

SUBLIME LEARNING: LEARNING FOR WISDOM

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Introduction

Sublime Learning is learning to live in harmony with the dynamics of *The Universal* – the energies and forces, whose ceaseless interplay sustains the continuum and integrity of the existential wholeness. Every human being is an embodiment of these energies and forces; they manifest their limitless potentials through each of us. While endowed with ability to be conscious about ourselves, we can be aware of them working inside us and supporting our physical activities, as well as the emergence and interaction of our emotions and feelings, thoughts and ideas, spiritual beliefs, dreams and aspirations. Once aware of them, we are able to learn how to harness and ride their inexhaustible power so as to use it for the growth of our consciousness.

The dimensions of human life reflect and express the dimensions of existence. As far as the existence is timeless: it has always been, *is*, and will always be, human life must also have timeless dimensions – dimensions that do not perish at the physical end of one's life; we refer to them as *aeonic* dimensions (from the Greek word *aionios* meaning "eternal").

For the great thinkers in Ancient Greece, like Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato, as well as for many other thinkers who lived at different places in the ancient world, it was clear: if one cannot reveal anything in life that is beyond death, such life seems futile. All the lifelong efforts, which one earnestly applies to learn and grow in intelligence seem completely senseless, if death is empowered to destroy instantly and forever the fruits of these efforts. Nature has endowed the human beings with *self-consciousness* – a sublime capacity to be aware of the unfolding of their lives, to be able to explore the dynamics - the energies, forces, changes and transformations, which drives this unfolding, to recognize, control and apply the gigantic self-sustaining power of these dynamics; it is hard to believe that such a unique capacity, created through millions of year of evolution, can annihilate with the disintegration of the material composition of the body.

The ancient thinkers were convinced: the human beings are exponents of something greater, something that expands beyond physical plane of existence. But they understood also that the emergence of genuine insights about aeonic dimensions of life needs preparation demanding persistent efforts on behalf of the individual; it is the individual alone who is responsible for his or her own life – for exploring, understanding and managing its unfolding. Nobody can live or understand another's life.

The thinkers of the Ancient Greece considered human soul and spirit as the bearers of aeonic dimensions of life. Plato's conviction on spiritual nature of soul and its immortality was as unshaken as Socrates's. The soul, according to Plato, has three projections: the rational, which resides in the head; the irascible (the seat of courage), which resides in the heart; and the appetitive (the seat of desire), which resides in the abdomen. Socrates considered human soul as possessed of latent knowledge, which could be brought out and elucidated by a special kind of inquiry that Socrates called maieutic (from the Greek word *maieuticus* meaning "midwifery") – an inquiry into the depths of one's innermost nature. His appeal "Know Thyself!" was (and is) a behest for those who strive to grasp the enigmas of life. For Aristotle, the soul was thought to be the essence of the whole living body; without soul the body is only potentiality, and it is the soul that activates this potentiality.

Sublime Learning is coherent with the legacy of the ancient thinkers: *it is only through learning about ourselves that we can develop awareness about the aeonic essence of our lives*. We are the bearers of this essence; it constantly expresses through the events of our own experiences. In parallel with the sharpening of our ability to:

- see what unites the experiential events,
- recognize similar or repetitive patterns in their unfolding, and
- discover the rhythm in which the discovered patterns emerge, dissolve and re-appear,

we move towards understanding the aeonic *essence* hidden beyond the outward manifestation of life, the aeonic *source* that energizes the life dynamics, and the aeonic *centre* that each life trajectory can be consciously connected with, if its “owner” endeavour this to happen.

In his book “Creative meditation”, Govinda says: “what we call eternal is not an infinite duration of time (which is mere a thought-construction unrelated to any experience) but the experience of timelessness” (Govinda, 1977). Sublime Learning is learning to experience timelessness, to fill in our minds and hearts with the soulful “oceanic” feeling of being at-one with the self-propelling dynamics of existence, at-one with everything that *is*. Such deep experience of timelessness may happen only when one succeeds in dissolving the boundaries between oneself (where the ego is the boss) and the universe, when one stops to see oneself as a mere mortal entity disconnected from the aeonic existential rhythm, but a “fractal” of the whole, in other words: to experience oneself as one actually *is*: aeonic microcosm of the all-embracing existential infinitum of *The Universal*.

