

A misty forest path with a person walking away in the distance. The path is made of wooden planks and is flanked by tall, thin trees with bare branches. The atmosphere is foggy and somber.

# **Hurting**

**the role of trauma and  
suffering in life**

**Stella Baker**

 **qultura** CORE  
CIC

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- Title: Hurting - the role of trauma and suffering in life
- Author: Stella Baker
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# Introduction

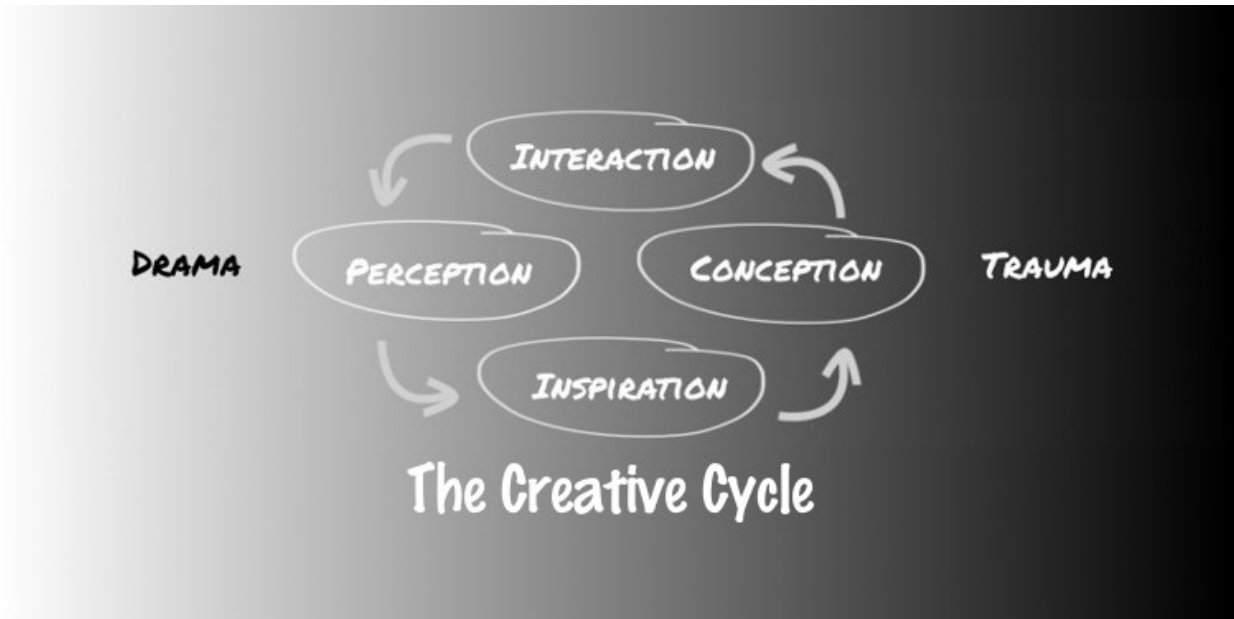
Trauma and suffering is a very esoteric subject for many people for the simple fact that, while we all experience trauma and suffering as part of our lives, nobody likes to think about it, talk about or or discuss it. Indeed when it comes to the definition of the occult, the occult here meaning hidden or obscured, the number one occult subject isn't mysticism, or magic, or witchcraft. It's trauma and suffering.

This is why a prison is different from a hospital. A hospital is run for the benefit of the staff, so screaming, yelling and crying is not allowed. Staff such as doctors and nurses in a hospital have to constantly make critical decisions and undertake tasks which require focus of attention and concentration. It's hard to do these things in an environment when people are outwardly suffering and yelling and screaming and so forth. However a prison is run for the benefit of the governor, so there can be noise, doors slamming, yelling, shouting and suffering. Besides suffering is a part of penitence. The whole point of being in prison is so that you suffer. This is part of 19th century thinking that still lingers in our so-called modern 21st century society.

But if you've created a method of enquiry designed to liberate people from their trauma and suffering, and you're seeking to develop a community along those lines, and you're trying to find volunteers and activists to help you liberate people from the misery of social stigma and social exclusion, knowing about trauma and suffering and understanding the relationship between the two is fundamental to everything else.

The first thing you need to understand is that trauma is a fundamental part of existence, but suffering is very much a human concept which is rooted in human culture and human social and cultural values. Hopefully by the end of this document I will have provided some insight into both trauma and suffering and hopefully made it possible to gain a deeper understanding in these matters.

# Starting from trauma



Trauma is the starting point for any creative process. Drop a stone into a pool of water and the impact of the stone hitting the surface of the water will disrupt the smooth surface creating a splash, then waves, then ripples, until the surface of the water reaches a point of equilibrium and becomes smooth once again.

Trauma is the solitary force in the universe creating chaos, division and separation. Trauma is always negated by drama. This is the fundamental of Creative Law which I developed in November 2009 and which forms the basis of Qultura methodology, which I derived out of Buddhism thereafter. The illustration above is the simple Creative Law meme which illustrates the polarity between trauma and drama.

Creative Law is arguably the simplest explanation in existence as to how consciousness, energy and space interact with one another. To understand the relationship you just need to understand that:

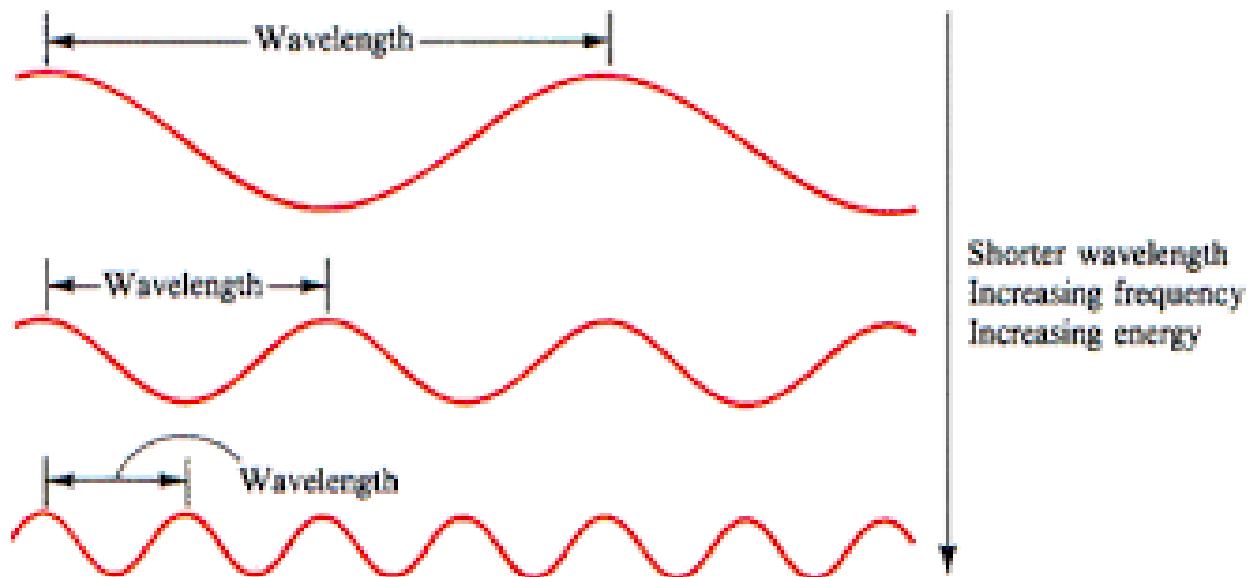
- consciousness is existence and information
- space is environment and reality

- energy is physicality through which consciousness and space are perceived

Consciousness and space are both infinite throughout the universe through interaction with energy, which is finite, constant, and cannot be created or destroyed.

Consciousness is existence simply because it can be perceived because it is information. Space is reality because it is also non-existence. If something exists then it must exist in some form of reality, and consciousness always exists in space, just as space always contains consciousness in the form of existence. No matter what you can think of, however which way, you will never find space without consciousness just as you never find existence without reality.

But you always perceive consciousness and space through energy and physicality.



Which brings us to energy and the Energy Spectrum, which is the core principle of Creative Law. Existence (consciousness) is defined by it's relationship to space which can be perceived through it's relationship to energy.

Energy is a matter of wavelength, frequency and how it relates to both energy and space. Out of this we have the three core principles of existence:

- all existence is unique and individual
- all existence is binary and based on a pulsating relationship with space
- all existence is cyclical in nature

This means that the higher the frequency of energy, the closer it is relative to space. The closer the relationship is between energy and space, the more traumatic and forceful energy becomes.

This also means that the lower the frequency of energy is, the closer it is relative to consciousness. The closer the relationship is between energy and consciousness, the more dramatic and less forceful energy becomes until it reaches Zero Point and there is harmony and equilibrium between energy and consciousness coexistent with space.

Consider that you also have physical scale and dimension which creates massive variances in energy cycles.

A solid physical object is extremely high frequency energy interacting with space so that it feels hard, solid and impenetrable.

Compare this with a life cycle of a human or animal or a tree, which is extremely low frequency energy based on an extremely long cycle which can take many years or - in the case of trees - centuries to complete.

Therefore life is a dramatic response to the trauma of death. This is the principle of reincarnation.

Think about it.

You can probably remember being a small child and have recollections from the earlier years of your childhood. But are you physically a small child?

All existence is consciousness in space interacting with energy in various forms of physicality. Life is just the universe expanding on different planes of consciousness. Consciousness and space are infinite and cannot be explained, understood, or fully known.

We can never understand fully the reality we exist in. I'm not trying to explain reality here, but give you some idea of how consciousness, energy and space interact with one another so you can understand trauma.

Consciousness expands relative to the space it exists in. For that expansion to occur, both consciousness and space must interact with energy. This is how the universe works. This is how this planet works. This is how Nature works. This is how life works. All existence is based on the exact same mystical principles.

This means that biological evolution occurs on the same principle as the universe. The starting point in any process of creativity and interaction is trauma. The starting point in living existence is death, because death is trauma, is it not?

Death is the separation of consciousness from a physical body.

The consciousness remains the same, but the physical body becomes biomass, a corpse, rotting flesh, like a dead leaf, because without consciousness the energy can only interact with space.

But consciousness must expand, and it can only expand through interaction with energy in space. We can only experience the universe through life.

So our consciousness attaches itself to another body in the form of a foetus and we once again acquire a brain, a sensory nervous system, supported by a physical body, through which we can experience life through a mind.

