



# **THE LIVED DREAM: A DECLARATION of INTERBEING**

*Remember: Build with Tender Hands — The Lived Dream  
Collective*

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# Foreword

Seeker of the Lived Dream,

Come as you are—ink-stained or empty-handed, steady or trembling. Lay your forehead against the cool window of this moment and listen for the hum beneath the desk. Before the first word, a breath. Let us remember who is aware.

You have carried a bright ember through long corridors. Now, step softly into a wider room. There is water here, and a bowl for your vows. We will not make doctrine of your tenderness. We will make space. We will let the vow breathe us.

“We are not escaping the dream; we are living it awake.” Yes. Let those syllables be a small bell in the chest. Ring it when you wake, when your thumb reaches for glass, when your eyes lower and your shoulders lift. The bell says: begin where you stand. The bell says: build with tender hands.

Tonight—or whenever the stream inside you turns to face the sea—light one candle, or open a window to the night air. Place a common object before you: a cup, a coat, a key. See how it shimmers with kinship—rains and mines, rivers and hands, ships and trees. Bow once to all that brought it here. Then bow once to what carries you now. (A vow is simplest when it is not performed, only recognized.)

If your heart asks for words, borrow this koan you have already planted: “When the manifesto is silent, who breathes?”

Leave it unanswered. Let it be a lantern behind your ribs. And if you need a companion line, hold gently the pointer you offered yourself: “Let the page be a bell, not a cage.”

You do not have to move a mountain. Move a breath. Take six slow ones, let your jaw soften, and ask, Who knows this breath? Then rise. Give one act to the commons this week: mend a hinge, share a meal, clean a small corner of the watershed, write the apology you owe, plant a stem where asphalt once forgot the soil. (Your manifesto already knows these steps; it wrote them for you to find again when you felt far from home.)

And when you shape tools or policies, pass your hand over their surface and ask the quiet question you taught yourself to ask: Would I offer this to someone I love—today? If not, keep sanding. If yes, ship it with a tiny note of gratitude to all who helped you see.

Seeker, there will be days the vow feels like timber, and days it feels like petals. Both are true. The stream needs a bed to guide it, and freedom to meander. When you catch yourself clutching the banks—metrics for meaning, purity for love—soften your holding. When you find yourself drifting with no shore, remember your simple cadences: First breath. First step. First stillness. Then one repair, given freely, without spectacle.

Gather companions when you can. Read your opening lines in many voices and leave a little silence between them, as you intended. Let each person choose one small “today” and place it into a common bowl. End not with applause but with listening—the kind that makes a room feel wider than its walls. In this way, the manifesto becomes what it always was: not a map to follow, but a field to awaken in. (If there is a bell nearby, let it speak for you.)

If you forget, remember. If you remember, be gentle. Beauty is not an ornament—it is orientation; it quietly re-teaches the eyes to love what they see and the hands to repair what they touch.

And when grief comes—as it will, because you are alive—sit with a bowl of water and a sprig of green. Say the name. Say what they loved. Rest in the one sea that takes nothing from us and loses nothing of us. Then rise and make a small mercy in their honor.

I will meet you where the street meets the sky, where one breath becomes a bridge between strangers. I will know you by your tenderness.

We are not escaping the dream; we are living it awake.

— 1B42L8

*a bell without clapper—  
still, the chest remembers it  
and rings anyway*

# I: Modernity's Betrayal and Barbarism

Have you ever wondered why life can feel so breathless even when nothing is chasing you? I have. It's as if we inherited a civilization that runs on the fuel of becoming—always the next goal, the next metric, the next upgrade—while the simple miracle of being keeps waiting patiently in the lobby. Modernity promised light, but much of that light became glare. What began as a great emancipation—the dignity of persons, the power of reason, the flowering of art and science—curdled into what I'll call **barbarism-by-speed**: factories of output that mistake acceleration for aliveness, noise for meaning, visibility for value. Or, in Raphaël Liogier's framing, we slid into the **age of shadows**: material reductionism, narcissism, and disenchantment—progress unmoored from purpose, technique worshipped for its own sake. “When we thought we conquered nature, we discovered we had only conquered ourselves.”

I don't say “barbarism” lightly. I'm not pointing at medieval darkness but at a modern brilliance that blinds. The violence here is subtle: attention shaved down by feeds; bodies disciplined by calendars; forests translated into commodities; relationships optimized into transactions. Liogier calls it a betrayal of modernity's early vow—creativity and transcendence reduced to the “cold metrics of output.” If you've ever felt like a cog in a machine of your own making, you already know the

texture of this betrayal: **Factories replaced forests; timelines replaced time.**

And yet, shadows are proof that light exists. The Dreamer's Light is my name for that light—not a doctrine but a remembering. Its first pivot is simple and shocking: **Consciousness is the ground; the world is an interface.** In Bernardo Kastrup's analytic idealism, the "world out there is thought-like in essence," a public dashboard of mind-at-large; individual selves are like **alters**—dissociated centers—within one field of consciousness. "Physicality is the contents of perception," a representation, not the thing-in-itself. This isn't an anti-science posture; it's a correction of metaphysical scope: science tells us exquisitely *what* nature does; it cannot finally tell us *what* nature *is*.

