

# Social and Spiritual Discombobulation

## [Social and Spiritual Discombobulation](#)

by [Adam Abraham](#), [Thought for Food](#)

February 24, 2021

When Joe Biden declares, as he did recently at a meeting of G7 countries (which was closed to media), that “America First” diplomacy is over, he means that “Americans first” is also over.

Biden let the G7 representatives, from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom, that America is now back and ready to play in the Trans-Atlantic Alliance sandbox.

The “United States of America” is a bankrupt corporation that is in debt beyond belief. Yet, its highly questionable “leader” is announcing and pledging his allegiance to foreign interests, pledging more *debt accelerating* concessions and disbursements to said “allies”.

Americans are told to brace themselves for wave after wave of health calamity and financial stress, with little in the way of direction on how to *reduce* and ameliorate the matters at hand.

Please be clear: there *are* answers to all these issues, from health to fiscal, but they involve moving in an entirely different direction, beginning with toward the direction of truth.

We are where we are as a society, nation, and people, as a

result of a cascade of lies and liars who, throughout history, no longer care what is true.

Americans have never been “first” in U.S. politics. Mr. Trump, and a few other presidents sought, to varying degrees of success, to move the system in that direction. But Mr. Biden and his ideological “supporters”, under the cover of a pandemic, have managed to dismantle the Principles that America has striven to embody.



The incessant fixation on mask wearing, ostensibly for the “protection” of others, is more so to protect the guilty, i.e., political operatives and accomplices, from a plain sight crime of monumental proportions against the people of this nation, and all of humanity.

Notice the ritualistic vibe?



These people are doing what they've been told to do, but not by the Americans. They do not work on behalf of the American people. They do someone's bidding to exploit... albeit with our cooperation.

If there were no "pandemic" (and for the record, *there is none*), there would be *no* plausible reason to justify the measures that the sufficiently misinformed public has consented to permitting. If you *know* that the information being presented is not factual, and can cause harm would you follow it?

Employers, such as Trader Joe's, Walmart, Walgreen's and Amazon are offering incentives for employees to take COVID-19 injections. There's no truth behind the initiatives. People are doing it to keep or obtain a job, a position, or continue to be able to "earn a living".

# For flight attendants, getting people to wear masks is now one of the hardest parts of the job

Harmeet Kaur and Natalia V. Osipova, CNN • Updated 21st January 2021

People are agreeing to comply because they:

1. think the danger is legitimate
2. think that the promoters have their best interests at heart
3. believe that no alternatives exist
4. think the inconvenience is temporary and complying is the fastest way to get “back to normal”

So without independently verifiable, scientific evidence “experts” continue to mislead people deeper into a dysfunctional abyss. Below, **Dr. Anthony “Falsy” Fauci** now “suggests” that even with the supreme act of obedience and compliance, people who take the injections who want to go to restaurants are *still* advised to eat outdoors and avoid theaters.





**Fauci: Vaccinated people shouldn't dine indoors or go to the theater quite yet**

Scientific principles are not the eminent domain of any exclusive group. They belong to everyone, because they represent Laws of Nature that apply to everyone, even those who don't understand, "recognize" or *respect* them. Many who call themselves, or are thought to be "scientists" do not understand, recognize, or respect the Laws of Nature. Their pronouncements, such as Dr. Falsy's above, if not true, will not change Biological Facts of Life.

"Social distancing" is being pushed as a behavioral norm to "protect against a now ubiquitous 'COVID-19', except when it is inconvenient.

The crime that is being perpetrated are coordinated actions that keep from the public information about the incorrect assumptions that have evolved into the institution known today as "modern medicine", under the general subject of "Germ

Theory”.

Still being practiced, institutionalized, *and unquestioned* today, erroneous medical thinking is taking compliant humans into a broader den of emotional dependency and mental servitude. One of the consequences of these misrepresentations is the decreasing inclination to seek the truth (just listen to “the authority”), and discern what is true, to choose it, and benefit from the decision.