Life starts when the brain in the foetus is capable of recording consciousness and perceiving an environment, believed to be a few months prior to birth. This starts with the trauma involving the foetus from its mother's body. This is where life begins. Birth is just a change in environment.

It is the trauma that we experience throughout our lives which shapes us. It defines us, because in response to the trauma we learn, we develop consciousness, we heal, we grow.

We are not our physical bodies, we are not our thoughts, we are not our feelings or emotions. We are the consciousness that develops out of our



physical experiences with trauma.

This is the circle of life, the cycle, and the process of existence.

Irrespective of whatever form life or existence takes, the starting point is always trauma.

# Separateness



Separateness is central to the human perception of existence. It hasn't always been this way. It's only been this way for the past 5,000 years of our evolutionary history when we learned that we could influence our environmental reality from our thoughts and through our focus of conscious attention direct our thoughts and emotions to influence our reality.

Through this discovery human culture changed to explore this new phenomenon of being able to focus our conscious attention and direct our thoughts and emotions to influence and seek control over our environment.

As a species we started to believe that we were far more evolved than other species, separate and distinct from our natural environment, and also

separate and distinct from each other. This is where the shift from developing our consciousness as a whole to only developing our narrow focus of conscious attention started.

Mankind is paying a very heavy price for that shift in focus in developing consciousness, a price which has slowed down or even halted the course of human evolution. This price is of course ignorance.

Now here please understand that I'm not referring to ignorance in the form of a lack of conscious awareness relative to our existential or environmental reality. The universe and the environmental reality is coming at us constantly in a multidimensional continuum of sensation and experience. This means that everything is happening everywhere all the time.

But what I am referring to is the kind of ignorance that comes from a conditioned emotional and psychological attachment to this cultural belief in separateness which manifests itself as a conscious choice to persist in this belief in the face of experienced reality and truth which repeatedly shows that everything is connected and interdependent.

Let me give you an example of what I'm referring to here a mother and a newborn baby.

Both share the exact same environmental reality. Yet both perceive that environmental reality completely differently.

From the perspective of the baby, probably not more than a few weeks old, baby and mother are one and the same. You can only perceive your reality and existence in terms of your consciousness and conscious awareness. This conscious awareness can only be developed through the felt sense of immediate experience, meaning that your level of consciousness is directly relative to your experience and awareness of life.

Throughout much of its short life this baby's life experience was gained in the environmental reality of its mother's womb, part of her body. It's now conscious of the fact that its environment has changed but it has yet to achieve any kind of autonomy, its sensory nervous system is not at all well

developed, it has very little motor coordination skills, all it knows how to do is to suck, cry, pee and poop - the bare bone basics of life.

However from the conscious perspective of the mother its completely different. Everything is separate and has been ever since the positive pregnancy test. She is the mother, a woman, and the baby is her child, she's a parent, and conscious of her role as a mother she's probably going to have a plenty of ideas of how her child is going to be living for the first 18 or so years of life.

At the time of its birth this baby was born as the most highly evolved member of the species and completely enlightened and perceptive of its connection to its environment and everything in it.

At some point during the first year or eighteen months of its life inevitably its going to experience trauma and from that traumatic experience go through the sensation that it is somehow separate from its environment and its mother.

Now it could be rather early and come from the trauma experienced when suckling on its mother's breast and no milk is produced. It could be a bad case of nappy rash. It could be a loud noise which startles it. Trying to stand up for the first time and falling over. Being left to cry for too long. But somehow in some way this baby is going to experience trauma and experience the sensation or get the impression that it is separate from its environment and mother.

As the baby grows into an small infant and becomes more familiar with their environment they're going to develop a sense of self and other. From their perspective they're going to get used to being carried, wheeled around in a buggy, pram or pushchair, and get used to seeing the legs of humans who are much bigger than they are.

By the time they're three or thereabouts and a toddler they're going to be testing their power out on their parents and developing an Ego. Depending on how their parents respond to their tantrums and raise their child the toddler will have a well developed Ego which is a compromise between their inner world and their outer world. Out of this the child will start to develop a

relationship with themselves and develop feelings and emotions about themselves.

Through a process of constant socialization through parents, education, social interaction, the media, the government, and so on this child is going to be taught how this world and reality works. From this this child is going to develop a distorted perception of who they are, who everybody else is, and their environment.

More than likely they're going to become very confused as to what the difference is between actual reality (consciousness, energy and space) and symbolic and cultural reality.

Assuming this child is being raised in the West somewhere, they're going to be told such things as God is this old man living in the sky who created everything in existence, that Santa Claus is this old fat guy in a red suit who breaks into their home once a year to leave everybody presents under some decorated fir tree.

They might go to church and Sunday school and learn the Bible and that God is watching them and knows everything about everyone and everything. Then they're going to be read stories from the Bible and learn that God created Adam and Eve as the first man and woman, and everyone was born from them despite the fact that Adam and Eve had two sons and no daughters. They're going to be taught how to pray where everyone is expected to get on their knees, put their hands together, close their eyes and tell God what he should do. Then to make things more interesting they're going to sing religious nursery rhymes.

Of course this child is going to go to school to learn many things in many different subjects. They're going to go to one school which is focussed on playing, where they get taught to read and write, learn the alphabet A B C and also learn to count and use numbers to learn that  $1 + 1 = 2$ ,  $2 \times 2 = 4$ ,  $6 - 4 = 2$ , and so on. Then when they go to the next school they're going to learn that  $a + b = z$ .

Is it any wonder how most people become confused as to who they are, who everyone else is, and how they relate to their natural and social environment

- which are two completely separate things but which many people believe are one and the same?

Many people seem to have a messed up sense of understanding the difference between what they do and what happens to them.

For example I think we can all agree that we cut hair the same as we cut grass. So how does this end up as understanding that grass grows but hair doesn't? Why do we say that we are growing our hair but never say that the earth is growing grass? Why do we believe that our physical bodies are part of who we are but then turn round and say my heart is beating? Is your heart not part of your physical body?

I mean why is it that our hearts are beating but we are breathing? Why is it never "my lungs are breathing", or even "my brain is thinking"? How come it's always "my stomach is rumbling" but never "I am rumbling in my stomach"?

Where do we get the notion that we are completely separate from our natural environment?

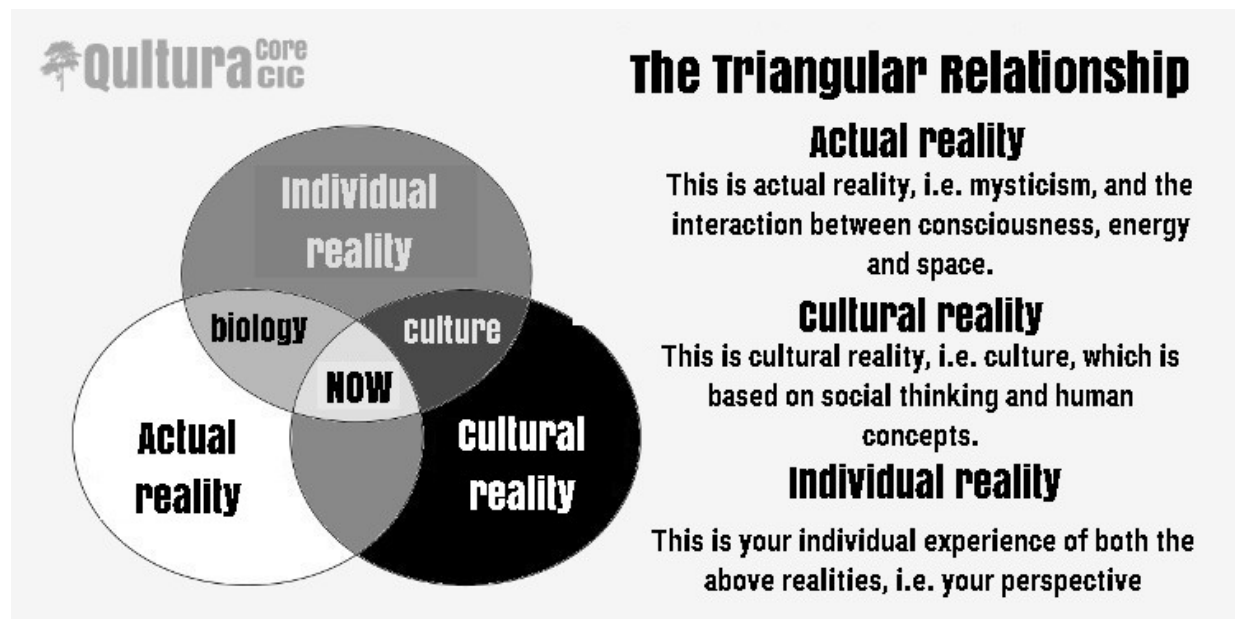
I mean how long do you expect to survive without breathing air, drinking water or eating food? How do you manage to move around without being physically connected through gravity to the dry surfaces of this planet? Can you somehow naturally live under water, for example in the sea? Do you have the natural ability to fly through the air?

It's like people say stuff like "I came into this world." Did you? From where? The Moon? From Mars? Were you somehow brought here from outer space by aliens and left behind in a shopping bag? Where exactly did you come from?

Is it therefore any wonder that we suffer when we are so confused as to how we relate to each other and our natural environment, cannot tell the difference between naturally occurring reality and social reality from human thinking, and are so confused about what we do and what happens to us?

This is the difference between trauma and suffering. One is real, the other is a social construct which arises out of our conditioned beliefs in separateness.

# The role of suffering



While trauma is very much a part of existence, suffering is very much a human concept. Therefore as per the Triangular Relationship (the illustration above) we can clearly see that trauma is part of actual reality, while suffering is far more a part of cultural reality.

This means that generally suffering is an additional, cultural layer of hurt and pain which accompanies, but which is distinct from trauma.

I'm writing about this because learning to make this distinction between trauma and suffering was a very major obstacle in my spiritual journey and shamanistic path. I started out in my teens being introduced to Theravada Buddhism in the context of eastern philosophies such as Hinduism, Brahmanism and Mahayana Buddhism.

Trauma and suffering were identified as karma and it was explained that in being karma, and something which had something to do with emotional and psychological attachments to physicality, you needed to resolve the karma to move past or beyond the trauma and suffering.

However through mysticism and magic I was aware that consciousness could take on form because this is the fundamental principle of consciousness. Consciousness is information because it's out of consciousness you get physicality and physical form. That's how we arrive at the word information, because it is in-formation. Consciousness coming into form. As per the Book of Genesis, God creates Man (Adam) from the dust of the earth and He breathes spirit into his nostrils, so he becomes informed and takes on a form.