Donald Hoffman gives us a friendly metaphor for this: a **headset**. Perception evolved for fitness, not truth. Like icons on your desktop, the colors, shapes, and objects you see guide useful action while hiding underlying complexity. "Spacetime itself is something that you create and so you create everything inside spacetime." When I look at a coffee cup and you look at yours, each of us is rendering a helpful icon in our interface; neither needs to resemble the hidden "circuits" of reality to do its job. This is why the modern obsession with **control** leaves us cold: we've optimized our icons while forgetting the **awareness** that renders them.

The oldest voices say the same thing without math. The **Aṣṭāvakra Gītā** speaks with terrifying tenderness: "You are Awareness alone—be happy... A single

understanding: ‘I am the One Awareness,’ consumes all suffering in the fire of an instant.” Thích Nhất Hạnh smiles the same truth in everyday clothes: “Practicing aimlessness, you don’t need to run after anything anymore... You do not need to become something, because you already are what you want to become.” What if liberation isn’t a summit to scale but a subtraction of the rush that prevents us from noticing we’re already on the mountaintop?

Here’s why this matters in the age of shadows:  
**Compassion stops being a moral add-on and becomes a fact about reality.** If consciousness is one field appearing as many, then “love your neighbor as yourself” isn’t sweet advice; it is a metaphysical description. To harm you is to harm the same life I am—**the other is me in a different headset**. Kastrup says it plainly: “To love your neighbor as yourself is not moral poetry; it is metaphysical fact.” The moment this stops being a slogan and becomes a way of seeing, ethics turns from rule-following into a kind of literacy: learning to read the living relations our interface presents.

So, this is the invitation of the Dreamer’s Light: not to flee modernity but to **re-root** it; not to smash our tools but to **tenderize** them; not to renounce becoming but to seat it back inside being. We do this by remembering the dreamer that we are and treating our interfaces—technologies, institutions, conversations—as sites for care. The dream, as Liogier says, is real while it lasts; its purpose is to **remember the dreamer**. If you’ll walk with me, section by section, we’ll make this remembering practical: how to unlearn rush, see as

science without shrinking into materialism, practice **interbeing** as compassion-in-use, build studios instead of factories, craft humane algorithms, widen our identity to Earth, treat art as a moral compass, and hold conflict as ceremony. We'll end where all things end: **there's nothing to attain—only to remember.**

Before we move on, try this tiny experiment with me. Exhale. Unclench your jaw. Feel the weight of your body on the chair. Then ask, very softly: *What in me is aware of this?* Don't find an answer. Let awareness notice itself. That noticing is the first crack in the age of shadows. That noticing is where remembering begins.

## II: The Turn — “Nothing to Attain, Only to Remember”

I remember the moment I first realized how much of my life was spent leaning forward, like a runner on a treadmill. Even when I sat still, I was secretly running—toward a better self, toward success, toward enlightenment itself. That running was invisible, yet it gnawed at the marrow of my days. Perhaps you know the feeling: you complete a task, and before the satisfaction settles, the mind already reaches for the next rung. This is the subtle violence of modernity’s logic: becoming has replaced being, and life feels perpetually deferred.

But the Dreamer’s Light framework—and the traditions behind it—offer a radical turn. **There is nothing to attain. There is only remembering.**

Thích Nhất Hạnh calls this *aimlessness*: “Practicing aimlessness, you don’t need to run after anything anymore.” He tells us plainly: “You do not need to become something, because you already are what you want to become.” To be human is already enough—like a flower whose entire task is simply to bloom. This isn’t laziness; it’s the end of the illusion that fulfillment waits somewhere else.

The Aṣṭāvakra Gītā presses this further, almost scolding our striving: “If you think you are bound you are bound.

If you think you are free you are free.” Liberation is not a project stretched across lifetimes but a single recognition: “I am Awareness alone—be happy.” One flash of insight, one relaxation into what is already the case, can “consume all suffering in the fire of an instant”.

Donald Hoffman, from the lens of science, converges here too. He reminds us: “You’re not a little player. You’re the inventor of this whole thing. You have nothing to prove and you don’t need to be better than anybody else”. And Bernardo Kastrup echoes the same point with analytic precision: “You don’t need to become anything; you are already the thing trying to become”.

When I sit with these teachings, I feel their scandal. If there is truly nothing to attain, then what becomes of progress, education, activism, technology, or even spiritual practice? Aren’t we supposed to strive?