Taught to seek approval rather than truth, we have taken some fundamental errors in thinking as gospel truth, and presumed that acting as though they were true would make it so.

As an example, this leaves us oblivious to the cumulative effects of, and connection between genetic manipulation and gender confusion and rise of transgenderism. The people who push the products that alter genetic *information* would explain the phenomenon by suggesting that new species of humans are “evolving”. Better to keep the scientists in the labs working than to pull back and risk seeing whether the phenomenon abates.



With an increasing portion of the population retaining or regaining their discerning abilities, a large and concerted effort was undertaken to remove and expunge mitigating factual information about pathogen origins and behavior, virology, and its remediation. Even more so, an almost total *under-*estimation and negation of the Human Immune System is at play by people who should know how it works. This includes the “researchers,” and the educators who teach new researchers, as well as the public. They run the education system that requires children to “get their shots” as a condition for attending schools. With “COVID-19” this erroneous thinking has expanded to prey on the public at large who are all suspected as being potential “victims”, and are being coerced, by various means of policy and subterfuge, into to injection compliance.

Please remember that there are methods that need to be pursued to maintain and restore health: the approaches described above

are NOT on the list.

This track of thinking and behavior has brought us to where we are now, not only in social, cultural, and environmental chaos, but mental and spiritual too.

Unless you take the initiative to take care of yourself, and *know* the potential consequences, you can count on the information that you're being given will be false.

You have the power to chart a different future. Each one of us does. All anyone has to do is seek, vet, and then follow truth, wherever it leads. Give truth and accept only truth in return.

Truth is not swayed by political affiliation, or scientific opinion. Truth is scientific, but not all "scientists" are truthful. They are only telling you what people who wanted to keep their academic or professional standing, told them. Every "hole" in their truth, is essentially a lie. It matters not whether the liar wears a white coat.

This is social and spiritual discombobulation. Knowingly or unknowingly, it is our experience and our creation. For those who condone or comply, it is also someone's future; someone's children will inherit this unless we make some informed decisions now.

The future is *\*not\** in our children's hands, as I've seen some people opine. It is in our hands. All who continue listening to, or obeying liars, will have been their enablers, and will pay the price.

*cover image credit [StockSnap](#) / pixabay*



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# 'Unseen Enemy': Coronavirus as an Archetype of Perception.

## ['Unseen Enemy': Coronavirus as an Archetype of Perception.](#)

by [Ludovic Noble](#), *OffGuardian*

February 11, 2021



Women hanged for witchcraft in Newcastle, original illustration from Ralph Gardiner's 'England's grievance discovered, in relation to the coal-trade' (1655).

My conjecture is that 'perception of an enemy' could be a Jungian archetype or a category of perception that represents

a certain dynamic between groups of humans in societies or between humans and aspects of the world.

Humans are on one level tribal and it could be that tribal creatures have benefitted from being able to unify against a collective perception of an enemy, whether that be a pack of lions, another tribe or an individual within the tribe that must be exterminated or resolved at all costs for the tribe's survival.

It could be argued that this archetype, if it has some physical expression, underwent a process of natural selection, where prehistoric human societies in which it was activated could be provoked into a destructive frenzy that would ensure their survival, in the face of an enemy.

Jordan Peterson explains how swearing uses the same neural system as alarm cries in apes. If this is true, there are neural systems that are representational. The 'enemy' archetype could feasibly be said to be a biological neural system in the brain that has evolved in humans and other social species.

To push this idea further, I hypothesise that there could be a subtype of this 'enemy' archetype, where the enemy is 'unseen.'

History is full of examples of societies that have behaved in a way that suggests that they had collectively activated some primal archetype that fills them with fear and disgust of an 'unseen enemy'. Crucial to the concept, is that the enemy can be (or be in) any member of the group at any one time, making any member of the group potentially a suspect.