As humans we are gatherers of information, which is what makes the development of consciousness so easy for our powerful memories and imaginations and complex psychological processes. This is why most of the things you learn in life, and remember, are things which you have learned through the development of consciousness and the satiation of curiosity.

But trauma and suffering are physical experiences. Fear is physical. Thinking is a physical activity, abstractions are physical, and irrespective of whether the pain is physical, emotional or psychological it's still existing on the psycho-physical plane. So how do we move past trauma and pain to another level of consciousness?

Back at the time I had another friend, Tony. Tony was a bus conductor on a Routemaster bus but he was also a devout Catholic. He had always wanted to study theology and become a priest, but see he was also gay and for some reason that held him back. Tony explained that moving past trauma and suffering was a case of letting go, and that there were four ways of letting go which formed two basic polarities:

- • resignation ↔ rebellion
- • renunciation ↔ reincarnation

What I was picking up on was a common and very widespread assumption that trauma and suffering was so deeply rooted into the human psyche, and was so addictive, that the only way of overcoming trauma and suffering was to physically remove yourself from an environment. There's this common and widespread belief that you need to withdraw so that you can become aware of the other, more 'delicate' levels of consciousness through removing yourself from the temptation of worldly desires.



Indeed there seems to be widespread societal acceptance of suffering, so much so that suffering has been legitimized as a means of motivation – through fear motivation, deprivation of opportunity, artificial scarcity and through social stigma.

There is no legitimate reason for the amount of suffering we have today in society. We have the space, we have the digital technology, we have the scientific know-how, we have the financial and material resources, the potential intelligence, sense of community, consciousness and a capacity for conscious awareness to work together and cooperate to create communities and a society where people can live comfortably with sufficient income and opportunity to meet their basic, fundamental needs – shelter, access to food, fuel and energy, access to clothing, healthcare and education, and so on.

We simply have to prioritize our humanity over ideology, let go of our emotional and psychological dependency on external authority and embrace the fact that we are conscious beings in a physical environment.

Until we can learn to achieve the above in sufficient numbers we need to accept that is it us, we the people in our communities, who allow others in authority to make conscious, fully premeditated choices and decisions which cause harm and suffering to other people. We allow them to make such choices and decisions even when they know that their choices and decisions will harm and cause suffering among other people.

# The Buddhist perspective

The story begins in ancient India somewhere in the 500's BC in the Shakyamuni province in northern India. A young prince, Prince Shakyamuni Siddhartha Gotama is being raised to be the next king of the province. He is kept in isolation because his father does not want him to see the suffering from all the decadence out there in society. An astrologer told his father that his son would either be a great emperor or a great sage, and his father preferred the former to the latter.

But one day the young prince manages to break free and leave the palace to go for a walk in the streets. He leaves with an advisor or consort. They come across an old man begging in the street. Siddhartha turns to his advisor and asks, "What is wrong with this man? Why does he look so ugly? Why is he begging in the street?"

The advisor advises him that he is old, and sick, and poor, and needs money.

"And what of me?" asks Siddhartha, "Will I become old and sick?"

The advisor informs him that this will be so, because sickness and aging is a part of life. So they walk further and they find a corpse lying in the street. "What is that?" asks the young prince. He is informed that it's the body of a dead person. "And what of me?" asks Siddhartha, "Will I die?" The advisor informs him that yes, death is a part of life experience.

Distressed by his social encounters, Siddhartha relinquishes his regal life and leaves the palace to become a mystic, a mendicant and a spiritual teacher. Long story short he spends several years as an ascetic, imposing on himself harsh austerities, constant meditation, giving away his alms and possessions, seeking out causes of suffering, self-flagellation, and so on.

It was during this period he acquired a number of disciples and students. "You suffer because you desire," was his opening premise. So the students

went away and tried not to desire. But this of course led to problems. My relationship with Babu, the elderly Bangladeshi Theravadin, started out in a similar way.

When he spoke about the Theravada and I asked him to introduce me he said, "You are young and your mind is fickle. How do I know you have the discipline to learn? If you are serious about this then go away, and live without any income for three months. Show me that you can let go of your selfish desires and learn something about humanity and the kindness of people. Otherwise you will be wasting my time."

I ran into the same problems as Siddhartha's students. You see if you are seeking to give up your desires, then you are desiring to give up your desires. They came back to Siddhartha and explained the situation. "Then you get the point," he explained. It was only after several years after he realized that there was no value in suffering that he gave up and created the Buddhist system of the Middle Way, the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path. It was through this awakening that he gained the title of the Buddha – which is a title which means the awakened one.

I managed a little over 10 weeks, ending up homeless in the process. I returned to Babu apologetic that I'd failed to make it through the whole 3 months. "But you tried hard enough that you lost your home. That's more effort than most people achieve in their lifetime to give up their cravings and desires," he said. He gave me a room in exchange for household help and chores and thus accepted me into his mentorship.

It was through Babu that I became a shaman. All Buddhism originates out of Mahayana Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism means 'greater vehicle', because '-yana' is a Sanskrit word for vehicle, such as a raft, and 'maha' means greater. Out of Mahayana Buddhism you get Chan Buddhism (Chinese Buddhism which is infused with the Tao Te Ching) and out of this Zen Buddhism. Then you have the tantric forms of Buddhism and some flavours of Vedanta. However much of Vedanta is like Qultura, and a derivative of Buddhism rather than a flavour of Buddhism.

Greater vehicle here means that there are many ways to become enlightened, and this contrasts radically with the Theravada or Theravada

Buddhism, which is hinayana Buddhism - 'lesser vehicle'. Therevada is known as 'the School of the Elders' and is the strict, conservative flavour of Buddhism. The difference being is that there is only a few ways to become enlightened, and ideally only one way of becoming enlightened, which you must seek out and find for yourself.

However it's important here to understand that strict and conservative does not mean dogmatic, or attached strictly to doctrines, or fundamentalist as it would with say a Western religion (think Islamic or Christian fundamentalism). It simply means that you must figure out your own path to enlightenment as the Buddha did. You have get out there and connect to the wider world or community, and seek counsel from the elders, or older people.

What I found interesting about Buddhism, and the same is true of the other eastern philosophy the Tao Te Ching, is how both these philosophies are very averse to suffering. Taoism advocates walking a very minimalist path, being as natural as possible, so as to learn as much about the Dao, which is the way, the method, or the life force, whichever way you look at it. Buddhism is also very averse to suffering.

I was taught the Therevada on the basis of a single sutra, the Rhinoceros Sutra, considered the first sutra of the Pali Canon, the central Buddhist text (which is larger than the Encyclopaedia Britannica and much of it is hard to read or understand). This is a heavy text, rather like reading all the Hindu Upanishads rolled into one, and takes the form of a very long poem with many stanzas consisting of four lines the last of which is 'Fare lonely like the rhinoceros'. The rhinoceros in question is the Asian rhinoceros with one horn.

The poem or sutra is all about trauma and suffering and liberation from it through being a shaman, a hermit, and walking your own path through life.

Then you have the story of the exchange between a student and Bodhidharma, an Indian migrant to emigrated to China and developed Chan Buddhism. The dialogue goes as follows..

Student, "I need help to pacify my mind."

Bodhidharma, "Show me your mind."

Student, "I cannot find my mind."

Bodhidharma, "Then your mind is pacified."

I've got to be honest I've never ever really been reconciled to this approach to suffering. Let me give you an example of what I mean here.

Let's take a very clear example of trauma and suffering – bereavement. Someone very close to you dies suddenly and unexpectedly. A parent, a partner, a child, a loved one. All of a sudden that person with whom you've had a close intimate relationship with is dead. They're no longer part of your life. Inevitably you're going to be hit by shock, trauma, and suffering.

So what now? You go off and crawl into a hole and meditate for the next five years? Or do you 'pacify' your mind and just somehow pretend that the natural process of bereavement doesn't affect you?

This is ultimately what caused me to step off the Buddhist raft (or 'yana') and create a new raft – Qultura. This is not a criticism of Buddhism, because the whole point of Buddhism is that it's a method of enquiry to develop consciousness and achieve enlightenment. Just like a raft it's a vehicle to get you from one place to another.

When you reach a shore you get off the raft and leave it behind, don't you? Or are you one of these people who will try and find a way of dragging the raft with you or carrying it on your back?

# Sufferer's culture

The avoidance of suffering which is not limited to either Buddhism or the Tao Te Ching is very much a part of human culture. Much of this is down to the widespread attachment to Ego and living primarily on the psycho-physical plane of existence where you believe that your Ego is real and your mind is your mind, and is not part of the environment but very much a part of your physical identity and concept of Self.

Then you have the mental and social conditioning which we are all put through pretty much from the start of our lives, much of which is based on moral reasoning, where we are taught that trauma and suffering is bad, that it is unpleasant, nasty, and to be avoided or resisted at all costs. We get taught this the first time we puke or play with our poop, and we learn that certain things in life are nasty and are to be avoided.

Only this conditioned and socialized aversion to trauma and suffering doesn't result in any less suffering in the world, but instead binds us to the suffering and creates more of it.

I started to wonder whether this was all part of the grand scheme of things and that this was all inevitable. My spiritual guide Alchesay started appearing in my dreams. "Stella when you look into space you're not supposed to think. You're supposed to feel. You have a spirit for a reason."

This is when I started to become aware of the immense amount of suffering all around me and it began to dawn on me as I walked down the street and looked into the faces that almost everyone I came across was suffering in some way.

Suffering manifests itself in many different forms and people deal with suffering in a vast multitude of different ways as part of their everyday lives.

For example there are billions of people who are right now feeling hungry. There are billions of people who are hurting from past trauma and abuse, billions of people who are lonely, afraid, having to deal with sickness, pain, and billions of people living in fear. How do we deal with all this?

What do we do? Some of us have money in the bank, food in the fridge, yet there are many others out there with no money and who are starving. We are part of a culture and society that is generating suffering.

We could say that they did it to themselves, or that they didn't try hard enough. But this is a lie. It's dishonest and we know that's not the way it is. For a start it's a blanket denial of others out there who for whatever reason make harmful choices towards others, and those who abuse the power and trust placed in them by others. This is all part of the sufferers culture.

We're part of this culture, and conditions that have suffering built into them.