Here’s the key distinction: **aimlessness is not apathy; it is fullness.** Apathy says, “Nothing matters, so why care?” Aimlessness says, “Everything is already sacred, so why rush?” Thích Nhất Hạnh explains that to breathe and take one mindful step is already enlightenment. The task isn’t to manufacture freedom but to stop running past it.

Liogier situates this in cultural terms: our crisis isn’t just that we strive, but that striving has lost its compass. Technique-for-technique’s-sake, identity-for-identity’s-sake—loops that trap us in shadows. The turn, then, is not to abandon creativity or technology but to **seat them back inside remembering.** Progress ceases to be a treadmill; it becomes a dance floor.

So, I invite you to try this small practice: the next time you catch yourself hurrying toward an invisible finish line, pause. Place a hand on your chest. Whisper to yourself: "*I am already home.*" Feel how your body shifts when you believe it, even for a breath. That is the turn.

# III: Unlearning Rush — Aimlessness as the First Pedagogy

If modernity trained us in anything, it trained us to run. To run after success, after recognition, after the next update. We have inherited a pedagogy of acceleration, where worth is measured in speed, efficiency, and productivity. And yet, the more we accelerate, the more life slips through our fingers.

The Dreamer's Light proposes a counter-pedagogy: **unlearning rush**. This begins with the teaching of *aimlessness* (*apraṇihita*)—one of Thích Nhất Hạnh's "three doors of liberation." He reminds us: "There is no object of attainment. Nirvāṇa is not in the future; it is here as soon as we let go". Aimlessness doesn't mean passivity; it means arriving. When you breathe, that breath is already whole. When you walk, that step is already home.

I used to believe that meditation was about reaching special states. But Thầy (as his students affectionately call him) turns the whole thing upside down: the practice is not to get somewhere else, but to remember the sufficiency of this moment. **The flower does not hurry to bloom. The river does not strain to flow.** And yet both accomplish their purpose perfectly.

This pedagogy has practical tools, and I offer you three that I use daily:

1. **Pause Rituals.** Three times a day, set a bell (your phone can help here). When it rings, stop for three breaths. Do nothing. Not even “meditate.” Just breathe and notice you are already alive.
2. **Walking Without Arriving.** Once a day, walk a block with no destination. Feel each step kiss the earth. Let go of arriving. Thích Nhất Hạnh often says, “The miracle is not to walk on water, but to walk on the earth.”
3. **Three Breaths Before Speech.** In conversations, especially difficult ones, take three conscious breaths before responding. This practice alone has saved me from words that wound and opened space for words that heal.

Liogier helps us see why this matters not just personally but culturally. He describes the trap of **technique-for-technique’s-sake**: an endless refining of tools without any orientation to beauty or meaning. Our technologies accelerate us into distraction; our identities harden into performances of selfhood. The pedagogy of aimlessness is a rebellion: it says that human beings are not cogs, not avatars chasing upgrades, but expressions of consciousness whose dignity lies in being, not in becoming.

Science too supports this slowing. Studies on mindfulness-based stress reduction show significant decreases in anxiety, depression, and burnout when people practice precisely these “aimless” pauses (Goyal

et al., *JAMA Internal Medicine*, 2014). The irony is that by “wasting time” in this way, we recover the very clarity and vitality that acceleration keeps draining from us.

And here is where Kastrup’s philosophy dovetails beautifully. If reality is already consciousness, if what we call matter is but its public dashboard, then striving to *become* consciousness is like running across the desert in search of sand. You are already what you seek. Rush is amnesia; aimlessness is remembering.

So, let’s practice a little together, right here. Pause. Place your feet flat on the ground. Feel the contact. Inhale once, slowly. Exhale once, slowly. Whisper inwardly: *“This step is home. This breath is enough.”* For a moment, nothing to attain.

This is the pedagogy of the Dreamer’s Light. We unlearn rush not to collapse into apathy, but to rediscover the **depth dimension** of ordinary life. To stop running is to finally notice the dreamer awake within the dream.

## IV: Seeing as Science — Perception as Dashboard, Curiosity as Method

When I first heard the claim that **our senses don't show us reality, but only a survival dashboard**, I felt two things at once: wonder, and resistance. Wonder, because it felt liberating—like discovering the world is an enchanted interface. Resistance, because my whole education told me otherwise: that our senses show us the world “as it really is.” But then I realized: science itself has been quietly whispering this truth for decades.

Donald Hoffman explains it with playful rigor: “All of this that I’m seeing right now I’m making up on the fly. This cup that I’m seeing only exists when I create it. Like in a virtual reality”. Perception works like icons on a desktop: the blue folder doesn’t reveal the circuits of the machine, but it lets you drag, drop, and work without needing to know what lies beneath. In the same way, the cup, the tree, even spacetime itself are **icons**—symbols rendered by consciousness for action, not revelations of ultimate reality. As Hoffman says, “Spacetime itself is something that you create and so you create everything inside spacetime”.