An evolutionary argument as to why this archetype might exist could be as follows:

*a tribe that decided that there was an 'unseen enemy' in their midsts might kill a minority group within the tribe for*

*some arbitrary reason. Whether or not the minority group is guilty, the remaining members tribe would then have a greater share of the resources than they did previously. The archetype, then, would have served an evolutionarily advantageous cause.*

The devil, evil in general, witches, radical muslim terrorists, Jews, communists and coronavirus are all examples of phenomenon that have become, in some groups of peoples' eyes, in some time in history, an unseen enemy.

Cases in point:

- Witches: The Salem witch trials where any person could be a witch and therefore everyone had to be alert to the 'unseen enemy.'
- The devil: In literature regarding the medieval ages (The Name of the Rose and the Devils) the devil is a purgeable demon that could exist in anyone. "He's always the one you least suspect."
- Radical Muslim terrorists: Employed during the War on Terror against anyone carrying a bag on public transport. "If you see anything suspicious please contact a member of staff."
- The persecution of Jewish people in Nazi Germany, who were thought to be secretly plotting to undermine the Reich.
- The House Un-American Activities Committee who sought to root out covert communists from American society in the 1950s.
- All diseases and viruses are unseen and the media and corporations refer to the "fight against coronavirus."

I should say at this point, it is beside the point whether the unseen enemy exists or not. Ultimately this archetype reduces to Descartes' evil demon hypothesis: the idea that there may

at any moment be an evil demon manipulating your reality and perceptions.

Deception is an aspect of reality that is employed in daily life by spiders, lovers, conspirators and criminals. Deception and perception manipulation are facets of human experience, as are theft, parties and commerce.

The power of the 'unseen enemy' archetype is that it doesn't depend on the actual existence of the perceived threat in order to be active. It is possible that:

1. there may be an evil demon and
2. one may perceive there to be an evil demon where there isn't any.

This makes the 'unseen enemy' archetype tremendously powerful and I conjecture that propagandists and governments are well aware of its potential as a tool for directing human behaviour.

When the 'unseen enemy' is defined it usually becomes illegal or taboo to be a member or in any way a part of it. In the case of modern society, one of the manifestations of the 'unseen enemy' archetype at work is the outlawing of Neo-Nazis, 'the far right', racism and 'hate'. Hate speech laws in Europe and a zero tolerance approach to 'hate' in certain institutions in the USA have made it either illegal or extremely taboo to be 'racist.'

Thus the usual open signals of being racist are replaced by alleged covert signs of being racist, and the 'unseen enemy' can now be any member of the society.

This is reflected in popular culture ("just because you have an friend, it doesn't mean you're not racist") and in political language (she / he was accused of 'harbouring hate' in their thoughts or hearts, i.e. it is hidden due to being taboo and so potentially omnipresent).

When something unprovable (in this case, being secretly racist and, in the Middle Ages, being 'inspired by the devil') becomes illegal or extremely taboo, denial is no longer a defence because it is meaningless. A denial is 'exactly what the unseen enemy [a racist or the devil] would do', both because being one of the unseen enemy is taboo and because by its nature the enemy tries to remain undetected.

Paradoxically, then, **denial becomes proof of guilt or at least not nearly enough to prove innocence.**

The criteria for what can be considered proof can then be extended to the point of absurdity and to where, more importantly, all members of the public can be suspected of being a part of the 'unseen enemy', unless they 'prove' their innocence.

This proof usually takes the form of ridiculous or pointless displays of total obedience and conformity to whatever demands some authority is making in order to manipulate the public at the time.

This opens up a space where literally anything can be taken as a signal that the person is a member of the unseen enemy and denying it. When this happens a terrifying relationship can emerge between the arbiters of justice (the authorities) and the public.

In such situations, the authorities are permitted by the public to do 'whatever it takes' to exterminate the dreaded unseen enemy and to exact punishment for lack of conformity. Then, people are not only behaving in certain ways to avoid aiding or encouraging the unseen enemy but they are now behaving in certain ways to avoid punishment from authority:

*the fear of the unseen enemy becomes subconsciously translated to the fear of what the authorities or society in general might do to you if they identify you as 'one of*



*them'.*

People who don't conform to the last detail are scorned and punished by society, sometimes out of fear that they may legitimately be a member of the unseen enemy but sometimes out of fear of what the authorities and society in general might do if they suspect association.