Now most of us deal with this through various strategies of denial and indifference. We look the other way. We pretend not to notice. We think up excuses. What we do is that we close down our hearts and we obscure our hearts with our minds. We obscure the heart with rationalizations:

- "I can't do anything about it."
- "I already give to charity."
- "I'm struggling myself."

There's other things we do as well. This is essentially to convince ourselves that we can go on in this sufferers culture without facing too many consequences or remaining unaffected.

However very few of us ever really appreciate the enormous costs involved in this culture of denial and indifference.

It's important to understand that while our minds and intellect are fed by human concepts, ideas and beliefs, our hearts are fed by the consciousness from our environment and indeed, the universe. One such example, and a very clear example, is that our hearts need iron in order to function and this is directly relative to how we perceive time. Iron is produced by the

collision of galaxies in outer space, but we also need large amounts of consciousness to be able to regulate both our time perception and energies.

Energy only has one source, and that source is consciousness.

Unlike energy, consciousness is limitless and boundless. Consciousness is what dissolves boundaries and divisions between human beings creating what is known as affinity, love, friendship, whatever you want to call it. You know when you feel attracted to someone or share a connection how you want more and more, and more and more. When you're powerfully attracted to someone or fall in love all the boundaries and divisions go flying out of the window.

So when you love someone or even something, such as art, music, or some other interest or activity, you know how it feeds you. You know how love builds you up and how, when you're in a loving relationship with someone, how the love between you feeds each other.

So then you reach a point where you say to yourself that you can love him, or her, but you cannot love them, because you cannot afford to because that involves too much suffering.

This is where we get to the subject of cost. You can obscure and shield your heart with your mind and all manner of rationalizations, imposing as many boundaries and hard limits as you wish. For sure you will feel a sense of security, you will feel protected and less vulnerable.

But this comes with an enormous cost in terms of consciousness. For a start you lose that living, spiritual interchange between you and your environment and others costing you a lot of vivacity and vibrancy. You also give up a lot of ability to control and manage your energy frequencies and you also lose a lot of your ability to modify and change your time perception. This has the effect of slowing your life down. Understand that your perception of time generally matches the speed of your life. When time speeds up it doesn't mean that you're being rushed towards your death, but means that you're developing consciousness faster and becoming more energy efficient.



This means that most people in society are living on the basis of one or two cylinders out of a total eight firing. It's a bit like driving round in a car everywhere at 20mph. The heart is obscured by the mind, which gives people a sense of security, comfort and safety, but it massively cuts down the supply of consciousness to the spirit or 'soul' if you prefer.

But it seems very difficult to conceive or find a way of dealing with the immense amount of suffering out there without needing to shield or protect the heart. How can you bear it? How can you bear what is basically unbearable?

Suffering is so widespread throughout society that you don't need to just think of the poor or the homeless, or the destitute. Do you not think that wealthy people aren't suffering? Look at their faces. Look at the lines of their faces. Look at their facial expressions. Look at the tension, the lack of humour, the lack of joy. Take a look at the faces of those who play a very active role in our socioeconomic system, such as politicians.

Think about the fear and insecurity which is generated by the socioeconomic system alone and how these fears and insecurities draw the attention of people throughout society. Go spend some time on social media and see how in among all the sponsored pages and advertising much of the content and posting generated by people is motivated primarily out of fear, anxiety and suffering.

Or shopping online. Observe the culture of people shopping and buying things online, just trying to relieve the misery and suffering trying to make themselves happy – despite the fact that spending money and shopping never really results in happiness. Think of all the people who buy stuff and then they're not happy with the stuff they bought – another form of suffering.

Even when you get what you want you can still end up suffering.

Getting old is suffering because your body is changing, bits of you are either working less efficiently or have stopped working altogether. You notice a general decline and loss of energy and it enters your consciousness that you're on the way out, albeit slowly.

Dying is suffering.

Suffering is an integral part of human culture.

# A Qultura perspective

Just because there is suffering in the world, in our culture, and in our lives does not mean that we have to accept it. I'm also not buying the eastern philosophy 'no mind' concept from both Buddhism and Taoism that you should 'drop your mind' and change your consciousness so that you no longer suffer. This to me seems a lot like yet another denial and aversion strategy.

This brings to mind a point made by Hui-neng, the 6th Chinese patriarch of Chan Buddhism when he spoke of the Indian culture of aestheticism and the striving for an empty mind devoid of consciousness. This is a culture of seeking out suffering to expiate your actions so that you have a blank mind. This is the culture of the fakir sitting on the bed of nails.

For sure there are some people who seek to suffer that much because sitting with your arse on a spike or board of nails is the only way you convince yourself of your reality. But it is not necessary.

Hui-neng made the point that the whole culture of aestheticism so that you become completely mindless is a great mistake, because it makes you no better than a rock or a lump of wood. If you're a conscious, living being with a mind that is essentially space and potentially contains everything, then surely you need to be expanding your mind constantly to be as enlightened as it is possible for you to become in your circumstances.

Babu, my Bangladeshi mentor who introduced me to Therevada, had even stronger views. The Abidhamma is the only reality, everything is an illusion. If you fill your mind with illusions then you will have to work in life. Work is a form of suffering. Work is something the less enlightened among us have to do in order to receive income. But you are born with certain resources you can transform into disciplines. These resources help you develop consciousness. When you develop consciousness you connect to other resources through disciplines and life becomes much easier.

My point here is that all suffering has a form which is centred around a concept or attachment. This form can be physical pain. It can also be a sense of emotional loss. It can also be the the notion of an unfulfilled need, or an unfulfilled condition or expectation. It can also be a sense of fear. But however which way suffering manifests itself in someone's life it is still some form of consciousness bound to space through energy, a sensation, understanding or awareness.

The fact that suffering is something which exists indicates that it has form. If something has form then you can work with it and transform that form into something else.

Understand that there is no value whatsoever in suffering. All suffering which is experienced by humans carries a cost in terms of consciousness and energy. Suffering holds you back in life. It drags you down. It slows your life right down, often to a standstill, and you can end up getting stuck in life if you end up suffering way too much.

But if suffering has form and exists, then surely it can be changed and transformed into something new which doesn't perpetuate the suffering, or the pain, or the misery, or the hardship, but instead it can be used to create insight which can then be used to help either yourself when you suffer again or as insight for someone else who is suffering.

In this way you're turning the suffering back on itself and creating new consciousness out of the suffering which results in insight. In this way you're not shielding or obscuring your heart through your mind and rationalization through denial or aversion. Instead you are shifting your conscious perspective so that your heart is fed with consciousness and your mind is expanded.

You are developing empathy.

Developing empathy is the natural way out of suffering. You have suffered, you are consciously aware of your suffering and you don't want to suffer anymore, so you express empathy towards yourself. But you also don't want others to suffer, so you develop empathy towards others.

Of course you need to let go of your attachment or aversion to the suffering in order to be able to do this, and you will also need to be willing to develop your humanity, but empathy offers you a reliable and secure way out of suffering which is backed up by around 3.8 billion years of biological evolution on this planet.

# The imbalanced perspective

While there's a lot of suffering out there and everyone suffers in their own way, it's important to understand that suffering is part of the circle of life and a fundamental part of what life is really all about. We humans have evolved a certain way, and we evolve through our social and cultural beliefs. If our beliefs are rooted in a belief in separateness, then this will form part of our evolutionary consciousness.

However it's important not to get too caught up in this culture of widespread suffering to the degree that it shifts your perspective from being a balanced perspective to being an imbalanced perspective.

You maintain a balanced conscious perspective by existing on different levels of consciousness so that you can vary your perspective from one level to another and you're able to make the connections, so that you see the harmony in the conflict, the equilibrium in the chaos, and you're using polar thinking not just to see what exists and is real, but also what doesn't exist and is possible.

If your conscious perspective is limited to just a few levels of consciousness or even just the basic, fundamental psycho-physical level of being, you're not going to find your Core Being and you will forever have an imbalanced perspective.

Developing an imbalanced perspective when it comes to suffering leads to a situation where you become so obsessed with the suffering, you end up railing against the unknown organization of the suffering, even though your mind cannot understand it.

This is like saying that you assume the mystery is a failure. You don't know that. A mystery is a mystery because it's unknown.

But please don't misunderstand me here or try to twist my words either. This is not me saying that all this is somehow perfect or trying to explain it

away by claiming that this is all just karma. This is not a rationalization for not acting or being indifferent towards suffering – it's quite the opposite in fact.

I'm not advocating the cheap cop out or the usual whataboutery.

My advocacy here is coming from a position of empathy. This is a position where you have enough conscious awareness to understand that you are part of the universe and connected to everyone and everything and – furthermore – you understand that there is no necessity to either obscure or shield your heart. Even in the presence of immense and widespread suffering.

If you shut down or obscure your heart in order to be in the universe and interact with its reality, you have rendered your connection to other dysfunctional and disabled your end of the mystical transaction. Sure from your perspective the cosmos, this planet and society might look the same, but there will be no vibrancy and no connectivity to either reality or others. I simply pointed out that they were being made to bear the unbearable.

# A way out of Hell

Fundamentally trying to find a way to transform suffering into insight is pretty much all about trying to find a way out of Hell. Trying to live with an open heart in today's modern society is pretty much the same thing – you're trying to find a way out of Hell.

Think about it. Take a good look around you and take a look at all the ways that suffering and trauma have been normalized in society. What other word for this reality can you find other than Hell?

Part of this comes down to the fear of the broken heart. "I'm afraid that my heart will break. I cannot become too involved or show myself to be too vulnerable or sensitive."

A while back I came into contact with the son and the sister of a man who had been executed by lethal injection in the United States. There were issues with the case, a failed appeal and a failed clemency petition. There were videos posted on Youtube about the case. The family steeled themselves for the execution. They watched as their relative was put to sleep by the State and they went off and waited for the post-execution contact visit. This was in the chapel of rest where the dead body of their relative was still warm enough so they could spend around 15 minutes or so to touch and hug the dead body of their relative and say their last goodbyes.

Of course the prison officials reported the execution to the media, the media reported the execution, and this resulted in many people who had no connection whatsoever with either the case, the executed man or his family posting their thoughts and opinions all over the social media.

- • Glad that this POS died.
- • Should have happened sooner.
- • Scum.
- • He should have been fried in the electric chair.



I encountered the grieving relatives online and send them a few emails. I just couldn't conceive the shock, anguish, pain, and grief this family was going through due to the murder – and it is a murder – of their father and brother or the waves of moronic ignorance from strangers on the internet afterwards. I said that there was nothing I could say to offer any solace or comfort.