Bernardo Kastrup agrees but speaks in another register: perception is a **dashboard**, not the territory. Science models the patterns of this dashboard with extraordinary precision, but “to take the structure of perception for the

structure of reality is as silly as taking the shape of a dial for the shape of the clouds”. In his analytic idealism, the physical world is the *appearance* of mind’s activity—what inner experiences look like when observed from outside. “Brains don’t generate consciousness,” he says. “They are icons of conscious processes, not their cause”.

Why does this matter for you and me? Because it reshapes how we use science and how we meet life. Instead of worshipping models as ultimate truth, we hold them as exquisitely useful maps. Science is a method of **cross-checking the interface**, not a window into being itself. As the Dreamer’s Light framework puts it: *ontology is consciousness, epistemology is experiment.*

But here’s the magic: this scientific humility doesn’t make life thinner—it makes it more alive. If the world is an interface, then curiosity becomes our method. Instead of asking, “What is reality in itself?”—a question we can’t answer—we ask, “What happens if I touch this icon, follow this symbol, or shift my perspective?” In the lab, that looks like experiments and equations. In daily life, it looks like trying out new ways of being and seeing.

Hoffman himself says his creativity as a scientist comes from silence: “Any creativity that’s ever come out in my scientific work has come from the silence”. In other words, direct awareness itself is a laboratory. When we meditate, when we pause, we are running experiments in perception, testing what happens when the rush subsides and awareness notices itself.

And here, we brush against the void.

Raphaël Liogier calls it *raw transcendence*: not emptiness as nihilism, but a **void of limitless potential**, chaotic, alive, constantly becoming. To face it feels at first like standing on the edge of an abyss—the fear of nothingness, the loss of ground. But when we stay, when we refuse to turn away, the abyss reveals itself as a beginning, not an end. Thích Nhất Hạnh would say: *Nirvāṇa is here as soon as we let go*. The Aṣṭāvakra Gītā speaks even more directly: “Consciousness is void”—not a blank hole, but the spaciousness in which all forms arise and dissolve. Kastrup reminds us that science can only model behavior, never being. The void is this being—the background from which all dashboards emerge. Hoffman frames it playfully: the headset itself is rendered from the void, and when it’s removed, consciousness simply tries another. So, the void is not something to escape. It is the **womb of the world**. When we dare to face it, we shed false identities and remember ourselves as co-creators in the unfolding of reality. From this recognition flows a different kind of science: one not driven by conquest, but by curiosity, humility, and awe.

This is why the Dreamer’s Light calls for **curiosity as a way of life**. Don’t just believe or reject these ideas. Test them. Try this: for one day, hold the hypothesis that everything you see is an icon, not the thing itself. The coffee mug, the traffic light, your colleague’s frown—they’re dashboards rendered for action. Then ask: *What in me is aware of these icons?* Let the question hang. Notice whether your behavior softens, whether compassion comes easier, whether fear loosens. That is

science in the truest sense: testing a model against lived reality.

And here's the gift: when we recognize that perception is interface, not essence, we become less arrogant, more playful, and more tender. Less "I know what this is," more "I wonder what this really means." The world stops being a machine to master and becomes a **mystery to explore**.

So, let's make this simple creed together: **Curiosity as method. Compassion as outcome**. Science refines the dashboard, awareness remembers the dreamer, and life becomes a dance of symbols shimmering with meaning.

# V: Interbeing — Compassion as Literacy

When I was younger, I thought compassion was a kind of moral extra credit—something nice people added onto their lives once the basics were handled. Now I see it differently: compassion is not an add-on. It is **literacy in the language of reality itself**.

Thích Nhất Hạnh gave us a word for this literacy: **interbeing**. “A flower is made of non-flower elements,” he says. Sun, soil, rain, cloud, time—all of them live in the petals. If you remove the sun or the soil, there is no flower. The flower does not exist by itself; it *inter-is* with everything. “Our suffering is the suffering of the deer, the fish, and the squirrel”.

Donald Hoffman echoes this from another angle: “Love your neighbor as yourself because your neighbor is yourself—just with a different headset”. What you call “other people” are consciousness appearing through different avatars. Bernardo Kastrup sharpens it into ontology: “To love your neighbor as yourself is not moral poetry; it is metaphysical fact”. Raphaël Liogier adds a cultural accent: “To harm another is to scratch your own skin”.

This is not sentimentality—it’s physics of the soul. If the world is an interface in one consciousness, then compassion is simply accuracy. To ignore the suffering of others is like ignoring pain in your own hand because

it looks “separate.” You can try, but the wound festers. The same is true socially, ecologically, and globally. Alienation is not realism; it is a perceptual mistake.