The enemy becomes those who don't conform, whether or not they actually belong to the original unseen-enemy category.

Coronavirus has given governments a new opportunity to expand the category of the 'unseen enemy' to possibly include every member of the whole public.

This is reflected in the NHS propaganda campaign, where the slogan is a blunt order to 'act like you've got it' (or 'conform to our demands for new behaviours in order to prove that you are not infected or at least that you are doing your best not to be infected, lest you want to become suspect').

We are repeatedly told that any one of us may have it, which, if it exists, is true. However, whether this possibility justifies the totalitarian measures in response to it is the real question, regardless of whether anyone could have it or how many people it could kill.

What should we be more wary of, the possibility of being infected by a deadly virus or the possibility of permitting a totalitarian government takeover through unquestioning compliance to rules that violate long-held civil liberties?

A similar situation was achieved after 9/11, where any member of the public using public transport could be a radical Islamic terrorist and therefore the gradual redesign of airports to resemble total surveillance prisons was justified.

The Catholic Church brutalised medieval Europe for about a thousand years using 'the devil' as a kind of spiritual virus

that could exist in anyone at any one time. In classic unseen-enemy fashion, those mandating conformity and obedience against evil were the agents of evil themselves.

While, in the case of the War on Terror, those vowing to take revenge on the hidden enemy that was threatening to undermine freedom and liberal values oversaw the gradual and ongoing erosion of the tradition of civil liberty in the West.

Regardless of whether the unseen enemy in its various forms exists or has existed, I find it hard to imagine an enemy so dangerous that it permits a relinquishing of basic civil liberties and totalitarian control, not even a hidden totalitarian government itself.

[Connect with Ludovic Noble at OffGuardian](#)

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## **Zen Gardner: 2 Years Later, I Am Still Wondering...**

[Zen Gardner: 2 Years Later, I Am Still Wondering...](#)

*“Truth does not waver ever, only our perception does. And it is our moral obligation to align our perceptions with truth so that our gained wisdom can manifest itself as moral right action.*

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*“If a person who is considered to be a good, moral, loving, spiritual, creative, and inspirational brother overnight turns into an immoral, bad, hateful, evil and deceptive monster; can both of these opposite perceptions of reality be based in truth? No, it can’t because truth is unwavering, definite and objective. Our perceptions are not unwavering, and need to be aligned with truth as much as possible. That is our moral obligation towards the Universe.*

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*“What I do know is the objective, definite difference between right & wrong behavior. Not because of my feelings, intuition, sense of resonance, or any other fluffy inter-dimensional expression of consciousness, but because of knowledge of the principles of the laws of morality.”*

*~ Willem Felderhof*

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## **Zen Gardner 2 Years Later, I Am Still Wondering...**

by [Willem Felderhof](#)

August 5, 2018

For anyone who cares about the truth regarding the sidelining and subsequent inquisition of Zen Gardner two years ago, please take the time to read the (complete) following open letter I sent to Bernhard Guenther regarding the whole issue. I feel it is important to understand what happened back then because it reveals the nature of many unsolved and unacknowledged psychological issues in so called truth communities which also plague society in general. WF

Dear Bernhard,

I hope you are doing well. Maybe you do not remember who I am as it is already two years ago that we had some email exchange following the publication of some articles on your website regarding the coming out of Zen Gardner. But maybe you do remember.

Anyway, in one of your articles, you speak brilliantly about false resonance and refer to sincere self work:

*“False resonating is mistaken for wishful thinking or based on (unconscious) projections or triggers. Sometimes, the false part within us based on conditioning, programming, and wounding resonates with something which we mistake for our true self, resulting in false resonance, or we reject the truth of something because it challenges deep ingrained belief systems we are identified with and hence “don’t resonate with it” because it brings up uncomfortable feelings... which also ties into cognitive dissonance.... In other words, honest sincere self-work is needed in order to detect the lies we tell ourselves and all the rationalizations and denial that come with it so we can get more and more in tune with our soul resonance/knowing.”*

When I saw some pictures passing by of you, Max and Benny recently I couldn’t help wondering how much time you guys spent on self-reflection on how you dealt with the “Zen Gardner issue” that you launched on the internet and into the cosmos 2 years ago.

