaps” — employ various combinations of the following processes-methods-practices from psychology and spiritual training:

1. Intrapersonal (The “Internal Work”)
  - a. “HSL Practice of Compassion”
    - i. Sympathetic inquiry with listening for clarity and learning
    - ii. Empathetic feedback and inquiry for understanding and shared connection
    - iii. “Presence” as “Unconditional Love”
  - b. Learning: Reflection | Meditation | Contemplation | Psychotherapy
  - c. Discernment: Intention | Responsibility | Accountability
  - d. Healing: Self-Forgiveness | Self-Love | Recalibration | “Emunah”
  - e. Integration: Wisdom | Compassion | Skillful Means | Action
2. Interpersonal (The “External Work”)
  - a. “HSL Practice of Compassion”
    - i. Sympathetic inquiry with listening for clarity and learning
    - ii. Empathetic feedback and inquiry for understanding and shared connection
    - iii. “Presence” as “Unconditional Love”
  - b. Learning: Reflection | Declaration of Intention | Recalibration
  - c. Truth & Reconciliation (“Ubuntu” | “Ho’ponopono”)
    - i. Inquiry into Causes
    - ii. Inquiry into Effects (Impacts)
    - iii. Healing: Forgiveness | Acceptance
    - iv. Atonement: Making Amends | “Emunah”
  - d. Integration: Wisdom | Compassion | Skillful Means | Action

\* “*Emunah*” means the capacity to trust (oneself and/or others), the willingness to commit (to oneself and/or to others), and the courage to act (in behalf of oneself and/or others).

To begin to bridge conflicts “gaps” we must start at the intrapersonal level. When we are in conflict with ourselves, it is usually reflected in our relationships with others.

### **Bridging Intrapersonal Gaps —**

Identifying and addressing the intrapersonal “gaps” is the domain of both spirituality and psychology. Yet in my experience, finding solutions that optimally integrate the strengths of both spirituality and psychology is some of the more difficult territory to explore. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses.

At its best, spirituality rigorously explores and cultivates our inner experience using adapted scientific methodologies, to simultaneously increase our capability to cultivate and apply wisdom, compassion, and skillful means in each present-moment — thus achieving a sense of interconnection to Self, Others, The Whole, and our Ecosystems; and removing illusions or false perceptions and formations. Spirituality attempts to probe deeply into the *ultimate* nature and purpose of all “things and phenomena” — providing

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insights like the principles of co-arising or non-inherent existence (“*sunyata*”), and training paths and/or practices for perceiving and internalizing our “true” nature and our relationship to all “things and phenomena”. The goal essentially is to liberate us from the suffering caused by our identification with the lesser egoic self (or ego) by cultivating our awareness of being more fully one's “true” “Self”. Unfortunately, spirituality typically does not rigorously address the evolutionary development, architecture, operational mechanisms, and pathologies and corrective strategies of human behavior and mental processes (emotional-cognitive-intuitive). This can result in spiritual practitioners not having the necessary tools to address the personal and interpersonal challenges that arise as a result of environmental circumstances and conditioning. So you may end up with presumably “enlightened” spiritual teachers committing acts of sexual abuse, substance abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and/or just plain being egomaniacs or manic-depressives. These people can cause serious physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual harm to others.

At its best, psychology rigorously explores and addresses the evolutionary development, architecture, operational mechanisms, and pathologies and corrective strategies of human behavior and mental processes (emotional-cognitive-intuitive). Its function is to develop and provide the necessary tools so that we can effectively and efficiently address the personal and interpersonal challenges that arise as a result of our environmental circumstances and conditioning. Unfortunately, psychology typically does not rigorously address the *ultimate* nature and purpose of all “things and phenomena”. It does not explore the principles of co-arising or non-inherent existence (“*sunyata*”). Also, it does not emphasize the integration of wisdom, compassion, skillful means, and action into the “present-moment” of everyday life.

This leads to a lack of understanding about the nature of “reality” and our relationship to it, results in our maladaptive use of processes for fabricating, controlling, suppressing, identifying with, personifying, amplifying, and/or chasing the phenomena of form, feelings, perceptions (physical-emotional-cognitive-intuitive). It can result in our reifying of our thoughts and emotions, and deifying our relationships with our own experiences and perceptions. This time you may end up with presumably licensed and vetted therapists and counselors committing acts of sexual abuse, substance abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, or just plain being egomaniacs or manic-depressives. These people can cause serious physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual harm to others.

So, what I am proposing is a “bridge” that integrates and balances the strengths and weaknesses of spirituality and psychology — and reduces the number of unfit spiritual and/or psychotherapeutic “experts”. To begin the exploration, I would like to work with a simple model for human development that explores “Nature” versus “Nurture”. “Nature” is what you are born with (think DNA), and “Nurture” is how your environment conditions you while you are growing up.

The “Nature” aspect states that we humans arise are born (“arise”) with specific predispositions and limitations, generally referred to as inherited characteristics and

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potentials. The “Nurture” aspect states that we are conditioned by interactions with our environments. For the purposes of evolving spiritual understanding, a more accurate framing of the model is “Nature” plus “Conditioning”, where “Nature” addresses predispositions and limitations, and “Conditioning” addresses “Haphazard” versus “Cultivated” interactions with our environments (internal and external). In this framing, “Nature” and “Conditioning” are equally important in the processes of human development.

