

MAXIMIZING POTENTIAL

A Design Inquiry Project

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I want to explore the process of inquiry, the way I come to know, myself (mySelf).

I will start with an assumption, an hypothesis: Within me lies potential I have not yet actualized: I am capable of much more than I have thus far realized. I can safely make this assumption because I can sense, I can envision, a reality, a way of being, that is a qualitative improvement over the current way of life. Coming to fully know mySelf in a process of inquiry means actualizing this unrealized potential and living the life I can envision. The (approaching) culmination of this process of coming to know mySelf will be none other than “Self-realization!”

This initial hypothesis engenders two implicit aspects: 1) There is an unrealized maximum potential for human beings as a whole, and 2) I, as a member of humanity, carry an individual potential that is a unique contribution to and a unique perspective of that whole. In order to come to know my full potential, to achieve “Self-realization!”, I must first know what is possible for humanity as a whole. Once I am aware of the potential for humanity, I can take steps in my individual, unique life designed to align myself with this larger potential.

To define the maximum potential of Humanity, I must create limits. To say that “Humanity has unlimited potential” is to equate Humanity with God – God is one definition of unlimited potential; God is All. Since Humanity is not All, is not God, Humanity must have limited potential; and by inference, since ‘I’ am a subset of Humanity, ‘I’ must have limited potential. Achieving “Self-realization!”, then, is a matter of maximizing my individual, unique potential within the limitations of the larger body of Humanity.

Then it is necessary to define Humanity. Is Humanity strictly the current form of human being, of being human, the species known as *Homo sapiens sapiens*? What defines *Homo sapiens sapiens*? Archaeology classifies many forms of being human: Australopithecus, *Homo erectus*, *Homo neanderthal*, Cro-Magnon, etc. – and even plain old *Homo sapiens*. These sub-species are classified as being human even though they are not *Homo sapiens sapiens* – us. Humanity, then, must include the entire range of sub-species subsumed under the genus prefix *Homo*. Furthermore, is *Homo sapiens sapiens* the end point of evolution, the culmination of Life on Earth? Since evolution, as of this writing, has not yet terminated, I must conclude that there is the possibility that *Homo sapiens sapiens* will eventually evolve or morph into a new, as yet unspecified, form of human being. At what point is there a clear demarcation between one species of humanity and another? At the point where *Homo sapiens sapiens* begins evolving into a new species, how will we know? What will be the defining characteristics of this new

form of Humanity? For all we know, it could be happening at this very moment: there could be transition species walking around in our very midst.

If I am to become aware of the limits to my potential so that I can achieve “Self-realization!”, I must first become aware of where on the evolutionary progression of Humanity my individual, unique perspective lies. That is, if I were to assume for a moment a ‘fourth-dimensional’ perspective, a time-independent state where I could observe the entire evolutionary progression of Humanity from start to finish, I would be able to place my unique perspective somewhere along this time-line, and thus gain an understanding of what my limitations are. I consider such an understanding essential if I am to achieve “Self-realization!” and maximize my potential.

The above was an exercise in the process of inquiry whereby I come to know.

I first started with a question that was deeply meaningful for me; it was so meaningful that it aroused my entire perceptual cognitive being into reflexive action. I am now intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually involved in the resolution of this question. I am drawing on the core of all my previously held beliefs, knowledge, and understanding in order to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. After the question was raised and I became engaged, I spontaneously formed an hypothesis, a starting point from which subsequent investigation could follow. The hypothesis reframed the question into a verifiable mode of inquiry. Stating the hypothesis also provided me the opportunity to express a goal, a culmination to the process of inquiry – in this case, achieving “Self-realization!”

The next stage in the process of inquiry, of coming to know, required setting limits, narrowing the scope of the investigation into a manageable field of possibilities. In this stage, the intellect becomes the primary tool and its technique is analysis. Setting limits is defining parameters: fundamental principles need to be stated and understood; key words and concepts need to be defined so that the process of inquiry advances in a clear and compounded way. Clear definitions also assist the process of inquiry when communicating and sharing with others. For example, in this exercise it makes a difference to know whether *Homo* is a classification of ‘species,’ ‘genus,’ or ‘class’ – all because this inquiry is essentially a question of phylogenesis. To be able to communicate effectively ideas among others, uncertainties like this need to become crystal clear. Many other uncertainties arose in the form of a barrage of interrelated questions. That is a good sign: it means that the process of inquiry is progressing and taking shape. As each new question gets answered or reflected upon, the essence of the inquiry comes into sharper focus and the resolution of the inquiry comes closer into view. This entire stage may require intensive, in-depth research.