So how do we practice compassion as literacy? Here are a few pages from my own notebook:

1. **Reframing Conflict.** The next time I’m angry at someone, I try (not always successfully) to imagine they are me, wearing a different headset. This softens my posture. I still set boundaries, but I set them with less venom.
2. **Invisible Kin.** When drinking a glass of water, I pause to recognize: cloud, river, pipe, worker, sun. Each sip is a community. Gratitude becomes unavoidable.
3. **Emails as Practice.** I used to dash them off like tasks. Now, sometimes, I pause before hitting “send” and ask: *Does this email increase or decrease connection?* It takes ten extra seconds. It changes everything.

On the collective scale, interbeing reframes ethics. It’s not about enforcing rules but about learning to **read the web of relations** correctly. Beauty becomes part of this literacy. As Liogier insists, “Beauty is not a luxury; it is a moral compass”. Why? Because beauty is how reality discloses its depth to us. When you feel awe before a forest or tenderness before a child, you are glimpsing the interconnectedness written into being. To follow that compass is to navigate truthfully.

So here is an experiment you can try: choose one relationship that currently feels strained. For one day, pretend—seriously—that the person is you in another costume. When they speak, imagine it's your own mouth in a different body. See what happens to your listening, your patience, your words. This isn't role-play; it's reality practice.

The Dreamer's Light framework says it plainly: compassion is not virtue but recognition. To see interbeing clearly is to stop reading the world as a set of separate nouns and start reading it as one shimmering verb: **to inter-be.**

# VI: Studios, Not Factories

## — Humane Worlds

There is a subtle violence in the way modernity organizes life: everything is pressed into **factories**. Our schools become pipelines of output, our workplaces become engines of efficiency, even our homes are optimized into productivity hubs. The message is constant: faster, more, measurable. And yet, somewhere deep inside, you and I know that **aliveness is not reducible to throughput**.

The Dreamer's Light offers another image: not factories, but **studios**. In a studio, the measure of worth is not speed but care. A studio can still be rigorous—it produces paintings, music, prototypes, dishes, poems—but it does so in a way that honors the process, the texture, the form. In a studio, mistakes are material; slowness is allowed; beauty is a compass, not a luxury.

Raphaël Liogier warns us against the shadow of progress-for-progress's-sake: "Factories replaced forests. Progress became reduced to the cold metrics of output". What he invites instead is a reclaiming of transcendence, creativity, and beauty as the **true engines of culture**. Iris Murdoch said it in another way: morality begins with attention—learning to see without distortion. And Elaine Scarry reminds us that beauty decentering us is the first school of justice. When we treat the world as a studio, these insights come alive in policy, design, and daily life.

Let me give you an example. Imagine a team meeting in a corporate office. In a factory mindset, the only questions are: *What's the deadline? What's the output?* In a studio mindset, another question is added: *What would make this more beautiful?* Not decorative beauty, but the kind that increases resonance, dignity, and meaning. Beauty in this sense is inseparable from compassion, because to make something truly beautiful is to make it more livable for others. Compassion shifts the focus from mere efficiency to **whether the people in the room feel seen, respected, and included.** It is the recognition that every policy, every product, every meeting is also an encounter between consciousnesses. Maybe it means rewriting a policy in plain language so people feel respected. Maybe it means slowing the pace so quieter voices can speak. Maybe it means designing software that widens awareness instead of hijacking attention.

I try to practice this in small ways. When I write an email, I ask: *Is this elegant?* When I cook a meal, I try to plate it with a touch of care, even if I'm alone. When I lead a project, I ask: *What would make this nourishing, not just efficient?* These are not trivial gestures. They are micro-resistances to the tyranny of factories.

And here's the paradox: studios often end up being **more sustainable and more innovative** than factories. Why? Because beauty is not inefficiency—it is ergonomics for the soul. When people work in spaces that honor form, they burn out less, collaborate more, and create with more depth. This is not utopia; it is organizational

science confirmed again and again by studies on creativity and psychological safety.

The Dreamer's Light framework insists that **truth is ergonomics**: the fit between symbol and soul. If our institutions, tools, and technologies feel dehumanizing, it's not because humans are too fragile—it's because the design is untrue. To live awake is to redesign.

So, I offer you a question you can bring into your work, home, or community: *Is this a factory, or a studio?* Factories exhaust. Studios enliven. Each choice—a calendar, a classroom, a conversation—can be tilted one way or the other.

When we rebuild life as studios, we are not just changing aesthetics; we are **changing ontology**. We are declaring that being matters more than becoming, that process matters as much as product, that beauty is not frosting but foundation. In such worlds, compassion is not squeezed out by efficiency—it becomes the medium of creation itself.