Similarly to Plato’s projections of human soul, the aeonic dimensions have three projections on the physical body: mental (in the head), emotional (in the heart) and physical (in the gut). What unites them and keeps them work or, as Aristotle said, “activates their potentials” is the soul; what can connect them with the aeonic essence of *The Universal* is the spirit. In the framework of Sublime Learning, the words “soul” and “spirit” are beyond definition; they are used to denote something essential in us, something central for our humanness, something vital for energizing our life journey, despite the knowledge that at the last stop of this journey the death will swallow all the three physical projections of the aeonic essence of life. Sublime Learning liberates us from the fear of death, as it illuminates ways to connect ourselves with something which is beyond death.

Sublime Learning can be seen as learning to transform knowledge into wisdom. We acquire and generate knowledge through our minds, but minds are not enough to lead us on the way to wisdom. Mind can be easily trapped in dogmas and prejudices, distracted by transient desires, entrained into realization of selfish goals, manipulated and brainwashed by those who possess economic and political power in society. It is the human mind that is embodied in today’s advanced technologies for mass destruction, for killing one another in never-ending wars and bloodsheds. The capacity of mind to rationalize, however developed it might appear, cannot help us deal with the ecological and social crises of our days - crises, which according to some researchers, irreversibly point towards self-destruction of humanity.

Unlike knowledge, wisdom thrives on the synergy of the mortal triad body-mind-heart with the aeonic tandem soul-spirit, where the latter (no matter that it lacks explanation of the scientific experts) is central for our existence. In Hindu scriptures the thinker refers to the soul-spirit tandem as “the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought thinker, the unknown knower, *The Eternal* in which life is woven and which is woven in it”. Wisdom weaves together in the living body of the individual the logic of mind and the passion of heart with the longings of soul and the might of spirit, and thus helps him or her move beyond the physical limitations of the body

Learning to Solve Problems

In today’s society, learning is primarily directed towards acquisition of various kinds of expert knowledge aimed at decision-making and solving problems. This type of learning is centred in mind (conceptual knowledge) and body (practical skill), and crucially depends on development of learners’ ability to think in a rational way, to analyse and synthesise, to extract and study cause-and-effect relationships, to generate hypotheses and test them experimentally, to draw out logical conclusions and master skills for performing certain actions.

The processes of design, implementation, development and innovation of ever-increasing in number and diversity artificial systems require a great deal of expert knowledge and therefore the educators in society keep busy packing and spreading it. The deeper we immerse ourselves in this type of

knowledge, the narrower becomes the niche for researching ourselves, the less able we are to hear and understand the subtle voice of our inner nature and distinguish it from the roaring noises coming from outside. The majority of people have lost their ability to decipher the messages, which the every-day events of their experiences convey to their hearts and souls, or the symbols of *The Universal*, described and interpreted in the sacred books of the ancient thinkers.

Example 1 In the local Australian newspaper "Penrith Press" from 27.04.2004, we read that "a national report recently tabled by Macquarie Federal Liberal MP K. Bartlett includes 41 recommendations on how young people could be better prepared at school for their chosen job". *Learning to Work* is a program conducted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, chaired by Mr Bartlett." The article continues to convince the readers that learning for work "must be a mandatory part of the core curriculum" in all the schools. The system of education in society does not want to teach students how to live in a wholesome – healthy and self-fulfilling – way; *The System* does not teach students how to experience the joy of being alive, how to live in harmony with nature and with one another, how to grow in wisdom and spirit. The Establishment wants them to be prepared to work all their lives like slaves, make the rich get richer while they are becoming overtaken by debts, social injustice, ecological problems, wars and diseases. Can one imagine schools where the young people are introduced to Sublime Learning? Or there would not be teachers for such schools, because the teachers in *The System* were also taught only how to work and not how to live