I also wondered in what way the grammar that you applied back then to come to the logic you then shared on the internet has changed and evolved into more knowledge and more in alignment with truth as time went by.

As Max stated on his YouTube channel to his followers back

then: "We need a calm investigation before we go and have a lynching as any case needs a trial before a possible lynching and we have a lot of questions to be answered." Besides the implementations of such an outrageous statement, I wonder in which phase that investigation is now, two years later, and how many questions have been asked and answered.

The lynching that Max referred to happened anyway and is actually still going on even though the whole thing helped many people with their personal healing process which might be outside of your range of vision. As emotions calmed down over time, proper reasoning set in which made introspective self-reflection possible and many people concluded that things were not really dealt with in an objective and responsible way.

People who really did care about the truth regarding the whole issue put real effort to get in touch with Don/Zen. They tried to establish that contact not only during the period that he was in the line of fire after all hell broke loose and could not meet up with ridiculous self-righteous deadlines, but also AFTER the insane tsunami of attacks passed by. They came to a very different perception of the reality than people who did NOT put effort in trying to get in contact with him.

Yours and others' rhetoric on the internet back then served as a trigger for a lot of stimulus-response driven clicktivists to react in ignorant and immoral ways that caused a lot of harm. This is the main reason for me to write to you as this will not magically go away by itself or by deleting things online. The way this was dealt with and why this was extremely harmful, irresponsible and wrong needs to be faced, deeply understood and lived through, if evolving consciousness is truly intended and desired.

Ignoring unpleasant truths is one of the causal factors of



why we do not see any significant improvements in the collective human condition we co-create by the behavior we choose with our Free Will. Realizing truth, so that we can align our perceptions and our actions with it, is most effective through an apophatic process. So, in the Zen Gardner case it is much more effective and powerful to address the things you and others did NOT do. Namely establishing contact with Don/Zen in REALITY. All justifications for not having direct contact or not engaging in determined efforts to try to establish real contact when things calmed down still do not change the reality that there was no direct contact one bit.

Truth does not waver ever, only our perception does. And it is our moral obligation to align our perceptions with truth so that our gained wisdom can manifest itself as moral right action. Moral right action would be something like the publishing of an expression of a changed perception on the D/Z reality due to evolving consciousness as a result of ongoing filtering of truth from lies. Because of the total lack of such a statement or expression, can I conclude that your perceptions on the way you dealt with the D/Z situation are unchanged like a rigid 19 hijackers narrative?

Does the lack of any such public expression mean that you consider most things you did, and more important did not do, were in line with truth, or that you still think you had the right to perform your actions in the way you did back then, based on the perceptions you then had? Or that your actions did not cause any harm to other beings?

Or do you consider you were in the wrong in any way with your actions and/or lack of action due to revised perceptions? If so, it would be right to share this revised perception with all the people you shared your earlier rhetoric with.

If not, I urge you to read the assessment below by the late Dr. Paul Marko who shortly before his death felt the urge to serve the truth by giving his view as an expert on the subjects that surrounded the allegations levied against Don/Zen.

If a person who is considered to be a good, moral, loving, spiritual, creative, and inspirational brother overnight turns into an immoral, bad, hateful, evil and deceptive monster; can both of these opposite perceptions of reality be based in truth? No, it can't because truth is unwavering, definite and objective. Our perceptions are not unwavering, and need to be aligned with truth as much as possible. That is our moral obligation towards the Universe.