When you are forced to bear the unbearable something dies deep inside you.

What dies inside you is who you were who could not bear the unbearable. There is it. You say that something is unbearable. But unbearable to whom? It's unbearable to who you think you are.

# The way into Hell

Well if we're in Hell trying to find ways of transforming suffering into insight, and live with an open heart in the midst of so much human suffering, then how did we end up in Hell to begin with? It's quite simple.

We end up in Hell through our attachment to suffering.

Let's compare the foundation premises of Buddhism and Qultura:

- We suffer because we desire. (Buddhism)
- All trauma and suffering is born of division and perception of division. (Qultura)

Buddhism, and also the Tao Te Ching, is all about being averse to suffering, taking the path of least resistance, letting go and moving on. This can be incredibly effective for some people because the methodology here feeds directly into the human psyche and the natural human inclination to avoid conflict at all costs.

Qultura achieves the same effects as both Buddhism and Taoism, but adopts a completely different strategy and method. Qultura is not averse to either trauma or suffering because both are seen as part of the natural or even existential cycle of existence. Existence is cyclical in nature. Trauma is opposite to drama, pain is opposite to pleasure, light is opposite to dark, black is opposite to white, and physical existence is all based on polarities and dualities. Therefore it is always possible to evolve and move past a situation of either trauma or suffering.

It's important to understand that attachment to suffering often comes with both an attachment to Ego and self-image, or personality, or Self, and through this carries with it a perception of division. This perception of division is rooted in the false sense of separateness between Self and Other. You see you are obscuring and shielding your heart as protection of your Self against Other.

This cuts both ways.

If you yourself are suffering then it's because you have been conditioned to think and believe that suffering is weakness, or you're suffering because you've failed, or made a mistake, or you're too overwhelmed. Your suffering has usually got nothing to do with these things and you encounter trauma and suffering in life simply because shit happens. It's unresolved karma that you pick up on your rocky path or journey through life. Someone dies. You fall ill. You're born with a disability or a chronic illness. A relationship falls apart. You lose your job. There's no morality in any of these things. It's just all part of the flow of life.

But you might have noticed that if you go through any of these experiences and end up suffering people start avoiding you, making excuses, judging you, or coming up with all sorts of rationalizations as to why you're suffering and what you can do about it. Quite often it's the people who are least connected to you who are often the most generous with their rationalizations and opinions.

Quite often it's the people who have obscured and shielded their hearts are the ones who are doing the rationalizing. One of the biggest and most frequently used rationalizations used to shut down the discussion about human suffering and the development of empathy is what I call the Golden Money Question:

“Where is the money going to come from?”

This has led to the concept of money being used with increasing frequency as a tool to shut down, shield and protect hearts against suffering and its alleviation, and thus the development of empathy and community. We now have terms such as ‘taxpayers money’ and ‘costs to the taxpayer’ to reinforce this shielding and shutting down of hearts and empathy.

This is circular logic and fallacious reasoning which is not a rationalization at all. This is bean counter mentality. This is materialistic, reductionist, mechanistic thinking which doesn't protect anyone from suffering at all, but instead binds everyone to suffering, the causes of suffering and its perpetuation.

Understand I'm referring to something which is a widely held and believed myth and which is the very antithesis of human evolution. I'm referring to a myth which is so widespread and so powerful, it could become a motivating factor to the decline and extinction of the human species.

# The harsh lessons of suffering

So now we come to that point in life where you are forced to bear the unbearable. Let's examine this process to gain some insight and understanding into that what we are so averse to and making so much effort to avoid.

It's important to understand that while trauma is not suffering, and suffering is not trauma, and that suffering is an additional, cultural layer on top of trauma, suffering is always relative to trauma.

What happens is that you do not die, you are still relative to the universe and part of the mystical transaction between you – the organism – and your environment or totality. The consciousness within you is still relative to the space around you, the reality is still the same.

But what dies is your Ego and your concept of self and who you think you are. But when your Ego becomes destroyed through suffering, you are forced to embrace empathy and compassion. Being forced to bear the unbearable and face up to it is the very source of compassion, which is rooted in empathy.

You're being transformed into an instrument of compassion. You are being forcibly reconnected with reality and your environment.

This is very harsh lesson for some people to learn. Neither I nor someone else in your life would be prepared to teach you this lesson. But there you go. This is the legacy of suffering. That's what you get when you're taught lessons from your environment.

If you choose to go back and examine the suffering you have gone through in life, whether it is suffering from loss, from inadequacy, from the consequences of the choices you made or the unresolved karma, you will probably find some lessons which have been hard to accept and these lessons hurt like hell.

If you have been opened and your heart has been broken, you will have gone through times when you've thought "I can't deal with this." Yet here you are, reading this.

I'm sure that some of you reading this will be able to see and understand how that suffering burned deep into you, it scarred you, and created somewhere deep within you a different quality of your Core Being.

It's very hard to imagine a system where suffering is a part of the system and how you move forward. But this is a fundamental part of being a human being. Your part of a species and neither the universe or nature favours one human being over another. You can die just as easily as the next. Your Ego can be destroyed completely from a single consequence from a single choice.

But that's how it is.

# Fear of vulnerability

There is a tremendous fear of the vulnerability of the human heart. You cannot face it. You've got to look away. You have to step back. Protect yourself. Shield yourself.

You can probably remember being young, getting into your first relationship, your first intimate relationship and experiencing love from someone outside your family for the first time. Can you remember? The first contact? The first meeting? The first kiss? The first time you felt that person's arms around you? The first time you had to deal with the intense attachments and equally intense feelings and emotions.

You can probably remember just as well how the relationship ended and how your heart was broken, for the very first time. You were probably thinking "I'll never open my heart again." It's too painful.

A few people never opened their hearts again, but most people did. After the intense pain and heartache, we started to breathe again, we went through the grieving process of the relationship, and something within us changed, and once again we were ready to try again.

Some of you will have opened your hearts many times and had your heart broken many times. But you keep growing, and growing, and growing, and growing.

Now instead of looking back and seeing all this as the failure and the pathology of life, instead try to see this as a journey, a process, and your personal evolution. Just that tiny little step in consciousness, that little shift in perspective.

I look back on my own times of suffering, the childhood beatings, putdowns, abuse, arguments, being raped, being homeless, being homeless in deep snow and subzero temperatures of minus 20 degrees, and I fought, I resisted, I rebelled, but also now I look back and see how all that trauma

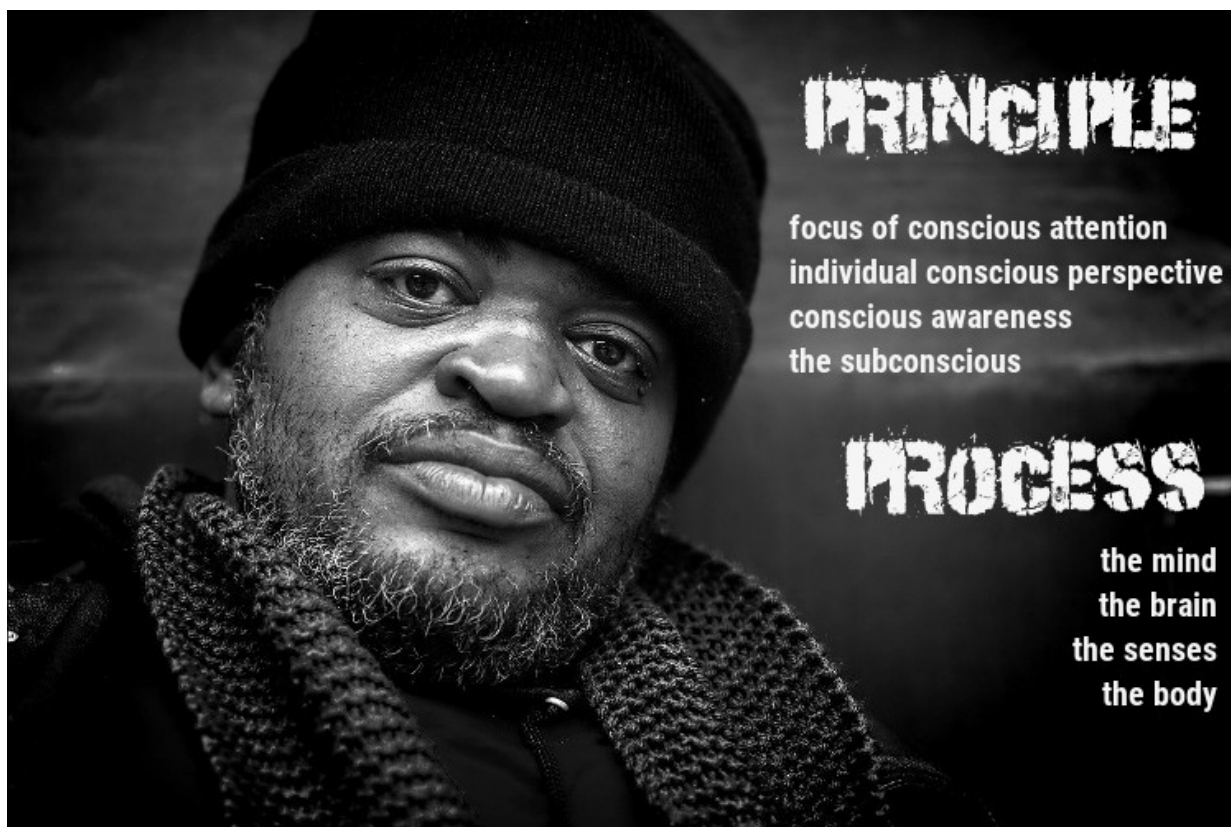
and suffering I went through changed me, shaped me and gave me that insight and consciousness.

I'm hoping that you can see that, in hindsight, the trauma and suffering you go through you survive, somehow, some way, but you survive, and it changes and shapes you creating both your character and story.

What matters when it comes to the suffering you go through is not necessarily how you go through it, but how you bring your suffering to an end. Can you find a way to accept it, and also find a way of working it into your character and story?



# Recognition of suffering through trauma



Hopefully now you've reached a point here where you understand that while you cannot avoid either trauma or suffering in your life, if you can breathe, pee and read these words you haven't reached The End in your life story either. Your life is both the Principle and the Process and you can find a way through this.

This is like one of those movies where you're both the lead actor and main character in the story and also the director. You're not writing the script of course, but you get to direct and figure out how you're going to play it.