Example 2 The prevailing attitude of today's society to human health is mechanistic: if you do not feel healthy, go to the doctors and they will "solve the problems" of your health and "fix" it. Society continues to spread this delusion, as there are strong economic forces behind it: the multinational pharmaceutical corporations make unbelievable amount of money by offering them "tools" to solve their health problems. Unfortunately, health is not a machine to be fixed; it is a holistic expression of one's life with many dimensions: individual and social, physical and emotional, mental and spiritual. Without developing our inherent natural ability for self-healing and making it work, no medicine can fix our health. The more intensively we use medical drugs, the more addicted we become to them. The more addicted to drugs we become, the more serious their hard-to-predict side effects on our organisms. The worst is the numbing effect that any "curative" chemical substance exerts on our self-healing potential; eventually, the use of drugs irreversibly destroys this potential. Society appears to need experts for manufacturing and prescribing medical drugs in the similar way as it needs experts for computers, robots, military and cosmic technologies, genetic engineering, extraction of natural resources, business, communication, etc.

When experts and authorities interpret our reality for us, it becomes easy for people to "bury their navigational equipment that allows them to move authentically through life" (Somerville, 2004).

Society needs experts but not people of wisdom. As seen from the history of the humankind, if some individuals wholeheartedly persist in pursuing wisdom and truth, society condemns them to the stake, crucifies them, stabs them in the back or guns them down. The enlightened people are seen as a threat for the elite possessing and exercising the power in The Establishment. It has been always much easier for the elite to deal with experts in narrowly fragmented fields of knowledge (to reward them generously, if they serve The Establishment and punish them severely, if they resist to do this) or with herds of economically enslaved, stressed, frightened, sick, addicted, or simply ignorant people than with those who have a broad and deep understanding of reality and endeavour to see the truth, to reveal the acts of manipulation and social injustice, to rely upon the power of their own will, intuition and spirit.

As long as the process of education in society is under the surveillance of The Establishment, it resembles a *scientifically informed brainwash*, which instead of stimulating humans' urge to wisdom, teaches them how to better fit into the requirements of the Establishment, to follow its rules and remain mesmerized by all kinds of meaningless images and dreams for consumption-centred happiness.

Learners, who blindly follow the instructions of The Establishment and contribute in its perpetuating and reinforcing, can never become wise.

Without being aware of and protecting oneself from the destructive and delusive influences of society, one cannot trigger transformation of knowledge into wisdom.

Necessary Conditions for Sublime Learning

The “energy level” of our inner potentials, expressed through the level of development of our awareness (consciousness, vigilance, sensitivity) must be high enough in order to make Sublime Learning possible. How can we heighten the level of our awareness and thus saturate our inner potentials with creative energy?

The ancient techniques of concentration and meditation significantly contribute to this endeavour. When learnt under guidance of advanced masters and practiced persistently, these techniques result in emergence of inspiring creative insights and help practitioners experience their connectedness with the inexhaustible life-sustaining source of creative energy of *The Universal*.

(1) Practicing the techniques of inward concentration and meditation is the first necessary condition for Sublime Learning

As we pointed out in the Introduction, knowledge is always under control of mind, and mind is susceptible to delusion, manipulation and brainwashing. Mind is overcome by the illusion of identification with the *ego*, as the primary goal of mind is to protect the individual’s ego and satisfy its appetite for recognition and power, as well as for experiencing comfort and pleasures. Mind looks at reality through the lens how to better serve the ego and to respond to its constantly emerging desires and ambitions. The deeper one’s mind immerses in egoism, the lesser one’s ability to see and experience reality in its vibrant wholeness.

When aware of the traps of the ego and determined to avoid them, one is on the way to destroy the dominant power of the ego over mind ([Brunton](#), 1989). This leads to a release of significant amount of energy which, when embodied in altruistic actions of the individuals, stimulates their growth in wisdom.