From a “Nature” perspective, some of the predispositions and limitations are deterministic, in that they are statistically predictable because they occur in probability spaces of knowable outcomes — like flipping a coin where the domain of outcomes is knowable (“heads” or “tails”). And some of the predispositions and limitations are non-deterministic, strongly non-linear, and analytically intractable. In the non-deterministic cases, we can not even determine (“know”) a possible domain of outcomes because of random interactions and causes evoking effects that in turn influence causes (“strong emergence”) — like trying to predict right now which next stranger you meet will be a “friend-for-life”.

“Conditioning” also results in the formation of new predispositions and limitations. For example, let’s say that an athlete decides to strictly do intensive weight lifting in order to build up strength, power, and bulk muscle. As the conditioning progresses, the athlete does indeed become stronger and bigger and more powerful — and less flexible because the weight training has established new physical limitations regarding how much any given muscle, tendon, or ligament set can be stretched. You end up with a big, bulky, and slow physique that is “stiff as a board”. This is what is meant by, conditioning establishing new predispositions and limitations. In this case, the predispositions and limitations arise as conditioned characteristics and potentials.

The “Conditioning” perspective provides that there is a possibility of “*cultivating*” our experience of interactions with our internal and external environments — rather than ignorantly accepting “Haphazard” conditioning as the rule. Unfortunately, although the aspiration may exist for raising children (and adults) in ways and environments that cultivate positive experiences and minimize avoidable trauma — rarely does this aspiration achieve the level of manifesting as a life practice actualized by volitional-intentional, disciplined, and integrated training that cultivates multiple intelligences (physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual) towards wisdom, compassion, and skillful means. So most people end up being raised in haphazard ways and environments that continually re-traumatize them during the course of their lives.

From a “Conditioning” perspective, we create the environments and conditioning experiences that shape other people, our organizations, the world, and ourselves. When we are harsh, controlling, and/or self-loathing — we create environments and conditioning experiences that are harsh, controlling, and/or promote self-loathing. When we are violent, non-responsive, and/or impatient — we create environments and conditioning experiences that are unsafe, traumatizing, and damaging (physically, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually).

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Likewise, when we create environments and conditioning experiences that are safe and nurturing and compassionate for Self, Other, the Whole, and our Ecosystems — we manifest wisdom, compassion, skillful means, equanimity, and “Presence” in ourselves, in others, and in our organizations and communities.

Sourced from my life and spiritual training, I experience both positive and negative environments and conditioning experiences. I experience them as interconnected impressions-imprints (Sanskrit: sanskaras) — as integrated co-arising physical-emotional-cognitive-intuitive (spiritual) perceptions. For me, everything that I experience — including my *sense* of “self” — is made up of co-arising parts. This is called dependent origination (arising together). All “things and phenomena” arise and cease according to both simple and complex conditions that reflect predispositions and limitations — whether by “Nature” or by “Conditioning”.

The “things and phenomena” that arise and cease are described in the Majjhima Nikaya Sutra #109. I frame them in current concepts as:

- Form (rūpa): energy/matter — space-time
- Feeling (vedanā): apprehension of sensation-information — stimulation-activation of multiple intelligences
- Perception (sañña): direct experience of physicality-emotion-cognition-intuition
- Formation (sankhāra): Awareness (Self-Other-Whole-Ecosystems) — intention-volition — mindfulness
- Consciousness (viññana): awareness of awareness — Presence-wisdom-compassion

It is important to note that "Consciousness" is the aggregate awareness of "Self" as form, feeling, perception, formation (awareness), and awareness of awareness — as an emergent property of the inter-relationships of the co-arising of all “things and phenomena”. "Self" is recorded in memory — which is created, reported, updated, deleted, and executed both within and external to the transient forms of "self". Memory and recording mechanisms are both discrete, distributed, shared, and joined. Thus, "Consciousness" is extended through shared recording mechanisms — symbol / mathematical sequences / languages, direct neural experience, artificial neural enhancements (computational devices, etc.) — shared recorded memories, and shared processing capabilities like other people.

When cultivated through training and persistent practice, "Consciousness" manifests as “Continuous Presence” — as being the expression of compassion Wisdom & Compassion — (unconditional love) as an individual and collective unconditional skillful “gifting” of our integrative views and perspectives, awareness, attention, discernment, intuitions, humor, understanding, and mindfulness — identifying, developing, and using your individual and collective multiple intelligences to act from experience of and awareness in the “present moment”.

To be "Present" is to hear, see, and love oneself; as well as to hear, see, and love Others, The Whole, and all of our interconnected Ecosystems. “Presence” is the intention,

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invitation, and willingness to be available for the experience of interconnected relationship. And it demands that we be aware of and responsive to both ourselves and to others. “Presence” establishes a sense of interconnectedness of Self, Others, and The Whole that expresses itself as a capacity to trust, the courage to act, and a willingness to commit. “Presence” is an act of “attunement” that brings one into clarity and harmony with what one perceives as the higher aspirations, expectations, and needs of Self, Others, and The Whole.

In my own experience, for a long time “Presence” emerged as a periodic temporary state (“Episodic Presence”) that was the result of aspiration, tools, insights, and the hard work. It was an episodic event that was triggered by the training inquiry, “Am I being “Present” in this present-moment?”. Eventually, deep integration training cultivated a persistent state of “Presence” (“Continuous Presence”) for me as a continuous stage that was triggered by the practice inquiry, “What is the quality of my “Presence” in this present-moment?”.

The difference between “Episodic Presence” and “Continuous Presence” is significant.