Once an issue has been raised and I’ve formed an hypothesis and have defined parameters and have begun to reach tentative conclusions, I then need to understand my

position in the whole affair, my special connection to it. I won't pursue a process of inquiry that is not meaningful for me; I need to be fully emotionally aroused even to begin! These emotions become fuel for propelling me and sustaining me in the process of inquiry. It's almost as if I *need* to know – more than that, I need to know how I can apply the fruits of investigation in a practical way to a life-structure already in process. Spiritually, I need to be able to understand these fruits of learning in a way that can further the evolutionary growth of Humanity, so that I don't consume them avariciously. This often requires getting out into the world and immersing mySelf in a situation that can reveal my assumptions and connections, as Life responds to my presence. This stage often requires travel to reach an ultimate fulfillment.

The next stage in the process of inquiry, of coming to know, after I understand my position and relationship with the knowledge, is a process of integration. I want the newfound understanding to be a part of my life, influencing and directing my decisions and judgments. This requires an almost tactile understanding of the issue; I need to feel it in my body. I need direct, existential experience of the knowledge. I can't just learn something without experiencing its full implications in 'real life.' I'm not much attracted to abstract wanderings, knowledge without context, or superficial transitory fads that cannot be meaningfully introduced into my own established, growing psycho-mental structure; in fact, I consider many of these loose thought-forms to be dangerous, capable of infection – like watching TV – and so I am continually editing, screening, and carefully choosing the contents that do get introduced. This becomes a process of association, of identification, of forming relationships with pre-existing knowledge and entities, a powerful process of Whole Systems Design in that the new knowledge will be practically integrated into larger living goals.

Finally comes the stage of expansion. Once integrated, the new knowledge becomes part of me, part of my total worldview. I am no longer consciously pursuing the process of inquiry because I have satisfactorily reached a temporary conclusion, and have moved on to new inquiry. The process now lives on in the depths of the unconscious, where un-be-knownst to my awareness, Mind is busy forming connections and relationships with this new knowledge-protein, as it were. Innovative syntheses will be formed that may eventually resurface to conscious awareness in the form of further emotionally-charged questions, or wild speculations, or novel imaginings, or just plain contentment of knowing on a lazy summer afternoon. My potential has expanded for all my efforts and this has provided fertile ground for self-growth and ultimately for "Self-realization!"

Thus, my own process of inquiry, of coming to know, involves five major stages: 1) The raising of an emotionally-charged, personally meaningful question that *needs* to be addressed and answered; 2) The reframing of the question into an hypothesis that can serve as a starting point and can reveal a goal or culmination; 3) The setting of parameters, of forming definitions and fundamental principles, and of research as new questions get raised – all this a largely intellectual and potentially extended endeavor; 4) The integration of the new knowing into a

larger, already-in-process life system, made real by practical experience and encounter; and 5) The expansion of awareness that promotes new explorations or potentials.

Now that I know what I'm doing, let me see if I can apply it to the question at hand, which is: "How do I fully actualize my potential so that I can achieve "Self-realization!"?" I like this question because it has no resolution, no tangible goal. I can never fully relax and abandon my quest; it will require continuous practice and ongoing application for as long as I am consciously aware. Perhaps fully knowing mySelf only can occur spontaneously, in a flash at that instant of transition known as 'death?' Will I be able to judge then whether I've fully actualized my potential? Or will someone be waiting there to judge for me? In either case, I will be back momentarily to resume the task, the process of inquiry of coming to know mySelf. In actuality, this is all really just a process of the Universe/God/Brahman coming to know *its* Self, and *my* self is just a temporal agent acting in its behalf, to bear witness to its unfolding splendid complexity, as it were.

When the process of inquiry leading to "Self-realization!" is understood to be perpetual, never-ending, many of the temporal hang-ups can be by-passed. The perpetual perspective ensures a time-independent state of sustainability and has the potential to align mySelf (identity) with the eternal Universe/God/Brahman Self. The temporal perspective contains so many fleeting moments and transitory sensations and multiple temporary identities that it is not a useful perspective for coming to know my true Self. The temporal perspective is egocentric; it is necessary for achieving time-dependent goals in limited contexts, but it is not entirely adequate for coming to know my perennial Self and actualizing my full, or fullest, potential.

The perpetual perspective (sometimes known as the Perennial Philosophy) is well-documented, so there's no need to repeat it here. At this point in the ongoing inquiry, I often feel the need to draw up a plan, to design a schedule of activities that I can introduce into my life in order to bring about the desired states of awareness that can lead me to "Self-realization!" – and I have done so in the past. Yet now I realize that a life at the creative edge of emerging novelty does not lend itself easily to arbitrary structures. The structures can initially introduce discipline and practice but ultimately they too are only temporal, and so limited. A time-independent, fourth-dimensional (ready for fifth-dimensional?) state of mind requires continuous attention on the process of unfoldment of the eternal Now. The Great Self that is the Universe/God/Brahman reveals *its* Self in the continuous unveiling from a sublimest of sublime "Ever-present Origin," and in order to achieve "Self-realization!" and actualize my full potential, I need to align mySelf with the Greater Self of which I am a part, and so arrange my busy temporal life around the Now.