(2) Liberating mind from the dominant power of the ego is the second necessary condition for Sublime Learning.

With a deeper understanding of ourselves, the motivating factor for our reactions to the injustice, oppression and exploitation in society are no more hatred and vengeance, but pursuit of truth and equity, as well as readiness to help those who suffer from the social injustice.

The changes we create in our inner dynamics are able to trigger changes in our environment. A heart full of love evokes love in the hearts of the others; a mind full of good will brings forth constructive changes in the life of community; a soul full of inspiration radiates inspiration the souls of others. We can bring peace and harmony in the world around only if we have them in ourselves. The opposite is also true - a stressful and tensed personality emanates stress and tension; an ignorant mind cannot help those who seek understanding and wisdom.

Love expressed genuinely and illuminated by the spirit of a loving and caring person creates miracles: flows of energy, for the nature of which the science has no explanation, generously pour in the heart of this person and re-vitalize her or his body, mind and soul. In one of his wonderful poems devoted to love, [Rumi](#) wrote: "Love is the energizing elixir of the universe, the cause and effect of all harmonies".

When the thoughts and feelings are saturated with genuine unconditional love – the kind of love that the creative forces of nature exercise towards all what they bring into life, – the mind is free from the selfish grasp of the ego, and the destructive and delusive influences of society cannot enter one’s heart to suffocate the waves of inspiration it radiates.

The ecstatic experience of one-ness with the creative power of nature, which love evokes, can be compared with the bliss experienced in a state of deep meditation

(3) Genuinely experienced unconditional love is the third necessary condition for Sublime Learning.

Love illuminated by genuine spiritual aspirations and faith is not only the most powerful catalyst for Sublime Learning, but it has the power to reveal to an immersed-in-love heart the light radiating from the aeonic dimensions of human life.

Although invisible, the aeonic forces of soul sustain the integrity of our bodies, inject inspiration in our thoughts and feelings, keep us connected with the rhythm of the universe through the pulsations of every single cell, fill our lives with mysterious coincidences (synchronicities) and happenings, design our dreams when we sleep and create unique phenomena in our experience which science of today is helpless to explain

Human hearts and souls are open to feel and experience the limitless power of the spirit. The way to nurture it is through spiritual practices free from pre-imposed religious dogmas.

(4) Nurturing the spirit is the fourth necessary condition for Sublime Learning.

Bootstrapping Effect of Sublime Learning

When learning to understand an unknown object (a phenomenon, a process, an experiential event), we try to move beyond the fuzziness (uncertainty, vagueness, ignorance) of what we know (or do not know) about this object using the findings of other researchers and our own exploration.

If we explore ourselves, we rely on our own knowledge about ourselves to move beyond the fuzziness imbedded in this knowledge. And there is no other way to move beyond the fuzziness, except by using our own knowledge, that is, the knowledge characterized by the same degree of fuzziness. So *the process of understanding ourselves, which is at the core of Sublime Learning, is a process of realisation of a self-referential procedure* – a “bootstrapping” of fuzziness, that is, pulling of fuzziness from one’s knowledge by its own bootstraps and moving from one level of one’s understanding and knowing to another level (presumably, higher than the level from where the fuzziness moves). The challenge is to create conditions, which facilitate this bootstrapping.

The ability of learners to create conditions for fuzziness “to pull itself by its own bootstraps” mirrors the degree up to which they have succeeded in subliming their knowledge into wisdom. The higher this degree, that is, the deeper and broader one’s understanding (knowing, experiencing, thinking, feeling) the more “energetic”, active and flexible is the fuzziness and it is easier for the learner to make it move and change - shrink or expand, accelerate or slow, “harden” or “soften”, transform and transcend ([Dimitrov and Hodge, 2002](#)). By exploring the fuzziness - its sources, causes and factors affecting its resilience, one is able to find out how to activate its bootstrapping.