I recall that “Episodic Presence” was hard work! It was a protracted grinding effort to consciously alter my state **from** being based in the experiences and processes of fabricating, controlling, suppressing, identifying with, personifying, amplifying, and/or chasing the phenomena of form, feelings, perceptions (physical-emotional-cognitive-intuitive), and/or formations, **to** being habitually “Present” (“Continuous Presence”) as an entrained unconscious competency. In the process, I had to consciously condition my awareness to hold and cultivate multiplicity — of form, feeling, perceptions, and formations. Even with years of training, I found myself constantly falling into separation fallacy: dealing and even identifying with emotions as separate from thoughts as separate from awareness as separate from others as separate from the whole. Consequently, I had to frequently remember to remind myself to be “Present”. But “Episodic Presence” thankfully offered me an occasional breath of fresh air from the everyday trauma and experiences of rage, despair, irrelevance, and impending doom (extinction). Because it gave me firsthand experience that there was a better way of being and experiencing life — “Episodic Presence” gave me hope and the courage to pursue deeper integration training.

“Continuous Presence” is equanimity\* that rests in the effortless: reflecting on ones own perceptions, assumptions, views, intentions, communications, behaviors, and impacts on Self, Others, The Whole, and ones Ecosystems; discerning and rectifying the "gap" between ones intentions and ones impacts; paying attention to the verbal and non-verbal communications signals and behaviors of Self, Others, The Whole, and ones Ecosystems; inquiring into the "gap" between the intentions and impacts; and using skillful means to achieve clarity and equanimity throughout the network of interrelationships.

\* “Equanimity” from the Latin “aequanimitas” or “aequo animo”, meaning “with even heart-mind or purpose or intention”.

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Once “Continuous Presence” has been cultivated, there is no: “forgetting to be ‘Present’”; or wondering about “is this “Presence”; or controlling, suppressing, identifying with, personifying, amplifying, or chasing — form, feelings, perceptions, and/or formations. “Presence” becomes a cultivated conditioned recursive pattern of:

- (1) Experiencing (Form-->Feeling-->Perception)
- (2) Noticing the Experience (Mindfulness)
- (3) Reflecting on the Experience (Insight)
- (4) Integrating the Experience of the Experience (Wisdom)
- (5) Being Aware in the Experience (Awareness)
- (6) Acting from that Awareness in the Moment (Compassion & Skillful Means)

It is also important to note that “Perception” addresses the co-arising of each experience of physical-emotional-cognitive-intuitive (spiritual) phenomena as an aggregate experience. The key point being that the present-moment-experience is experienced as an inseparability of physical-emotional-cognitive-intuitive (spiritual) phenomena.

Accordingly, I do not control, suppress, identify with, or personify my perceptions — my direct experiences of physicality, emotion, cognition, and/or intuition. I simply “experience” them fully as they emerge and cease. Therefore, sensation, emotion, cognition, and intuition co-arise in me — always in aggregate. Sensations emerge in my awareness with emotional, cognitive, and intuitive associations. Emotions emerge in my awareness with sensory, cognitive, and intuitive associations. Thoughts emerge in my awareness with sensory, emotional, and intuitive associations. And, intuitions emerge in my awareness with sensory, emotional, and cognitive associations.

If something has temperature, then I physically experience it as cold or cool or tepid or warm or hot — without controlling, suppressing, identifying with, or amplifying the sensations.

If something invokes or provokes emotional experiences in me — then I fully experience the emotions without controlling them, suppressing them, identifying with them, personifying them, or amplifying them. And I respond according to my own conditioning — in the experience of: sadness I cry and reflect; happiness I laugh (and sometimes cry) and reflect; anger I focus my attention and reflect, etc.

If something invokes or provokes cognitive experiences in me — then I fully experience the thoughts without controlling them, suppressing them, identifying with them, or chasing them.

If something invokes or provokes intuitive (spiritual) experiences in me — then I place my full attention on the quality of my “Presence”. “Presence” is a state-stage that I “rest in” — I do not “work” to be “Present”. “Presence” is not something that I fabricate, control, suppress, identify with, or personify.

So from a “Conditioning” perspective, people can largely experience interactions with their internal and external environments that are “Haphazard”, lacking a definite plan,

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purpose, or volitional-intentional pattern. These interactions lead to much of the avoidable physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual traumas that result in pathological conditions in human development. Thus, this group of people develops trauma-based predispositions and limitations as conditioned characteristics and potentials.

These traumas activate entrainment processes that leave interconnected impressions-imprints that are recorded as integrated co-arising physical-emotional-cognitive-intuitive (spiritual) “memories”. New experiences of trauma reactivate, reinforce, and integrate with previous networks of impression-imprint memories. Some of this process is available to the conscious mind, but much of it is processed by the mechanisms that constitute the subconscious mind. The networks of impression-imprint memories color and shape all subsequent life experiences — determining and conditioning in each present moment, one’s desires, states of mind, and physical-emotional-cognitive-intuitive (spiritual) responses (actions) — in any given objective situation, thus forming the lens through which the subjective aspects of experience arise.

The entrainment processes recruit existing useful physiological mechanisms such as “fear” and “anger”. “Fear” has the physiologically useful purpose of bringing attention to an awareness that “something is not right”. “Anger” has the physiologically useful purpose of directing attention to a single point focus (samadhi). They are both natural mechanisms of human consciousness evolved to increase alertness, awareness, and responsiveness to conditions and conditioning. They serve as a set of stimulus and response systems. However, when recruited in the service of “**trauma**”, “fear” and “anger” can produce very destructive results.

Fearful people fear isolation (“separateness”), and wrongly eliminate diversity (multiplicity), thereby extinguishing integrity (“wholeness”), creativity, and actual interconnectedness. Fearful people fear being controlled by someone else (“coerced”), and wrongly take the physically and meta-physically impossible position that they can be “independent” of other people, and therefore “control their own reality”. Fearful people resist or need to control change — needing to control their identity and the perceptions of others about their identity (e.g., “I am the boss”); needing to control relationships and/or “space”; or just plain needing to control everything!