Whether you like it or not, Don/Zen himself still is the embodiment of Truth regarding the whole issue, as he alone knows what did happen and what did not happen and how and why his consciousness perceived and manifested the realities at that time. He is the only true primary source in that respect. Excluding extensive study of primary source data and experience in the process of coming to conclusions leads not only to ignorance and confusion; it will lead to fallacious and feeble logic. Fallacious logic leads to harmful rhetoric/action because it is based in lies and deception. Primary source data and experience with the primary source of truth means direct contact with D/Z in this case. The time and energy spent in gathering, processing and assessing primary source data is directly proportional to the level of care to seek Truth.

Considered in that light; how much time and energy did you spend in trying to get in direct contact with Don/Zen in the years that went by to get more data that could lead you to evolve your consciousness...and thus more alignment of your revised perception of reality with truth? Back then the notion was brought up that soon evidence would pour to

the surface and the truth will speak for itself. I did not see any evidence come up on sexual child abuse or any direct evidence of the kind against Don/Zen as of yet, but maybe due to your research and/or investigation as Max called for, you have gathered some. I am most interested in evidence-based information so please share.

The respective article you posted is deleted from your website. What does that mean? It does not stop the ongoing damage it caused. Is there not any change of logical reasoning as a result of weaving out more contradictions and inconsistencies? This fallacious processing of information again, as I referred to in my email from over 2 years ago, is the exact working principle of the mainstream media, used to mold the minds of the masses.

The extensive contact I had over the last 2 years with Don in which we spoke about his time in the COG and the whole aftermath it caused did not provide me with significant inconsistencies or contradictions in my reasoning from where I could change my perception of Don. On the contrary, I consider him still as one of the most genuine, compassionate, loving and honest human beings I ever met. The wisdom he applies to deal with this immoral, and unjust reality is remarkable, it confirms my perception of his being I had before all of this. I can only have deep respect for the way he uses his own traumatic experiences for self-work purposes to evolve his consciousness and be able to better serve humanity and the Universe itself.

But again, I am very interested in evidence based information that you gathered as a result of the articles you posted back then.

I myself, like most people, spent most of my life in cults. I served as a green beret in the Special forces in the military which is an ultimate cult of evil because it is entirely built on violence, abuse and trauma based mind

control to engineer its members to engage in immoral and harmful behavior without being able to apply one's own conscience. After that I was a member of another cult system for 21 years that willfully exposes its members to nerve gas components and other toxins which causes unimaginable harm and suffering. That cult is deeply involved in numerous other immoral activities and it took me more than 20 years to leave that cult and speak out against it. Most of its current members (about 10,000) know the reality but ignore it because they are driven by deep fear like in all other cults. That cult was a major airline company where I worked as a commercial airline pilot for 25 years.

A cult is a fear-based system of religious veneration and ego-devotion which espouses erroneous beliefs that are dangerous, especially to the lives, rights and freedoms of those who are NOT its members. What is your cult?

One of the most difficult, unpleasant, and important tasks for humanity to change the ever-deteriorating collective human condition is to become aware that our society in general is a fear-based cult system built on numerous sub-cults. Even more difficult but essential is our moral obligation to admit that we ourselves were duped and are part of a cult and that we were wrong. To dismiss a member of a notorious cult like the COG when speaking out, without even consulting in depth or even a second with him, is a clear indication of a deep lack of Self knowledge, Self respect, Self love and lack of wisdom. For me it was a confirmation of the absolute lack of spiritual responsibility and wisdom in so called awake communities. All the so called big shots in the "alternative truth cult" kicked their brother Zen Gardner and all associations with his work off the steaming square wheeled truth-train without having spoken one word with him. Another huge and precious chance for real change wasted all for the greater

good of the “truth warrior” community that so much cares about its important responsibilities towards humanity. Well, most of humanity apparently.

But hey, who am I and what do I know? I do not have a brilliant way of speaking or writing. What I do know is the objective, definite difference between right & wrong behavior. Not because of my feelings, intuition, sense of resonance, or any other fluffy inter-dimensional expression of consciousness, but because of knowledge of the principles of the laws of morality. And the way you and others dealt with the Zen Gardner issue was wrong, immoral, spiritually childish and irresponsible.