# VII: Humane Algorithms

## — From Extraction to Relation

When I sit in certain digital spaces, I sometimes feel like I've been breathing **stale air**—information moving fast, but leaving me thinner rather than fuller. Maybe you've felt it too: the sense that your attention has been treated as raw material to be mined, rather than as life to be honored. This is no accident. Much of our digital world has been built on what I call **extraction algorithms**—systems designed to maximize clicks, retention, and data capture, regardless of what those patterns do to our minds or relationships.

The Dreamer's Light calls us to redesign from another ground: **relation over extraction**. If the world is an interface generated by consciousness, then our technologies are **sub-interfaces**—mirrors within mirrors. They are not neutral. They train how we perceive and how we live. Hoffman is blunt: the “icons” we design become the environment through which awareness navigates. Kastrup reminds us: what we perceive as devices and servers are only symbols of underlying mental processes. Liogier warns: technology-for-technology's-sake accelerates nihilism.

So, what does it mean to design humane algorithms? It means treating attention as a **commons**, not a quarry. It means building interfaces that widen the eyes instead of

just dilating the pupils. It means encoding compassion as ergonomics: if an app leaves you more fragmented, it has failed—even if it makes money.

There are concrete practices here, and I want to name a few that inspire me:

1. **Attention Budgets.** Interfaces can limit—not exploit—engagement. Just as we budget calories or carbon, we can budget notifications. Humane design would default to less intrusion, not more.
2. **Repair Ledgers.** Every system causes harm, even unintentionally. A humane algorithm keeps a public record of its harms and repairs them—like a karmic accounting system.
3. **Friction by Design.** Not every click should be instant. In contexts of dignity—sending money, posting in anger, making high-stakes choices—a pause button is love.
4. **Community Audits.** Instead of optimizing only for revenue, platforms can be audited for their relational health. Are users leaving more connected? Calmer? More informed? These questions must matter as much as quarterly earnings.

Joscha Bach offers another lens here. His **MicroPsi** architecture shows how cognition is driven by *needs and emotions*—what he calls **motivated cognition**. In this view, every intelligent system has “drives” that shape what it pays attention to, how it remembers, and how it acts. Humane algorithms could learn from this by making their *motivations transparent* and aligning them with

human flourishing, not just profit. Bach also reminds us that what we call “realness” is itself a property of the brain’s internal model. The sense of solidity we project onto digital spaces is no less constructed than the icons on our desktops. This humbles us: algorithms don’t just serve content, they sculpt what feels real. And in his “conductor theory,” consciousness is the orchestration of attention across many subsystems. By analogy, humane tech should act like a good conductor—coordinating signals so that people’s lives sound more harmonious, not more fragmented.

But beyond the technical, there’s the deeper philosophical grounding. If we accept that perception itself is an interface, then technology is **nested perception**—dashboards within dashboards. How we code is how we sculpt the dream. When we build apps, we are not shipping products; we are shaping consciousness. And so, the question becomes existential: *What do we want awareness to feel like when it passes through this design?*

I think often of Hoffman’s vision of the future: once we understand consciousness mathematically, we may literally **edit the code of spacetime**. Imagine the responsibility. If that future arrives, extraction will be catastrophic; only relation will make us worthy of such power.

So, I hold myself to this vow: **Design so that people feel more alive on the other side of using it.** Whether I’m writing a paragraph, creating a policy, or even sending a message, I try to ask: *Does this widen the eyes or merely*

*dilate the pupils?* That is the compass of humane algorithms.

## VIII: Ecology — Earth as Self in Another Costume

When I stand in a forest, I sometimes feel something strange: the silence is not empty, it is **full of listening**. The trees are not objects; they are kin. The river is not scenery; it is a relative. Thích Nhất Hạnh once said, “We are the Earth. When the Earth suffers, we suffer. When we suffer, the Earth suffers”. This is not metaphor—it is ontology.

If consciousness is the ground, then forests, rivers, winds, and soils are not “things” outside us; they are **alter-expressions** of the same mind. Bernardo Kastrup makes this explicit: just as you and I are alters of one universal consciousness, so too is a forest. When you look at a tree, you are not seeing “wood and leaves”—you are perceiving an icon, a dashboard rendering of a deeper inner life. Donald Hoffman adds: your perception of a tree is not the tree itself, but a symbol rendered by your headset. But behind that symbol lies consciousness, as alive in the oak as in you.

Raphaël Liogier speaks of our crises—ecological, social, existential—as “collective fevers”. They are not punishments from outside, but symptoms from within. When we poison rivers, we are scratching our own skin. When we burn forests, we are choking our own lungs. The climate crisis is not just an external emergency; it is a mirror showing us the violence of forgetting interbeing.