Anger as an emotional state can range from minor irritation to intense rage. Anger can be so destructive because it causes a loss in the capacity for self-monitoring, objective observation, sympathy, and empathy. And, angry people tend to abuse themselves and others. The expression of anger can be found in facial expressions, body language, physiological responses (increased heart rate, blood pressure, and levels of adrenaline and noradrenalin), communications (lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, gossip, profanity), and thoughts and/or acts of aggression (rage). Rage is a very intense anger caused by built up anger from past traumas.

“Haphazard” environments and conditioning experiences that persistently activate trauma-based networks of “fear” and “anger” impressions-imprints memories — cause persistent and pervasive physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual damage. We

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develop defense mechanisms as psychological coping strategies that become pathological when persistent use leads to maladaptive behavior such that the physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual well being of the Self, Other, The Whole, or our Ecosystems are adversely affected. These pathological psychological coping strategies include but are not limited to: compression (anger from past traumas “compressed” into rage), depression (pervasive low mood, anxiety, despair, guilt, apathy, sadness, grief, hopelessness, discouragement, melancholia), oppression (disempowered, marginalized, pressured, silenced, and subordinated), repression (“excluding desires and impulses from one's consciousness and attempting to hold or subdue them in the subconscious”), and suppression (“conscious intentional exclusion from consciousness of a thought or feeling”). All of these pathologies have as their root cause the thwarted need to feel heard, seen, and loved.

So what can be done to bridge the “gaps” that occur during intrapersonal development as influenced by “Nature”, “Haphazard Conditioning”, and/or “Cultivated Conditioning”?

I suggest that there are three strategies for bridging the gap and mitigating the effects of “Nature” (predispositions and limitations as *inherited* characteristics and potentials), and “Conditioning” (“Haphazard” versus “Cultivated” predispositions and limitations as *conditioned* characteristics and potentials). It should be kept in mind that all three of these strategies result in the manifestation of new predispositions and limitations because “conditioning” begets predispositions and limitations, and tool use itself is a form of conditioning. The strategies are:

- (1) Intrapersonal “predispositions” can be transcended by volitional-intentional spiritual training methods and practices such as traditional monastic programs; 3-7 year intensive programs for laypeople; Doctor of Divinity programs; . . .
- (2) Intrapersonal “limitations” can be transcended by augmentation through the use of tools such as psychotherapy and education, including but not limited to: Freud’s psychoanalysis approach; Jung’s analytical psychology approach; Beck’s cognitive therapy; Bowlby’s attachment theory approach; Rogers’ humanistic approach — person-client-centered therapy; Skinner’s radical behaviorism approach (experimental research psychology); Pribram’s holonomic model approach (neurophysiologic psychology); . . .
- (3) Intrapersonal “predispositions” and “limitations” can be mutually transcended by volitional-intentional deep integration training methods such as spiritual practices like the “**HSL Practice of Compassion**”, which employ psychotherapeutic tools in conjunction with wisdom education and practices:

**Self (Intrapersonal) — Individual | Personal**

HSL for the “Self” addresses the individual’s issues about “survival” in terms of physical, emotional, cognitive, and/or spiritual experiences — **transforming “Rage to Compassion”**, and landing the understanding that “I am loved”.

When we are not feeling **Heard by ourselves** — we bombard ourselves with Critical, Harsh, Judgmental, and/or Relentless Negative Self-Talk; Emotional and/or Cognitive “Numbness”. **The HSL Response** is: Deep inquiry and reflection into the

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causes, results, and conditions of the Negative Self-Talk and sense of “Numbness” — listening for insights, clarity, and an inventory of “what is”.

When we are not feeling **Seen by ourselves** — we find ourselves being Driven by and/or Obsessed with Controlling Feelings and/or Thoughts; Well-Defended “Persona” and Beliefs. The **HSL Response** is: Accurate and true inquiry and feedback for challenging and deep understanding of unexamined: assumptions, values, beliefs, norms, communications, behaviors, and/or causal impacts — integrating insights, experience, and awareness into life practice and wisdom.

When we are not feeling **Loved by ourselves** — we develop feelings of Low Self-Esteem, Self-Loathing, and/or Self-Hatred. The **HSL Response** is: Practicing “Presence” — Wisdom & Compassion — (unconditional love) as an unconditional skillful “gifting” of your integrative view and perspectives, awareness, attention, discernment, intuitions, humor, understanding, and mindfulness on your self — identifying, developing, and using your multiple intelligences to act from your experience of and awareness in the “present moment”.

When “*We*” are not feeling **Heard by Others and/or The Whole** — we either Shout or are Deafeningly Silent. When “*We*” are not feeling **Seen by Others and/or The Whole** — we are Bullying and/or Intimidating; Shy and/or Hiding. When “*We*” are not feeling **Loved by Others and/or The Whole** — we engage in “Come Here — Go Away” isolating type of dynamics. The **HSL Response** is: HSL ourselves, others, and our organizations by practicing “Presence” — Wisdom & Compassion — (unconditional love) as an unconditional skillful “gifting” of our integrative view and perspectives, awareness, attention, discernment, intuitions, humor, understanding, and mindfulness — identifying, developing, and using multiple intelligences to act from our experience of and awareness in the “present moment”.