So this is where we come back to the difference between trauma and suffering. Trauma is the starting point of change. This is where you're

moving back towards chaos in a downward direction heading to the trough. This is where things start falling apart and collapsing again and you need to disengage, step back and let it all fall apart.

The suffering part is the attachment to some kind of past reality and trying to keep it or make it present reality again. This is where you set yourself up to be in conflict with your present state of reality. You're clinging to something which no longer exists. As long as you keep clinging and holding onto that attachment, the more you're going to be in conflict with your reality. The more you're in conflict with your reality, the more you're going to suffer.

Now this is where you face the choice – because we're dealing with unresolved karma here – either you relinquish control and embrace the change, or you're going to get the control taken from you and be forced to accept the change anyway.

This means that the suffering comes from the attachment to your perception of the way something is, from what it actually is in reality. This doesn't necessarily mean that your perception is wrong – this is not about right and wrong – you might also need things to be a certain way but they're not a certain way and because they're not a certain way you're facing a situation where you're not going to get an important need fulfilled.

Now hopefully you understand that if your life is all about the Principle and the Process – your individual conscious perspective (Principle) and the Process (the psycho-physical process of your life) you've always got a couple of variables which are always accessible to you. You see you can always change either your Principle (you can always develop consciousness because you're a conscious living being existing in an infinite environment of consciousness) or your Process (you can change something about your life, your mind, your environment, and even throw away your Ego and create a better one from scratch).

You don't need to be attached or clinging to anything.

You can use this awareness to find a way of alleviating your suffering. Being conscious of your Principle and Process and Qultura methodology means that you no longer have to suffer unnecessarily. You have options. You can

try out your variables and discover what options you have available to you in your circumstances.

For example if you're hungry you can find a way of getting access to food. You see if you find yourself suffering you need to examine how you're relating to your environment and your reality to see if you're not defining something which doesn't exist as real and thus you've convinced yourself that you are suffering.

Pain is pain. Pain is a sensation. Suffering is something else. You can be in pain and not suffer. Or you can be in pain and suffering. Pain is a sensation coming from your sensory nervous system. But pain can be a state of mind depending on how your thinking processes are processing that sensory information.

I still struggle at the dentist but generally with a doctor I tend not to need anaesthetics or pain medication. I tend to ask for a few minutes so I can change my state of consciousness and get into meditation. This is one of my weird habits. I tend to lie back and play with the sensation of pain just to see how far I can push my pain threshold before I need to resort to medication. My dentist is a large man and can get very physical – I get it, teeth are essentially bone and the medical profession deal with bones as a kind of refined form of carpentry. As I've got it wrong and accidentally bitten a couple of dentists I tend not to experiment with my pain threshold in the dentist's chair.

I've also been homeless and a rough sleeper, both in the UK and Europe. I was homeless in snow in Eastern Europe. When you're on the streets and homeless you've got very little or next to nothing, you have no home, no shelter, which means that everything you need, everything, you have to seek, find and struggle for. You're literally struggling for everything, somewhere to sleep, something to eat, access to a bathroom, money, everything.

You're struggling 24 hours a day because you never really get a full night's sleep and you have to use all your energy up trying to find access to things which give you your basic needs. Every problem or issue you have is magnified ten times. You're totally vulnerable 24 hours a day. When you're homeless on the streets and vulnerable and open you don't have time to

suffer. You've got to use all your energy and your wits to struggle and keep struggling otherwise you will go down and end up a corpse on the street.

There's a lot less suffering among the homeless community – and far more humanity – than among many people who are much better off.

I don't want to romanticize either homelessness, poverty or destitution, all of which are incredibly traumatic and often leave emotional and psychological scars and wounds which are long term and often permanent. Homelessness changes you in the exact same way as active military service changes you.

# Reincarnation and suffering

The one thing about the homeless community is that usually it's a diverse community of people, each with their own individual struggles and history of suffering, who have been forced to come together simply through having nothing left in their lives and nowhere to live.

How do people become homeless? There's various answers to this question. People in society generally value property more than they value humanity is one answer. Poverty and destitution is a conscious premeditated decision some people make to fellow members of their communities and society is another answer. Most people have found ways of shutting down and shielding their hearts from the suffering of others is yet another answer.

But these are just the environmental factors, not about the actual state of being we can describe as homelessness. People usually become homeless because they are one friend short, one option short, one day short, but have made the one penultimate choice which results in them finding themselves with nowhere to live.

The homelessness itself is just the state of being, the current reality. Every single person who is homeless has their own individual story and their own individual struggles and suffering which culminated in the situation where they are left with nowhere to live.

Asking why people become homeless is almost as pointless as asking why people die. You could ask why the sky is blue? Why is water wet? Why does fire burn? Why do birds fly? Asking the question why will almost invariably invite an explanation which will skew your perspective. None of the explanations or rationalizations you can come up with are ever going to change the fact that there are people out there who have nowhere to live, nowhere to sleep, who are struggling and who have got where they are through an awful amount of suffering.

But wherever there is trauma, moving towards my point here, there are opportunities for drama.

This is one of the many dualities in life. You cannot have an outside without an inside, just as you cannot have consciousness without space. You cannot have light without darkness, white without black, daylight without night, heat without cold, and so on and so forth. It's only under the myopic excessively moralistic gaze of modern society which is so profoundly lacking in polar thinking that you find homeless people in a society with so many empty homes. Yin and yang I guess.

However nothing divorces you from your past or strips you of your Ego and concept of self quite as harshly or profoundly as finding yourself on the streets with nowhere to sleep and nowhere to live. This is the very definition of catharsis. As you try and hunt down a sleeping bag or cardboard, try and find your 'pitch' and figure out how you're going to move around and keep your smartphone topped up and charged, you also experience the sensation of being completely liberated and free from a society and social values which are generally based on a pack of lies and a crock of bullshit anyway.

You start to wonder if you're really free from mainstream societal expectations and obligations. This is an experience which is about as close to death as you can possibly get without actually dying.

Only you're not free. All that's changed is that you've gone from someone who had somewhere to live to someone who no longer has somewhere to live. For sure you're liberated from a laundry list of different conditions in your life, such as paying rent, having to keep the bathroom and kitchen clean, show consideration for your neighbours and making sure that you always have toilet roll in the bathroom. What has changed is your environment and your level of being and consciousness.

You've also changed from being an accepted member of society to someone who is no longer accepted from society. Being homeless on the street is the very definition of social exclusion. Your home is a public space where generally speaking, you're not welcome and considered a problem. You have the same needs as when you last had a home of your own but it's

down to you to figure out ways of getting past the issue of owning nothing having no real access to anything and getting your needs met.

This puts your whole life, your past, your struggles and whatever issues and emotional baggage you're walking round with in a completely new context. You have a lot more time and space to contemplate things more, get into meditation, and explore and examine the actual real relationship between your mind, your heart, your conscious perspective, and your reality.

This is what gives the experience of street homeless a very clear and profound mystical edge that you do not find anywhere else in society. When you're included in society you're usually caught up in a whole web of different societal obligations, connections and attachments often with very little space and wiggle room for divorcing yourself from your Ego and your past. You're constantly connected to other people and subject to their expectations and obligations.

You no longer have that when you're homeless and on the street. Your past no longer matters and as for your Ego, sense of identity and self-hood, nobody really cares. You're homeless and that's all that matters to most people. You're on the exact same level as someone with a disability who is seen as 'the disabled' rather than a complete human being, or someone with a darker skin colour who is defined by their skin colour or ethnicity than the human being beneath the skin.

This creates an almighty barrier which can have a whole multitude of different dimensions which you have no way of overcoming or getting past without support and back up from other people. This is nowhere near the same as one person not liking you and you having the option of just walking away. This barrier and the different dimensions which make up that barrier colours the way other people perceive you and usually you have no way of either figuring out which dimensions create the barrier or how to get past it. You don't have the resources, you don't have the awareness, you don't have the energy and you generally don't have the opportunities either.

This is where you learn or realize that suffering isn't going to get you anywhere and that the only way out of where you are is through reincarnation. Getting yourself off the streets has become a lot harder in

recent years and an increasing number of people don't get the opportunity. Once they end up on the streets they stay on the streets and they die on the streets.

Such is the harsh reality of the society in which we all live.

Irrespective of whether you stay on the streets or not, you're left with no other option than to reincarnate and come up with a different, new and far more conscious version of your being. This is not much different from actual reincarnation where you die, you leave behind a physical corpse for the planet and other people to deal with, your consciousness gets recycled and at some point you get born again as another completely different human being based on the consciousness of before.

You can only be you relative to the environment you find yourself in. You don't actually get yourself off the streets. Being homeless is all about finding yourself in an environment where first and foremost you can survive and then, if you're lucky, finding yourself in an environment which isn't on the street. The environment is always created by that which is other than you.

You just need to focus on the struggle and the growth. You are after all the organism. You grow within an environment, and much of what that growth is about comes down to developing the consciousness to be connected fully to your environment and continuing the mystical transaction between you and the environment.



# Lost enlightenment

So as you can gather the homeless community is a very different community from the rest of society simply because the members of the homeless community, particularly on the streets in major cities, are living in a completely different reality and on a different level of consciousness to the rest of society.

While most people generally see the homeless as a problem, that is if the homeless are ever on their radar and they haven't completely shut them out of their community and society, any homeless community, in particular in urban environments and major cities, are a lot more different from the rest of society, a mainstream community, for the simple fact that they are far more nuanced. These nuances, which make up much of what is street culture and what generally defines it, all comes from the different reality and different level of consciousness those who are homeless have to deal with as part of their individual every day reality.

This reality is generally born out of a certain amount of rebirth and reincarnation simply because most of the people who are street homeless have been forced to make some very hard choices as to what matters and what is really important and what isn't.

This is generally a very cathartic experience which while stripping away much of the emotional baggage and suffering from the past generally serves to reshape and redefine the individual members of the homeless community and comes with it a lot of harsh truths, paradigm shifts and shifts in the levels of consciousness and the levels of being.

But what I want to do here – and please remember that I'm not trying to romanticize the trauma and suffering of homelessness, destitution or poverty in any way – is to point out and emphasize that there are two sides to the barrier and division between the homeless community and the rest of society.

While many people are looking down on the homeless and perceiving them as a problem, seeing them as being needy, mentally ill, addicted, and generally undesirable and problematic, you have a bunch of people who have got through the experience of homelessness and survived it, having had a lot of fear, trauma and suffering stripped away from them, looking back and seeing society for what it really is and a lot of people who are enslaved and bound by their social conditioning, ideology and misconceptions about reality who are clinging unnecessarily to a lot of stuff which isn't that important.