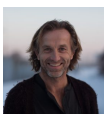
I hope this will be dealt with, not for Zen, not for me, but for the Truth itself.

I wish you, and anyone who has read this, much wisdom in processing this information in order to come to a perception of reality that is more aligned with Truth.

With love,

Willem Felderhof

To read Paul Marko’s article, mentioned above see the full article [here](#).



**Willem Felderhof** is a former commercial airline pilot and was a whistleblower on the presence of toxic elements in aviation generally known as “[the Aerotoxic syndrome](#)”.



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# When Things Fall Apart

## When Things Fall Apart

*Tibetan Buddhist Nun and Teacher Pema Chödrön on  
Transformation Through Difficult Times*

by Maria Popova, the marginalian

July 17, 2017

*“Only to the extent that we expose ourselves over and over  
to annihilation can that which is indestructible be found  
in us.”*

In every life, there comes a time when we are razed to the bone of our resilience by losses beyond our control – lacerations of the heart that feel barely bearable, that leave us bereft of solid ground. What then?

“In art,” Kafka assured his teenage walking companion, “one must throw one’s life away in order to gain it.” As in art, so in life – so suggests the American Tibetan Buddhist nun and teacher Pema Chödrön.

In [When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times](#) (public library), she draws on her own confrontation with personal crisis and on the ancient teachings of Tibetan Buddhism to offer gentle and incisive guidance to the enormity we stand to gain during those times when all seems to be lost.

Half a century after Albert Camus asserted that “there is no love of life without despair of life,” Chödrön reframes those

moments of acute despair as opportunities for befriending life by befriending ourselves in the deepest sense.

Writing in that Buddhist way of wrapping in simple language the difficult and beautiful truths of existence, Chödrön examines the most elemental human response to the uncharted territory that comes with loss or any other species of unforeseen change:

*Fear is a universal experience. Even the smallest insect feels it. We wade in the tidal pools and put our finger near the soft, open bodies of sea anemones and they close up. Everything spontaneously does that. It's not a terrible thing that we feel fear when faced with the unknown. It is part of being alive, something we all share. We react against the possibility of loneliness, of death, of not having anything to hold on to. Fear is a natural reaction to moving closer to the truth.*

*If we commit ourselves to staying right where we are, then our experience becomes very vivid. Things become very clear when there is nowhere to escape.*

This clarity, Chödrön argues, is a matter of becoming intimate with fear and rather than treating it as a problem to be solved, using it as a tool with which to dismantle all of our familiar structures of being, “a complete undoing of old ways of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and thinking.” Noting that bravery is not the absence of fear but the intimacy with fear, she writes:

*When we really begin to do this, we're going to be continually humbled. There's not going to be much room for the arrogance that holding on to ideals can bring. The arrogance that inevitably does arise is going to be continually shot down by our own courage to step forward a little further. The kinds of discoveries that are made through practice have nothing to do with believing in*

anything. They have much more to do with having the courage to die, the courage to die continually.

In essence, this is the hard work of befriending ourselves, which is our only mechanism for befriending life in its completeness. Out of that, Chödrön argues, arises our deepest strength:

Only to the extent that we expose ourselves over and over to annihilation can that which is indestructible be found in us.

[...]

Things falling apart is a kind of testing and also a kind of healing. We think that the point is to pass the test or to overcome the problem, but the truth is that things don't really get solved. They come together and they fall apart. Then they come together again and fall apart again. It's just like that. The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen: room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy.

Decades after Rollo May made his case for the constructiveness of despair, Chödrön considers the fundamental choice we have in facing our unsettlement – whether with aggressive aversion or with generative openness to possibility:

*Life is a good teacher and a good friend. Things are always in transition, if we could only realize it. Nothing ever sums itself up in the way that we like to dream about. The off-center, in-between state is an ideal situation, a situation in which we don't get caught and we can open our hearts and minds beyond limit. It's a very tender, nonaggressive, open-ended state of affairs.*

*To stay with that shakiness – to stay with a broken heart, with a rumbling stomach, with the feeling of hopelessness and wanting to get revenge – that is the path of true*