### **Bridging Interpersonal Gaps —**

In my experience, the deepest unspoken aspiration between people — be they strangers, intimates, or adversaries — is to receive a positive affirmation to the question “Do you love me?”. And the deepest unspoken question is “Am I alone?”. Where there is no love — there is rage; where there is rage — there is no hope; and where there is no hope — there is despair. Bridging the “gaps” that occur between people, or organizations, or communities, or nations, or cultures — requires the transformation of despair into hope as an interpersonal personal process, initiated by the transformation of rage into compassion as an intrapersonal process.

Transforming “Despair to Hope” is a process that cultivates individual and collective sympathy, empathy, and compassion — in that order. We are once again required to discern and challenge our unchallenged assumptions and processes, and to cultivate our capacity to hold multiple perspectives and perceptions. This time we must integrate our resulting awareness, insights, wisdom, and experience of shared connection into a

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conscious process that is specifically intended to reduce our own personal suffering as well as the suffering of those that we are in conflict with.

I have formulated four insights about bridging interpersonal gaps.

The **First Insight** is that polarization (“conflict gaps”) occur when people experience not being Heard, Seen, and/or Loved (HSL) — in that dependent sequential order. My observation is that when polarizing behaviors and/or conversations are occurring, the participants are exhibiting behavior modes that are discernable and predictable. This includes “aggressive non-listening”, “shouting”, “1000 yard stare”, “bullying”, “shunning”, “feigned disinterest”, “pushing buttons”, “outrage triggering”, “keeping score”, “passive aggression”, “push-pull”, etc.

The **Second Insight** is that where issues and/or behaviors are polarizing — “Segregation” versus “Integration,” or “Pro-Life” versus “Pro-Choice” — the wrong internal and communicated conversations are occurring, and people are faced with having to make equally wrong analyses and choices.

Bridging interpersonal gaps requires that we employ practices-processes that lead to a more culturally mature dynamic of increasing the overall experience of interconnectedness and creativity; and decreasing the tendency of falling into a “Unity Fallacy” where there is confusion regarding “Wholeness” (multiplicity) with “Oneness” (singularity) — thus forgetting that the converse of “Unity” (oneness or singularity) is “Wholeness” (multiplicity or diversity) and not separateness or uniformity (sameness).

Those same practices-processes must also decrease the tendency of falling into a Separation Fallacy that supposes that it is possible and/or desirable to view oneself as independent from the systems of relationships and dynamics that one is engaged in (observer, witness, act in or upon, hold space for, . . . ) — calling for one to be “independent” of other people, a proposition which for me is a physical and meta-physical impossibility.

The **Third Insight** is that beneath polarity lies shared values, concerns, and suffering — and that when conversations and behaviors are initiated from discernment and actualization of discovered shared higher purpose and values, then polarities dissolve in the pursuit of identifying and addressing the underlying causes and conditions of the polarizing beliefs, behaviors and/or communications.

For example, in the polarity of “Segregation” versus “Integration”, I suspect that most people would concede that everyone should feel heard, seen, and loved. If this were treated as a shared value mandate, then our attention would be on manifesting public policy and programs that directly addressed this need for everyone — tailoring our implementations to the specific needs of specific addressable populations. We would not be myopically focused on “school bussing”, racial quotas, and/or unequal rights.

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Likewise, in the polarity of “Pro-Life” versus “Pro-Choice”, again I suspect that most Americans would concede that everyone should feel heard, seen, and loved. If this were treated as a shared value mandate, then our attention would be on making sure that every child brought into the world was heard, seen, and loved — had a safe, loving, and nurturing environment. The scenario might go something like this: a pregnant woman who felt unprepared or incapable of bringing a child into the world and providing a safe, loving, and nurturing environment —would have available to her the option (“Pro-Choice) to relinquish legal and financial responsibility for her fetus to an organization (“Pro-Life”) that legally committed to providing a safe, loving, and nurturing environment for the child once born, and paying all costs incurred during pregnancy.

The **Fourth Insight** is that conversations and behaviors that occur in the context of shared value mandates, provoke and enable the participants to become more “Present” with each other — thereby providing opportunities for each participant to be Heard, Seen, and Loved. Being more “Present”, they are more loving, and reciprocally feel more loved. They discover that being fully “Present” means unconditionally giving to each other the “Gift” of their awareness, attention, understanding, mindfulness, and compassion — willingly becoming students to each other in order to learn the pith of each other’s life experience.

I am familiar with two types of practices that effectively bridge interpersonal gaps — “Truth & Reconciliation” -based processes like “Ubuntu”, and “Compassion” –based processes like HSL.

“**Ubuntu**” is an example of a “Truth & Reconciliation” process is that cultivated the *“culture of forgiveness”* made famous in South Africa. “Ubuntu” means “a person is a person through other persons”.

“Ubuntu” is described as follows in the UN Reconciliation Handbook — Archbishop Desmond Tutu has considered this culture of forgiveness extensively. “What is it”, he writes, “that constrained so many to choose to forgive rather than to demand retribution?” His answer is what Africans know as ubuntu in the Nguni group of languages (or botho in the Sotho languages). It is a difficult concept to render in a Western language. Tutu says that a person with the African world-view of ubuntu “is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed”. Such a cultural outlook, the argument runs, will predispose its members towards forgiveness and reconciliation.

Stanlake J. W. T. Samkange (1980), highlights the three maxims of Ubuntuism as:

The first maxim asserts that 'To be human is to affirm one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish respectful human relations with them.' And 'the second maxim means that if and when one is faced with a decisive choice between wealth and the preservation of the life of another

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human being, then one should opt for the preservation of life'. The third 'maxim' as a 'principle deeply embedded in traditional African political philosophy' says 'that the king owed his status, including all the powers associated with it, to the will of the people under him'.