When we say that fuzziness of our knowledge has moved to another level, this means that our understanding has moved to another level also, and what seemed fuzzy and incomprehensible for us at the level, from where fuzziness has pulled itself, has become clear and comprehensible. Of course, this does not mean that there is no more fuzziness, that we have won the battle with it and succeeded in extinguishing it once and for all from our consciousness. Fuzziness is still “alive” at each new level of our understanding: full of vigour and potential to become denser or expand wider. One can call the new level “higher” or “deeper”, it does not matter; what matters is that in the process of learning one’s understanding has become deeper, that the limitations imposed by fuzziness at one stage of the process of learning have been transcended. The learner will soon encounter the limitations that another kind of fuzziness imposes. These limitations challenge us to persist in our learning: to continue exploring fuzziness further and testing the degree of development of our wisdom, while trying to make fuzziness “bootstrap” again.

Methodology for Applying Sublime Learning

The more the learners know about themselves, the greater the chance for them to trigger sublimation of knowledge into wisdom. As we mentioned in the previous sections, the emphasis of Sublime Learning is on exploring ourselves.

Human nature is full of enigmas and paradoxes. Therefore the knowledge, which we have about ourselves, is fuzzy (uncertain, unknown, vague). Sublime Learning does not try to eliminate the fuzziness from it. To eliminate fuzziness would be equivalent not only to stop learning but also to distort our ability to perceive, experience, think, feel, understand, know, aspire, dream and act, as the uncertainty is inseparable from each and all of these vital processes for human existence.

Through Sublime Learning we try to create (seed, facilitate) conditions for fuzziness to pull itself from our knowledge about specific aspects of our nature and thus to facilitate, energize, strengthen, broaden and deepen our understanding of these aspects.

Below is a heuristic methodology for creating such conditions. It contains three main phases

First Phase: Preparation

This phase includes application of technique(s) for honing individual awareness of the learner through exerting *volitional* efforts, that is, efforts supported by the power of one's mind and will, for an overall strengthening of individual capacity for perception, experiencing, sensing, thinking, intuiting, knowing. Example of such kind of techniques are the techniques of relaxation and concentration, combined with practices oriented towards triggering sublimation of knowledge into wisdom:

- being aware of and protecting ourselves from the destructive and delusive influences of *The Social on The Individual*
- keeping consciously connected with the inexhaustible source of the life-sustaining forces of *The Universal*
- mastering the techniques of concentration and mediation
- minimizing the power of the selfish ego over mind
- experience and realization of unconditional love
- nurturing the spirit.

Second Phase: Exploration

This phase pursues a careful exploration of the sources, nature, dynamics, causes and effects of fuzziness imbedded in learners' understanding (experiencing, thinking, feeling, knowing) of various aspects of their nature. It includes two stages:

- (1) *Identification* of what appears fuzzy (uncertain) to the learners in the exploration of certain aspects of their nature. This is also a stage of inquiring into the research findings of other authors who have explored similar aspects, as well as studying the ancient wisdom.
- (2) *Concentration*: applying volitional efforts for focusing and channelling individual awareness on what has been identified as fuzzy. This is a process of self-finding (self-discovery). The learner goes deeper into various experiences related to the studied aspects and interprets (makes meanings) of these experiences

Third Phase: Transformation

During this phase the learner tries to create conditions facilitating the bootstrapping of fuzziness and withdrawing its limitations from learner's capacity to understand (think, feel, experience, know) the studied aspects of one's own nature. It includes three stages:

- (1) *Meditation*: exerting holistic, body-mind-soul "efforts", which are *non-volitional* (not controlled by one's mind or will) but rather *meditative* ("let-it-go") experiences of calmness, peace and integrity, which bring forth inner clarity in the learner's knowledge. It is in the light of this clarity where the fuzziness related to the studied aspects of the learner's nature "burns-out", dissolves, becomes transcended
- (2) *Mental Verification*: This phase deals with the question: *Is the identified fuzziness transcended (dissolved)?* If the answer is "no", the methodology is applied again from the beginning with a

special reinforcement of the preparatory phase and also of the stage (2.2). If the answer is "yes", one can move to the next stage