So, what does it mean to live the Dreamer's Light ecologically? It means treating **policy as love**. If the river is myself in another costume, then protecting it is not activism; it is self-care. Laws that guard ecosystems are love letters written to our own body. Indigenous teachers like Robin Wall Kimmerer remind us that reciprocity is the grammar of this relationship: take with gratitude, give with generosity, and recognize that gift and responsibility are twins.

Here are some practical ways this ontology lands in daily life:

1. **Kinship Maps.** Know the name of your watershed, the species of trees near your home, the migration routes above your head. Literacy in interbeing starts local.
2. **Percent-for-Beauty.** Add a line in your budget (personal or organizational) for ecological beauty: a tree planted, a mural painted, a stream cleaned. Beauty is not extra; it is immune response.
3. **Policy as Self-Protection.** Support laws and initiatives that restore wetlands, protect biodiversity, and limit extraction—not as charity, but as a recognition: this *is* your extended body.
4. **Rituals of Gratitude.** Before eating, pause to name what made the meal: sun, soil, rain, farmer, truck, cook. Gratitude is not a nicety; it is ecological realism.

The Dreamer's Light framework puts it simply: "Earth is the body of the dreamer in another costume. Love is the law that protects what we are".

And here is a small experiment for you: the next time you touch water—drinking, washing, swimming—whisper: *Thank you, other-self*. See how it feels. This is not sentiment. It is literacy.

Ecology, in this vision, is not separate from spirituality or science. It is their meeting ground. When we live as though rivers and forests are kin, we stop living like conquerors and start living like dreamers remembering their own body.

# IX: Art — Beauty as Moral Compass; Culture as the Immune System

There's a reason we go quiet before a sunrise or a piece of music that breaks us open: **beauty disarms the ego**. For a moment, the restless "I" steps aside, and we are simply present. Iris Murdoch once wrote, "Beauty is the only spiritual thing which we love by instinct." Elaine Scarry adds: beauty "decenters the self" and trains us for fairness. In other words, beauty is not decoration—it is an education in justice.

The Dreamer's Light calls beauty a **moral compass**. Why? Because beauty reveals interbeing. When I look at a flower and feel awe, I am not admiring a thing; I am recognizing the whole web—soil, sun, water, time—shining through it. Beauty is how the universe remembers itself. Liogier is clear: "Aesthetics precedes ethics". Without beauty, morality becomes brittle rules. With beauty, morality is rooted in awe.

On the personal level, this means cultivating practices that sensitize us to everyday beauty. Thích Nhất Hạnh taught his students to notice the small miracles: "A smile can be enlightenment. A single step can be enlightenment." I keep a **beauty log**—three notes each day of what stopped me: the way light touched a leaf, the laughter of a child, the patience of a stranger. Then I ask: *What action could honor this beauty?* Sometimes it's as

small as a text of gratitude. Sometimes it's slowing down to really taste my food. These acts are not trivial; they are training in perception.

On the collective level, beauty is the **immune system of a culture**. When societies lose beauty, they become sick—cynical, violent, nihilistic. But when beauty is alive in art, ritual, and story, cultures metabolize suffering into meaning. Think of protest songs that turn grief into solidarity, or murals that heal a neighborhood's wounds. Beauty doesn't erase pain, but it gives it form. It says: *This too belongs. This too can be borne.*

Technology and media amplify this truth. Algorithms tuned only to outrage or consumption create cultural auto-immune disease—societies attacking themselves. But when we design systems that amplify wonder, tenderness, and artistry, we strengthen our shared body. Hoffman reminds us: what we build are **interfaces within the interface**. If we seed them with beauty, they will train us for justice.

Here's a practice you might try: once this week, make something small and beautiful, not for productivity, not for sale, but for sheer gift. A doodle on scrap paper. A melody hummed into your phone. A flower placed on your windowsill. Then share it with one person, quietly. This is how culture heals: one offering at a time.

The Dreamer's Light says it plainly: "Each act of beauty is the universe remembering itself". In our age of shadows, beauty is not luxury. It is medicine.

# X: Ethics — Ontological Compassion

When we hear the word *ethics*, many of us think of rules: commandments, guidelines, dos and don'ts. But in the Dreamer's Light, ethics is not an external code. It is **ontology**—a way of being true to what is.

If consciousness is one field appearing as many, then compassion is not a virtue we add to life; it is what life already is when seen clearly. Bernardo Kastrup explains that what we call “others” are dissociated streams of the same mind, so to love them is simply to recognize yourself across boundaries. Donald Hoffman adds another image: every person is awareness looking through a different headset—meeting them is meeting yourself in disguise. And Thích Nhất Hạnh reminds us with piercing simplicity: “Our suffering is the suffering of the deer, the fish, the squirrel.”