While sharing is incorporated within "unhu" it is only one of the multiplicity of virtues within "unhu". In the "unhu" domain, visitors do not need to burden themselves with carrying provisions — all they need is to dress properly and be on the road. All visitors are provided for and protected in every home they pass through without payment being expected. In fact, every individual should try their best to make visitors comfortable — and this applies to everyone who is aware of the presence of a visitor within a locality. This explains how David Livingstone survived on his journeys in Southern Africa especially among ubuntu-oriented societies of the time.

The concept of "unhu" also constitutes the kernel of African Traditional Jurisprudence as well as leadership and governance. In the concept of unhu, crimes committed by one individual on another extend far beyond the two individuals and has far-reaching implications to the people among whom the perpetrator of the crime comes from. Unhu jurisprudence tend to support remedies and punishments that tend to bring people together. For instance, a crime of murder would lead to the creation of a bond of marriage between the victim's family and the accused's family in addition to the perpetrator being punished both inside and outside his social circles. The role of "tertiary perpetrator" to the murder crime is extended to the family and the society where the individual perpetrator hails from. However, the punishment of the tertiary perpetrator is a huge fine and a social stigma, which they must shake off after many years of demonstrating "unhu" or "ubuntu". A leader who has "unhu" is selfless and consults widely and listens to his subjects. He or she does not adopt a lifestyle that is different from his subjects and lives among his subjects and shares what he owns. A leader who has "unhu" does not lead but allows the people to lead themselves and cannot impose his will on his people, which is incompatible with "unhu".

**HSL** for the “Other” addresses the individual’s issues about “survival” in terms of the experience of relationships between people —**transforming “Despair to Hope”**, and landing the understanding that “I am not alone, and you are not alone”.

“HSL” is an example of a Compassion-based process for bridging interpersonal gaps. The **“HSL Practice of Compassion” (Heard | Seen | Loved)** was inspired in 2001 when I visited His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama in India. As a result of our conversation, he challenged me with an assignment to discern, embody, and articulate a "practice" that would result in the practical teaching and manifesting of compassion in the world. His Holiness suggested that such a practice be based on the insight that: “All people want and need to be Heard, Seen and Loved (HSL) — in that order”. When the “HSL” need is

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thwarted — mischief occurs, and we experience suffering (anxiety, discontent, . . . ) as signaled by fear and reacted to as forms of anger.

I have codified the HSL Practice of Compassion as a life legacy practice that provides a diagnostic and response approach for developing sympathy, empathy, and compassion. It places our attention squarely on intentionally manifesting conditioning experiences that stimulate the activation of multiple intelligences in ways that cultivate compassion and invite engagement in experiments that increase compassion in everyday life. The “Hizzle” (HSL) Practice of Compassion addresses the domains of Self, Other, the Whole, and Ecosystems — and carries the insight that the individual holds the experience of the collective.

A guiding insight of the HSL practice is that we can not truly “Love” someone (including ourselves) until we know and understand what specifically causes them pain and suffering; and that in order to know and understand what specifically causes them pain and suffering — we must be willing to be their student.

HSL for the “Other” is an interpersonal process that addresses the individual’s issues about “survival” in terms of the experience of relationships between people — **transforming “Despair to Hope”**, and landing the understanding that “I am not alone, and you are not alone”.

When “**Others**” are not feeling **Heard by us** — they either Shout or are Deafeningly Silent. The **HSL Response** is: Sympathetic deep inquiry with listening for clarity and learning.

When “**Others**” are not feeling **Seen by us** — they are Bullying and/or Intimidating; Shy and/or Hiding. The **HSL Response** is: Empathetic feedback and inquiry for deep understanding and shared connection.

When “**Others**” are not feeling **Loved by us** — they engage in “Come Here — Go Away” isolating type of dynamics. The **HSL Response** is: Practicing “Presence” — Wisdom & Compassion — (unconditional love) as an unconditional skillful “gifting” **to others** of your integrative view and perspectives, awareness, attention, discernment, intuitions, humor, understanding, and mindfulness — identifying, developing, and using multiple intelligences to act from your experience of and awareness in the “present moment”.

Both “Ubuntu” and “HSL” attempt to address the deepest unspoken aspiration between people — be they strangers, intimates, or adversaries — is to receive a positive affirmation to the question “Do you love me?”; and the deepest unspoken question of “Am I alone?”. They are practices that can be used for bridging the “gaps” that occur between people, or organizations, or communities, or nations, or cultures. They both manifest the transformation of despair into hope as an interpersonal personal process that is initiated by the transformation of rage into compassion as an intrapersonal process.

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**Conclusion —**

From an evolution of consciousness perspective, conflict can be seen as providing selective pressures on us that have the capacity to provoke change. The intrapersonal and interpersonal processes that we use for addressing change, and the effects of those processes — can be both positive and/or negative. The determinant question being: “Do I feel heard, seen, and loved?”

If the processes activate-stimulate our multiple intelligences to discern and challenge our unchallenged assumptions and processes, and to cultivate our capacity to hold multiple perspectives and perceptions — then the likely positive outcome will be that we feel more heard, seen, and loved by ourselves as well as others. Our experience with these processes will continually direct our attention towards reducing suffering — our own and that of other people. In my experience, these processes are “Psychotherapeutic-based”, “Truth & Reconciliation-based” like “Ubuntu”, and/or “Compassion-based” like “HSL”. Many of the elements and modalities of these processes are shared.