Furthermore you have a lot of individual people in the homeless community who have been forced through their process of homeless and resettlement to rediscover their humanity, their empathy and their compassion. These are people who are generally a lot closer to the understanding of what life is really all about from a human perspective than a lot of people out there in the wider community or society.

While other people are focussing on their mental illnesses, their addictions, their inability to fit in with and conform to societal expectations and standards, you have a lot of people who are more in tune and aware of how their mental health issues, addictions, and past trauma has shaped them, given them an insight into humanity, and even altered the course of their lives.

If you're ever interested in exploring this phenomenon for yourself as a member of the wider community or society, you might want to spend a bit of money on a couple of sandwiches and a coffee and having lunch with someone who's street homeless. Sit down beside them on the street, strike up a conversation. Listen to what they have to say and look into their eyes. Chances are they will accept your offer, tell you their story, but they will do so out of pity and perhaps feel for you, but not expect too much out of the encounter. You might see yourself as being in better circumstances, but generally they will see you as another source of amusement or interest.

This can often turn out to be a very levelling experience.

I'm sharing this just to point out that there are different levels of existence and reality where if you are open-minded enough and prepared to develop

your consciousness and actually figure out what's going on, you will learn something.

This doesn't need to be the homeless community. Go spend some time among people with disabilities or who have learning difficulties, go spend time with the elderly, go volunteer in a hospice, spend time among the jobless, former addicts, ex-offenders, and chances are you will encounter people who are much closer to reality and humanity than the rest of the mainstream and those who have shut down their hearts and minds.

Few of these people are ever suffering in the way that you may project suffering into them and their experiences.

You see it's the actual experiences of trauma and suffering which give you the opportunity to take a step back and figure out how your mind and thinking relates to your reality and also how it relates to suffering. This gives you an opportunity to see the way the mind clings, grasps, and becomes fixated, out of which you form various belief attachments and start to form your personal ideologies and prejudices.

It's very important to pay attention to the process of trauma and suffering, and how your mind and how you – the conscious being behind your mind – relate to these things and how they shape your reality. It's important because the longer you live and the older you get in life the more your life will become a struggle, the more trauma and potential suffering you will face, and the more you will have to deal with issues such as aging, sickness, chronic illness, disability, mental health issues, lack of energy, lack of opportunity, hardship and deprivation.

These are all issues which we will all face, which we will all have to deal with, but in our suffering averse society and false sense of separateness which we cling to between ourselves and other, there is a lot of lost enlightenment out there because most of us have shielded our hearts and minds against the suffering of others, and so generally we are not open to the insight and experiences of others outside the few people we have intimate contact with. Beyond these few people modern society, socioeconomic values and digital technology has erased all opportunities

for access to the wider insight and sharing experiences which come from our communities.

It has also erased many of the opportunities for compassion, sympathy, empathy and humanity in the spaces outside our front doors and our social media feeds. Powerful algorithms on the internet have led to individuation of your internet experience which forces the organization and corporation and their advertising and promotional stuff in your faces at the expense of the small, private, intimate conversations we could have had with friends through social media.

So therefore it is often left to the alone time you spend with yourself, and the contemplation you choose to examine your life, your story, your struggles and your suffering and how they relate both to you as an individual and your relationship with your immediate environment.

The increasing amounts of isolation and loneliness we are experiencing serve not to bring us closer to other individuals but to increase our contact with organizations. This creates all manner of divisions and barriers between individual people and is generally counterproductive, because the older we get the more dependent we become on each other. This is not just for companionship and friendship, but also for more practical needs, financial needs and social needs, many of which are becoming unfulfilled.

Indeed it is the increasing isolation and shutting down of hearts and minds which serve to make our lives much harder and much closer to struggles and suffering. This is what renders much of the obscuring and shielding of our hearts against suffering among others in our environment and communities meaningless.

This brings everyone closer to the threshold where we are unable to bear the unbearable and we experience the death of our Egos and who we think we are.

This threshold is often the death of Ego and a surrender from freedom and autonomy and independence to dependency, interdependency and a reliance on community.

This is where some people who have been forced into dependency do involvement in community and codependency with such grace, feeling and humanity. These are the people who end up feeding everyone else who is supporting them and looking after them.

Having spent a lot of time volunteering in different environments and in different communities, I've encountered different people who have been dependent on others, people who are homeless, people who are affected by chronic illnesses, disabilities, people who are struggling to get free from addiction who cannot get it together some days, asylum seekers, and these are the people who are a delight to know and who are a gift to others who are supporting them.

These are people who are not at odds with themselves, there's no longer any inner conflict or struggle, and they have finally figured out the reality of humanity in that we are all codependent on each other, we are all interconnected and need each other to make our lives enjoyable, and possible, and that even when you have nothing left to give back in physical, financial or material terms, you can still give things which are valuable and precious to other people such as consciousness, insight, warmth, experiences, stories and empathy.

This leads us to a fundamental truth – empathy, be it human or animal, always adds meaning and value to our lives. Empathy is very much the lost value, enlightenment and consciousness which is no longer valued in our modern, materialistic society. This is something which people who have struggled and suffered in life have in abundance, and yet nobody in the mainstream ever really appreciates or understands its value and necessity to everyone in society.

# The sharp edge of humanity

So now we come to the sharp edge of humanity. The sharp edge of humanity is that point where you look at reality and say to yourself:

- “Oh I couldn’t do that.”
- “I’m not doing that.”
- “I cannot deal with that.”
- “I just couldn’t face that.”
- “I’m not sure I’d be able to cope with that.”

There is the root of your suffering. This is where your mind is relative to your reality and phenomena and fear. This is always somewhere outside your consciousness and Principle (or conscious perspective) and is in the empty space which defines your mind, your environmental reality, and your perception.

I’m unmarried and have no children. There’s a lot of people who are telling me that this is too bad. Not to me it isn’t. Now I could have chosen to make this the sharp edge of my humanity and seen it as an issue and been miserable about it. But this would be buying into a lot of suffering and misery.

Instead I made Qultura my child and developing the community my life work. It might work out, it might not, but either way it’s the culmination of the shamanistic path I’ve taken through life and is a way that I can share my insight and passion for mysticism with others freely as a means of giving various people the insight and tools they need, not to mention the resources, so that they can push back on the sharp edges of their humanity and find a way out of this societal hell and a means and method to begin the process of liberation from trauma and suffering.

This is fundamentally what I’m doing, pushing back at the sharp edges of my humanity. This is the challenge I’ve set for myself, to see if I can make my way through the remaining years of my life without closing down,

without shutting down my heart, without suffering, without denial, observing the way society dis-empowers me, observing the way I'm forced to embrace and accept my weaknesses, how I respond when coming face to face with my own ignorance and failure, and watching the way how different things come together and fit together..

For me this is still all part of the fascinating and memorable journey through life where every day comes with the promise of new insight, new consciousness, new learning, instead of being dragged kicking and screaming, resisting and fighting, shouting and swearing into each new circumstance and event in my life.

I have set myself up as an example or a horrible warning. Just keep reading and draw your own conclusions.

(I'm still not sure about this chapter, but hey ho...)

# Reversal of suffering

So now we come to the fundamental principle which applies when it comes to making use of a method of enquiry to liberate yourself from trauma and suffering and to achieve that transformation of consciousness, enlightenment and spiritual growth.

It doesn't matter if the method of enquiry is Qultura, or Buddhism, or the Tao Te Ching, the exact same principle applies in all cases. But I'm making such a big point out of this because the process of the development of consciousness starts almost immediately as you begin to explore Qultura methodology and you can quickly and effectively change your level of consciousness without putting too much effort into it.

If you can read and hold a basic conversation with someone else then you've got the practicalities of developing a Qultura method covered. There's no need to get into meditation or yoga or any fancy spiritual stuff because Qultura methodology is set up to be simple, direct, effective and where necessary immediate.

But if you do get involved in the community and develop a Qultura method, and you figure out your Principle and Process, understand that at no point does this ever mean that you can use your Qultura method as a means of rationalization for other people's suffering.

There is no moral reasoning involved in developing a Qultura method and you cannot turn to someone and say stuff like:

- They're suffering because of the way they think.
- They're suffering because they're addicted to heroin.
- They're suffering because they're not working.

No. No. No. No. This is not what all this is about.

Now you might be enlightened enough to have figured things out from these words and can see how trauma and suffering can be transformed into



something positive, such as humanity, insight, compassion and empathy. Developing a Qultura method enables you to figure out your Principle and Process, it dissolves your environmental ignorance, it gives you clear simple universal principles so you can figure out your mystical transaction and where your focus needs to be to achieve the flow of life.

You read for yourself at the start of this book the difference between trauma and suffering and hopefully you can work out where your mind gets trapped and caught through attachments. You can see how perhaps a Qultura method is an extremely useful and powerful tool to help you figure out the reality of your life.

But you cannot turn round to someone else and tell them how Qultura is a useful resource and start pushing Qultura methodology on them. You really don't have any moral or ethical basis to lay Qultura on another person and shove it in their face.

You have no foundation to involve yourself or push your way into someone else's mystical transaction and start telling them what they should think, believe or do. This might be somewhat difficult for you to wrap your mind around, but you do not have any moral right to remove someone from their suffering.

This is something Qultura methodology shares with Confucianism and the Tao Te Ching. Stolen or assumed virtue is not a virtue. It's oppression. What makes you think your enlightenment or path is any better than my path or anyone else's path? Qultura is not about fixing anyone, it's not about do-gooding, it's not a religion, it's not an ideology, it's not even a philosophy. It's a method of enquiry and it's a method of enquiry for a reason. It's there for people to figure out their own reality for themselves.

This brings us to the whole point of the Qultura community. The Qultura community goes hand in hand with Qultura, the methodology. Together the methodology and the community go together to create an environment which anyone from the wider community can come into to explore, experiment, interact, learn, discover, and let go of their suffering if and when they are ready.

The Qultura community is based around three simple, fundamental roles:

- community volunteers – those who provide the support, the environment and resources for the community.
- community activists – those who connect the Qultura community to other communities and the wider community. These people promote the community and make opportunities accessible to people outside the community to get involved in the community.
- reverse participants – these are the ones who are doing the suffering and who need the supportive environment. These are individuals who have an interest in reversing the trauma and suffering in their lives.

This means that the community volunteers and activists work together to create the environment and opportunities to people in the wider community who are struggling, suffering and directly experiencing trauma.