(3) *Contemplation*: This phase deals with the following questions: *What has become clear for the learner as a result of transcending the fuzziness? Did a new meaning emerge, a new insight? What kinds of thoughts, behaviours and actions did the achieved clearness evoke (stimulate, impede, sustain, lead to)?*

It is important to underline that when applying the described methodology, the learner does not fight with fuzziness in order to eliminate or reduce it, but rather *interacts* with it. The phases 1 and 2 help learners initiate creative “whirlpools” in the space of their thinking, feeling and experiencing. In the process of sharpening their awareness (stage 2.2), while integrating the experiential streams of their own explorations with the knowledge and experiences of the other explorers, the learner tries to centre the created whirlpools. The phase 3 is where the forces emerging out the whirlpools become so intensive that the learner is able to capture some subtle and yet perceivable signals announcing emergence of creative insights or new discoveries.

The above methodology bridges Sublime Learning with the research findings of *fuzziology*: the study of fuzziness of human knowing ([Dimitrov and Hodge, 2002](#)).

Example 3

Our knowledge about the phenomenon of death is saturated with fuzziness (uncertainty, ignorance). Let us apply the above methodology for expanding our understanding of this phenomenon.

The first stage of the Phase of Exploration reveals that the source of fuzziness in our knowledge of death is in the lack of our own experience of this phenomenon. What intensifies this fuzziness, what makes it dense and depressive is our fear that the death will put an end of our individualities, of our egos with all their achievements, acquisitions, aspirations and dreams.

In the second stage of the Phase of Exploration we concentrate on different views about death and how do they affect the fuzziness of our knowledge. We read and contemplate on what the ancient thinkers said about death (particularly, in the Ancient Egypt and Tibet), what has been written about death by researchers involved in diverse scientific and religious inquiries. We explore different ideas articulated by people involved in various spiritual practices and particularly by indigenous people. We read what different philosophers and mystics share about death, consciousness, existence, spirituality, immortality. We remember novels, poems and essays, as well as movies, plays, pictures, orchestral compositions and songs – all related to human death or immortality.

The Phase of Transformation is where we meditate and contemplate on what we have read and listened, on our own experience with people who died in our presence. The thoughts and feelings emerging out of the processes of meditation and contemplation offer insights from within the dynamics of fuzziness of our own ideas and emotions related to death. They help us clarify that it is the separate individual ego that fears mostly from the approaching death. If there were not a separate ego, there wouldn't be reasons for fear: why should we think that the death is a fearful experience when we never had it? It is obvious that one cannot do anything in order to save the material substance of the body (there is absolutely no fuzziness about this!), but maybe one can succeed in dissolving the individual ego before the moment of death.

We mediate and contemplate also on those conditions of life, which could help us dissolve the power of the individual ego over mind. What kind of behaviour, what kind of mental, emotional and spiritual efforts are required from us in order to transcend the limits of the separate individual consciousness and unite with the source of forces sustaining the eternity of the existential wholeness? In the same way as our planet Gaya is a living organism, the whole universe also breathes and evolves. Is not the consciousness that each of us is endowed with through the evolutionary impetus of the universe created and sustained by the energies and forces responsible for the timeless integrity of the existential wholeness? Of course, it is! Can we expand our consciousness and become at-one with the existential wholeness? Then there would be no separate individual ego and therefore there would be nobody to die. Of course, we can, because we *are* the

existential wholeness and embody in us its transformative power. Both the life and death are manifestations of this eternal power. As long as it exists (and it never ceases to exist), we exist also. The mental verification of this kind of insights places the second necessary condition (for transforming knowledge into wisdom) in a much broader context: how to liberate our entire consciousness from the power of the ego. At the final stage of the Third Phase we emphasize again the crucial importance of meditation as leverage for advancing on the road to wisdom.

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