If the processes provoke an inability and/or unwillingness in us to rigorously inquire into our own preconceptions about who, what, where, when, how, and why we feel that our need to be heard, seen, and loved is being or has been thwarted — then physical, emotional, cognitive, and/or spiritual damage at an intrapersonal and interpersonal level may result. The entrainment of the traumatic experience of these processes may condition us to focus our attention on the amplification of our own suffering, and possibly even on retribution regarding other people.

I believe that most people have the capacity to “bridge” intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict “gaps”. What they lack is the training to be able to discern and challenge their unchallenged assumptions and processes, and to cultivate the capacity to hold multiple perspectives and perceptions.

If we all learn to question our own preconceptions — particularly when survival is at stake — then perhaps we will all live long enough to enjoy our renewed awareness, insights, wisdom, and experience of shared connection. And in the process, we will feel heard, seen, and loved — and suffering in the world will be reduced . . .

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**BIO**  
**— MARK R. JONES —**

For over twenty-five years, Mr. Jones has led and performed organization optimization, large-scale systems architecture and integration programs, customer-facing-technology planning, development, and implementation activities, and IT product development projects — for multi-national corporations and with the U.S. government. For the ten years previous to that, he worked in or with small organizations and with State governments.

The combination of his leadership, technical, and spiritual skills allows him to create open and collaborative work environments that are responsive to the needs of his Stakeholders.

**VALUE CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT:**

Mark Jones work in the intersection of effectiveness (human relationships & information) and efficiency (process & technology) to optimize individual and organization value, performance, wellness, and contribution in ways that increase: social and economic effectiveness and efficiency (Non-Profits | Government | Communities); and/or social and economic profit leveraging {IPO | LBO | M&A | etc.} for For-Profits organizations.

His efforts result in — an increase in: social and economic profit for For-Profits; social and economic effectiveness and efficiency for Non-Profits | Government | Communities; Productivity (+ customer satisfaction | - defects | - costs | + delivery | + safety) regarding products and services; Innovation; Morale; Quality of Relationships; and Respect & Trust Levels; and a reduction in: Lost Work Days (sick leave | absenteeism); Overtime; Attrition; Accident Related Injury Rates; Complaints; Violent Behavior- hostility, rigidity, judgment, disturbance, sexual harassment, spouse & child abuse; and EAP Referrals.

**EXPERIENCE & EDUCATION**

Mr. Jones have over twenty-five years of fulltime professional experience, including five years fulltime experience serving at a senior executive level — CEO / Executive VP / Corporate VP / CIO / CTO / CTA — in organizations with annual budgets of \$100M or greater. During his career he also served six years in senior management positions in a large corporate environment. He has managed annual overall organization budgets of up to \$128M, with \$20M discretionary budget authority. As a CIO and CTO on a Management and Integration (M&I) government contract, he co-managed a labor base of 700 contractors with an annual budget of \$140 million per year. He once served as the President and CEO of a subsidiary whose primary focus was the development of an HL-7 medical e-Records repository and operational data store for the Department of Energy. In that assignment, his secondary focus was to market the application of “Lean Analysis” techniques to government and business. He has achieved over a billion dollars in cost savings, cost avoidance, and/or revenue generation.

Mr. Jones’ educational background includes: a M.S. degree in Management from Antioch University - Seattle (1996); a B.A. degree in Systems Analysis from Western Washington University (1978); and over 2500 additional hours of technical, management, executive, and community capacity-building training; 2300+ hours sports-specific training; 3000+ hours of sports coaching experience — including coach certification; and seven years sports officiating experience — including referee certification; and 42 years of spiritual training and practice.

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY | INFORMATION SYSTEMS | TECHNOLOGY OPTIMIZATION**

Mr. Jones has over twenty-five years fulltime employment experience leading information technology, information systems, and technology innovation and optimization efforts for multi-national corporations and with the U.S. government. His contribution is his ability to provide vision and leadership for developing, implementing, and operating comprehensive and integrated information and process technology programs that support the research, engineering, business, and manufacturing operations of the enterprise. He has a keen sense of discernment for: aligning research ideas with the strategic plans and capacities of the organization; and advocating for those ideas that have the greatest potential benefit, while

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deferring those ideas that may be challenging and exciting — but do not yet enhance organization performance and wellness, contribute to the execution of its mission, or accomplish its vision. Over the course of his career, he has been responsible for achieving over a billion dollars in cost savings, cost avoidance, and revenue generation — using information technology, information systems, and technology optimization. He once established and ran a profit-center R&D lab for four years within a large corporation. The lab investigated and/or created commercial products in the areas AI-Expert Systems, robotics control systems, telecommunications protocol converters, directory systems, and database structure translators. His assignment was to: direct strategic decisions; manage innovation processes; measure innovation, research, and experimentation by its contribution to organization performance and wellness; and focus on technology as it applied to products, customers, revenues, and competitive positioning in the market. He developed strategic relationships with the major high-tech players.

**CHIEF ENTERPRISE ARCHITECT — ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT & INTEGRATION**

Fundamentally Mark R. Jones is a master systems architect that uses informatics to conduct “Findings” investigations, and then assembles and manages teams to execute the resulting work. He has over thirteen years fulltime employment experience serving in senior enterprise technologist positions — Chief Architect, Chief Enterprise Architect, and Chief Scientist — optimizing the use of technology in supporting R&D and operations, and determining, executing, and measuring the opportunities and effectiveness of technology on organizational vision, strategy, policy, business models, and performance. Most recently, he supported the DoD and DON to optimize business operations through information integration superiority, using dispersed, networked capabilities to deliver accurate critical information to the right people, at the right time, at the right place. In this assignment he conducted performance audits to optimize business processes, information systems, and human relationships — identifying \$90 million dollars in cost savings. His efforts generated \$12M of revenue for his operating division.