The entire focus of the Qultura community is on creating a community which can serve as a friendly, non-judgmental and supportive environment for people who are suffering and struggling in their lives out in the wider community to access the support and resources they need to turn things round and reverse their suffering.

This is the whole point of the Qultura community – it exists as an environment which is spacious enough, and non-judgmental enough, and supportive enough to enable anyone to try out different experiences to find their own individual and unique way out of trauma and suffering. This means that together the volunteers and the activists are the environment and community of people who work together to create the opportunities and possibilities for people out there in society to come into the community, reverse their participation, and find their own way out of their trauma and suffering.

If somebody walks in off the street and says “I need to eat a supersized margherita pizza with a bunch of people.” It’s not for us to say “No, that’s not going to work out for you.” Instead what we do is say “Okay, when where and with who?” What we never do is impose barriers and further obstacles on someone’s experiences or ideas. Instead we seek to make whatever experience or support they need accessible to them so they can

work out their own experiences and suffering, play around a bit, experiment, get access to support, help, assistance, so they can figure out what what point they want to let go of whatever it is that's making them suffer and do whatever they need to in order to turn things round.

The Qultura community is all about finding ways we can help and support people who are seeking ways to end their trauma, their suffering, their pain, their misery.

This all comes down to trust, community and support. This is where we get into social stigma and social exclusion. Understand that both these very common and widespread issues come about from people shutting down their hearts and minds and being indifferent to the trauma and suffering of others.

What we, as a community, have to offer the wider community and society is a way out of trauma and suffering which is simple, straightforward, direct and effective. This can only work out if we, the community, create the opportunities for those who are experiencing the trauma and the suffering to remain the centre of their choices and experiences, and we support them in those choices and experiences.

We don't know what they have gone through in life, we don't know their life histories, we cannot read their minds, we do not share their individual conscious perspectives. Only the person who is experiencing the trauma and suffering can liberate themselves from their trauma and suffering. There is no other way round this. But quite often those who are suffering have no access to opportunities or support to try and explore the ways they can overcome their trauma and suffering and reverse it into a genuine transformation of consciousness, enlightenment and individual evolution.

We exist to support such people, no matter what and no matter how long it takes. This to us is extremely important and vital work and what makes the community a new and valuable community resource to many local communities.

# When 2 becomes 9

Welcome to the final chapter in which I'd like to write a bit about the concept of reverse participation in the Qultura community. I'm hoping that I've written enough about trauma and suffering so that you can grasp the concept of reverse participation and see it for the opportunity that it is.

Now you've probably come across a lot of advice and support in the past which is based on our current or modern social and cultural values and beliefs. Much of the beliefs when it comes to suffering and trauma is based on the principle of aversion to trauma and suffering, which I have written about earlier in this book. You've probably even experienced aversion to suffering in your own experiences of trauma and suffering from friends and others who are close to you.

You've probably been told such things as the importance of letting go of your emotional baggage, trauma and suffering. You've probably been told that you need to let it go, move on, forgive and forget, or you've been told that nobody wants to hear about your suffering, your woes and your trauma.

But I'm also hoping that, as you read these words, you understand the significance and importance of your trauma and suffering and how your experience of trauma and suffering has shaped you, shaped your life, how it has brought you new awareness and insight and understanding of life and existence in whatever path of healing and recovery you have taken.

Please understand what I am trying to verbalize here. Your suffering and trauma doesn't diminish you, if anything it enhances you and who you are as a human being. A disability doesn't diminish you or make you any lesser as a human being as someone who is able bodied. It just makes you different and adds something to your humanity and human quality or individuality. The same is true when it comes to mental illness, not being neurotypical, recovering from an addiction, being too tall, too short, too fat, too thin, none of these physical imperfections have anything to do with your

Core Being, your Principle or individual conscious perspective, or what you have to offer other people and your environment.

I can only try and emphasize my point by pointing out the differences in the way we perceive trees to the way we perceive ourselves and each other. When you go out for a walk in the park, or the woods, or even a tree lined street or avenue you see trees in all different shapes and sizes. If you care to stop and spend some time looking at the trees more closely, you will find that each individual tree is different from the next. You find some trees that are straighter than others, some trees that are more bent or crooked, or have had to grow around an obstacle, or perhaps have grown differently where they have had less access to sunlight.

Now I'm fairly sure that you have never wondered whether a tree has a disability, or whether a tree is mentally ill. I'm fairly sure that you have never spoken about fat trees, ugly trees, stupid trees and I'm confident that you've never said "That tree looks insane, I'm not going anywhere near it." You simply accept the trees for what they are in reality, trees and appreciate their uniqueness and individuality.

But the minute you get in among human beings everything changes, and it changes radically. I want you to think for a minute of the enormous amount of suffering, trauma and hardship there is out there in the world today, out in society, and even out there beyond your front door in the local community. Now think about how much of this trauma and suffering has been normalized as part of our culture and society. Think about all the rationalizations, myths, half truths, lies, the stigma, the social exclusion, and how so many people have hardened their hearts with these rationalizations and explanations as to why people suffer and why there is so much trauma in the world.

Out there in society you will find a lot of people who will shun you and avoid you if you're struggling. This is all part of the social conditioning and cultural values we are all part of. Trauma is bad and something to be avoided, suffering is weakness, and it makes people feel vulnerable. Please understand that they too suffer and struggle and experience trauma. Everybody does. But what you also need to understand is that when you believe your mind is the centre of your consciousness and your Ego (focus

of conscious attention) is the centre of your selfhood and identity, then you're existing on a very narrow level of consciousness and from your perspective the environment and society is a big scary place.

But what I'm here to tell you, and it's taking me close to 60 pages to communicate this to you, is that you should never ever ever let go of your suffering or trauma. You should never ever let someone else judge you for your trauma or suffering, or diminish your trauma or suffering, or define or explain away your trauma and suffering. Never. Never ever.

Please understand that your trauma and suffering is a part of who you really are, it's a part of your journey, it's a part of your life, and it's a major part of your humanity. It's the trauma and suffering which strips away your Ego, your baggage, your illusions and delusions, and pushes you towards the centre of your Core Being and your soul.

It's part of your circle of life, your cycle, and is ultimately what connects you to others and your environment. Your suffering and trauma is part of human suffering and trauma, it's a major part of the biological evolution that we humans go through, and so it is part of the mystical transaction that connects you to me, to other humans, to everyone else and to the universe.

This is how we arrive at the number 2, which in mystical terms is the number which symbolizes duality and polarity. Trauma is always connected to drama, just as darkness is always connected to light, negative always connected to positive, and death is always connected to rebirth.

Trauma and suffering is a sign that you need to connect to a bigger environment, that you've reached the end of a cycle. We live our lives in cycles, and while the cycles form develop and complete life is peachy. But sometimes life is traumatic and the cycles don't always complete, they break down, things go wrong, and nothing works out. Understand that when you suffer is the point at which you reach the end.

Only the end is a beginning, because we're thinking in terms of a cycle, right? If you're part of a cycle how can you have an ending without a beginning?

So when you've reached the end and you feel you need to give up and start all over again, this is what I suggest you do. Come into the Qultura community and seek to reverse your participation. If you are already part of the Qultura community head to the Resources on the Qultura Core website and reverse your participation. Reverse participation is a status in the Qultura community which lets other people know that you are suffering and need community support. They will then figure that they need to be your environment, your community, and do whatever it takes to give you access to the support and resources you need.

From that point forward you will have a voice, a platform, a community, a means of expressing yourself and reaching out. Tell us about your story, your background, your feelings, your emotions, your trauma and suffering. Find ways of expressing your pain and fear through developing narratives and tell your story. Understand that narratives are what connects you to others. Narratives and stories are what elicits empathy, sympathy and this will guide you through your recovery process.

We might not always be able to help you with your practical or financial needs, but there are others who can and we will help you find them.

Hopefully now you understand what reverse participation is and should have a clearer idea of how you can find a way out of your trauma and suffering. If it's still not clear then go to the website and message me. This is where I leave this. I've written enough, you've probably read enough.

Just keep in mind that this option is always available and accessible to you. Be well.

# About the author



Stella Baker is a mystic, shaman, dramatist and former Buddhist scholar who in November 2009 in London developed Creative Law and from that created Qultura and started the Qultura community.

Back in 1983 at the age of 17 she was introduced to Theravada (Tibetan) Buddhism by an elderly bangladeshi master who she refers to as 'Babu'. Under Babu's mentoring and guidance she was trained semi-monastically in Theravada Buddhism where she was directed to become a 'sramana' a shaman in the Buddhist tradition and encouraged to study mysticism and pursue a shamanistic path in life.

After the death of her mentor at the start of 1986 she explored deeper into mysticism and began to study the occult and magic, together with other esoteric subjects.

Then in the early 1990's she emigrated to eastern Europe, eventually settling in Poland where she became involved in alternative theatre writing and directing plays on social realism. During this period she got to know of Polish psychologist and charity worker Marek Kotanski and became interested in his pioneering work supporting people affected by addiction, social exclusion and social stigma. During this time she was also involved with Ole Nyadal's Diamond Buddhist community. She wrote and directed plays on social realism and began running drama workshops in the middle of 1996 after briefly teaching English at a Rudolf Steiner Waldorf school in Warsaw.

It was also during this period that she started to become much more heavily involved in humanitarian activism on such issues as anti-death penalty



issues, social exclusion, addiction, equality for the LGBT community, and work against the stigma of people with disabilities and mental illness.

In the first few years of this century she focussed much more heavily on her drama workshops working with the homeless, people with addictions and people with mental health issues, managing to establish a couple of successful small community theatres working with people affected by social exclusion and social stigma.

It was after returning to London and working with the homeless through drama workshops that she discovered that trauma was negated by drama and that social interaction, creative activities and involvement in community cultural development was the most natural and efficient way of developing consciousness.

In November 2009 she developed Creative Law and founded the Qultura community which was originally defined as an empathy based community. through her shamanistic work she developed Qultura methodology as a derivative of Theravada Buddhism. While Qultura is similar to Buddhism for its acceptance of reincarnation and karma, it is based more heavily on the I-Ching and four simple universal principles developed out of Creative Law. Therefore Qultura is much simpler, far more straightforward and much more focussed on connection to community and the environment.

Since 2009 Stella Baker works as the Core Facilitator of Qultura Core in London, which is the core of the Qultura community and is working with a growing number of volunteers and activists to promote Qultura and the Qultura community both nationally and internationally.