*awakening. Sticking with that uncertainty, getting the knack of relaxing in the midst of chaos, learning not to panic – this is the spiritual path. Getting the knack of catching ourselves, of gently and compassionately catching ourselves, is the path of the warrior. We catch ourselves one zillion times as once again, whether we like it or not, we harden into resentment, bitterness, righteous indignation – harden in any way, even into a sense of relief, a sense of inspiration.*

Half a century after Alan Watts began introducing Eastern teachings into the West with his clarion call for presence as the antidote to anxiety, Chödrön points to the present moment – however uncertain, however difficult – as the sole seedbed of wakefulness to all of life:

*This very moment is the perfect teacher, and it's always with us.*

*[...]*

*We can be with what's happening and not dissociate. Awakeness is found in our pleasure and our pain, our confusion and our wisdom, available in each moment of our weird, unfathomable, ordinary everyday lives.*

Remaining present and intimate with the moment, she argues, requires mastering maitri – the Buddhist practice of loving-kindness toward oneself, that most difficult art of self-compassion. She contrasts maitri with the typical Western therapy and self-help method of handling crises:

*What makes maitri such a different approach is that we are not trying to solve a problem. We are not striving to make pain go away or to become a better person. In fact, we are giving up control altogether and letting concepts and ideals fall apart. This starts with realizing that whatever occurs is neither the beginning nor the end. It is just the same kind of normal human experience that's been happening to*

*everyday people from the beginning of time. Thoughts, emotions, moods, and memories come and they go, and basic oneness is always here.*

*[...]*

*In the midst of all the heavy dialogue with ourselves, open space is always there.*

Another Buddhist concept at odds with our Western coping mechanisms is the Tibetan expression *ye tang che*. Chödrön explains its connotations, evocative of Camus's insistence on the vitalizing power of despair:

*The ye part means "totally, completely," and the rest of it means "exhausted." Altogether, ye tang che means totally tired out. We might say "totally fed up." It describes an experience of complete hopelessness, of completely giving up hope. This is an important point. This is the beginning of the beginning. Without giving up hope – that there's somewhere better to be, that there's someone better to be – we will never relax with where we are or who we are.*

*[...]*

*Suffering begins to dissolve when we can question the belief or the hope that there's anywhere to hide.*

Decades after Simone de Beauvoir's proclamation about atheism and the ultimate frontier of hope, Chödrön points out that at the heart of Buddhism's approach is not the escapism of religion but the realism of secular philosophy. And yet these crude demarcations fail to capture the subtlety of these teachings. She clarifies:

*The difference between theism and nontheism is not whether one does or does not believe in God... Theism is a deep-seated conviction that there's some hand to hold: if we just do the right things, someone will appreciate us and take care of*



*us. It means thinking there's always going to be a babysitter available when we need one. We all are inclined to abdicate our responsibilities and delegate our authority to something outside ourselves. Nontheism is relaxing with the ambiguity and uncertainty of the present moment without reaching for anything to protect ourselves.*

*[...]*

*Hopelessness is the basic ground. Otherwise, we're going to make the journey with the hope of getting security... Begin the journey without hope of getting ground under your feet. Begin with hopelessness.*

*[...]*

*When inspiration has become hidden, when we feel ready to give up, this is the time when healing can be found in the tenderness of pain itself... In the midst of loneliness, in the midst of fear, in the middle of feeling misunderstood and rejected is the heartbeat of all things.*

Only through such active self-compassion to our own darkness, Chödrön suggests, can we begin to offer authentic light to anybody else, to become a force of radiance in the world. She writes:

We don't set out to save the world; we set out to wonder how other people are doing and to reflect on how our actions affect other people's hearts.

Complement the immensely grounding and elevating [When Things Fall Apart](#) with Camus on [strength of character in times of trouble](#), Erich Fromm on [what self-love really means](#), and Nietzsche on [why a fulfilling life requires embracing rather than running from difficulty](#), then revisit Chödrön on [the art of letting go](#).

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