**INNOVATION | CULTURE & CHANGE MANAGEMENT | LEAN & THEORY OF CONSTRAINTS**

Mr. Jones was once invited to fix a critical production problem involving missed development and implementation schedules for a \$2.6 billion reengineering program. The culprit — late delivery of business processes, hardware, software, and software installation — was creating a \$3 million per day loss. His mission was to fix the problem ASAP. As a result of his efforts of leading innovation, culture, and change management through the use of “Lean” and “Theory of Constraints” –based processes and practices, his organizations were able to: transform a 11,520 production hour per year loss into a 23,040 production hour savings — a 34,560 hour improvement valued at \$125,000 per hour; book \$772,800,000 in projected operations outage savings; and achieve \$25,650,000 net contribution per core team employee. These accomplishments represented an increase in Work Statement of 340%, but required only a 40% increase in actual labor to achieve. The resulting core innovations became standard enterprise-wide processes and tools.

**SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT & INTEGRATION | METHODOLOGIES & TOOLS**

Mr. Jones has spent twenty years of his career successfully leading and/or performing large-scale (enterprise-wide) systems development and integration. For example, he spent three years supporting a factory automation program — leading teams to design, develop, and implement automation infrastructure systems; a systems integration operational environment providing all "middleware" services; and common data services; he spent 18 months supporting a \$2.6 billion enterprise-wide reengineering program; and he spent three years supporting \$300 million of DoD reengineering and systems integration programs. In the past he worked in great detail with systems and software engineering methodologies and tools such as SEI CMM, SSDM, RUP, Fit-GAP, ERD, OOA, TOC, SimProcess, etc. He also served for two years as a Senior Manager designing and overseeing a Companywide Information Systems Architecture and Standards program responsible for managing 15 companywide technical teams consisting of approximately 150 analysts, engineers, and technicians.

**DELIVERY SYSTEMS & DATA CENTER OPERATIONS**

Mr. Jones has spent seven years of his career managing delivery systems and data center operations. Most recently he served as a Senior Manager of the Computing Network & Operations Airplane Operations / Components organization, leading a global labor base (120 direct and 65 indirect employees), and managing a direct asset base of approximately \$20 million annually, a total asset base of \$128 million per

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year, and a customer base of 55,000 end users worldwide. As the Chief Technology Officer and Chief Architect (Enterprise) to the Airplane Components / Operations CIO, he had the mission to use information technology to reduce the unit costs of airplane products, and increase the capacity and throughput of the business and manufacturing processes. Prior to that, he led the organizations that managed dedicated server farms and labs. In his early career he served as a Site Engineer and performed systems administration at the site data center, instructed users in use of CAD/CAM systems, and served as Level 1, 2, and 3 customer support engineer across a five product offering.

**CURRENT POSITION:**

Mr. Jones is concurrently the Chairman and CEO of The Sunyata Group — a group of For-Profit and Non-Profit organizations, CEO of the Integral Wellness Group, and Founder of Green Economy Optimization Services (GEOS) initiative. He is a Master “Systems Architect” and “Strategic Thinking Partner” senior consultant who serves as a strategic business integration partner, senior strategic planning expert, program manager, contract executive, and public speaker. He provides expert, independent services and leadership in specialized business, community, and technical areas; provides expertise on an as needed basis to all task assignments; and provides expert advice and assistance in state-of-the-art frameworks, methods, processes, practices, and strategies. I have over twenty-five years experience serving in leadership capacities (CEO / Executive VP / Corporate VP / CIO / CTO / CTA / Chief Architect / Senior Manager / Chair / Vice Chair / . . . ) in business and elected and/or appointed positions. He is typically recruited for these positions because of his compassionate and innovative leadership, wisdom, business and political savvy, and participative and collaborative leadership and follower-ship style.

The Sunyata Group optimizes individual and organization value, performance, wellness, and contribution to increase: social and economic effectiveness and efficiency (Non-Profits | Government | Communities); and/or social and economic profit leveraging {IPO | LBO | M&A | etc. (For-Profits)} — through integral leadership; generative and healthy organizations and communities; green economy optimization services (GEOS); and institutionalized business and political savvy. It initiates, analyzes, designs, develops, supports, and/or delivers programs, projects, consultations, services, and products to address extinction-level issues and problems such as — global climate change, pandemics, warfare, famine, obesity, potable water shortage, aging populations, energy crises, ecosystem degradation, pollution, etc. The GEOS initiative currently addresses strategic planning for starting Green Economy businesses; strategic planning for converting existing businesses to Green Economy businesses; strategic planning for establishing Green Economy supply chains; development of Whole Systems Design-based Green Economy business ecologies, public policy, and informatics resources; and integrating the wisdom and practices of Indigenous Peoples into the infrastructure of the Green Economy.

Mr. Jones is a Dharma leader and spiritual teacher — focused on the cultivation of wisdom, compassion, and skillful means in everyday life. He has been a Buddhist spiritual practitioner since 1966. Mr. Jones was initially baptized Catholic and deeply studied standard Church Doctrine and Christian Scripture — and was introduced to material from the Gnostic Gospels and the “Q” Gospel. In an effort to achieve greater understanding and compassion of people, particularly in terms of what caused them pain and suffering and hope, Mr. Jones has explored Vedic Scriptures, the Torah, the Talmud, The Zohar texts, the Koran, Greek philosophy, Taoism, Confucianism, modern philosophy, and modern psychology. These religious and philosophical studies have helped him to work more effectively across cultural boundaries. He has also lived in intentional communities for a total of twelve years — five years of which were in a 7x24 residential community.