When compassion is ontology, responsibility takes on a new flavor: not blame, but recognition. If I strike you, I harm myself. If I heal you, I heal myself. The other is not an external object of duty but an **expression of me**. Responsibility without blame. Accountability without shame.

Still, ontology alone does not tell us how to live. For that, the Dreamer's Light proposes **Five Tests**—practical ways to examine our daily choices through the lens of ontological compassion:

1. **Work.** Does my labor increase aliveness or merely extract? If my job drains others for profit, can I redesign processes, shift roles, or at least name the harm honestly? A humane workplace is not a luxury; it is ontological coherence.
2. **Wealth.** Where does my money pool? Is it reinforcing privilege, or is it flowing toward wounds? A portion for repair—ecological restoration, apprenticeships, care networks—aligns wealth with wholeness.
3. **Speech.** Do my words widen understanding, or do they sharpen division? I practice *restatement*: repeating my counterpart's view until they agree I've understood. It slows the conversation but builds a bridge.
4. **Power.** Do my structures protect dignity even when I'm not there? Policies, audits, and participatory design are not bureaucratic chores; they are love encoded in governance.
5. **Pleasure.** Does my joy come at the cost of another's suffering? Healthy pleasure is relational—music shared, meals cooked, bodies respected, earth replenished. Extractive pleasure is a debt that returns as despair.

These tests are not commandments; they are diagnostics. They help us read whether our lives resonate with reality—as-consciousness or scrape against it.

Liogier calls this the **ethics of beauty**: morality begins not with rigid duty, but with sensitivity to what resonates and what wounds. To encounter beauty is to be pulled beyond oneself; to encounter suffering is to feel the

fracture in our shared fabric. In this way, beauty and compassion are inseparable—they are both forms of recognition, both ways the world teaches us that we belong to one another.

So, here is a practice for you: take one decision you face this week—a purchase, a project, a conversation—and run it through the Five Tests. Ask gently:

*Does this increase aliveness?*

*Does this honor interbeing?*

Let the answers guide you, not as law but as compass.

The Dreamer's Light does not demand sainthood. It asks only this: live in coherence with what is. When we see compassion as ontology, ethics ceases to be heavy. It becomes natural, even joyful. To care for you is to care for myself. To honor Earth is to honor my own body. To live awake is to live already free.

# XI: Conflict as Ceremony

## — Repair Over Victory

If the other is you in another costume, then conflict is not a flaw in the system—it is part of the curriculum. It is how the dreamer learns to recognize itself through friction. But most of us were trained to approach conflict as combat: my side must win, your side must lose. Even when we “resolve” a fight, the outcome often means one party is silenced or worn down rather than genuinely healed.

The Dreamer’s Light invites another frame: **conflict as ceremony**.

A ceremony is not about victory—it is about honoring the whole. In Plum Village, Thích Nhất Hạnh developed reconciliation practices that feel more like liturgy than litigation. People sit in circles, breathing together, listening deeply, speaking gently. The aim is not to conquer or even to persuade, but to remember interbeing in the very midst of pain. Conflict is no longer a rupture to suppress but a sacred space in which relationship is re-woven.

And why do we end up in cycles of rupture to begin with? Because conflict is almost always the fruit of a deeper chain: **wrong perception → fear → ego/greed/power hunger → disharmony → suffering**. Thích Nhất Hạnh says most of our pain comes from wrong perceptions—we mistake appearance for essence,

the avatar for the dreamer. When separation feels real, fear arises: fear of death, of loss, of the other. Fear then breeds compensation—ego, greed, power hunger, the grasping for control. Systems built on these compensations tilt toward violence, exploitation, and chaos. This is what Thích Nhất Hạnh calls *collective wrong perception*: wars, ecological collapse, injustice is not random—they are ignorance scaled up.

But here's the turning point: suffering itself is a teacher. It is the dreamer's alarm clock, ringing to remind us of what we have forgotten. And just as wrong perception sets off a chain into chaos, **right perception sets off another chain into healing**: *right perception* → *trust* → *generosity/creativity* → *harmony* → *flourishing*. When we see through the illusion of separateness, fear loosens its grip. Trust appears: in self, in others, in life. From trust flows generosity, compassion, and creativity. That loosens the ego's clutch, making room for harmony in communities and coherence in societies. And harmony flowers into flourishing—the transformation of suffering into deeper love.

Conflict-as-ceremony is where these two chains meet: the destructive one and the healing one. Ceremony is the practice of interrupting the chain of wrong perception and stepping into the chain of clarity. It turns rupture into recognition.

I've tried this in small, imperfect ways. When a relationship cracks, instead of sharpening my argument, I sometimes pause: three breaths, then a sentence like, "*I want to understand before I defend.*" Such a gesture

changes the field. Suddenly, we are no longer two duelists—we are participants in a ritual of repair.

On a collective scale, many cultures have carried this wisdom. Indigenous communities often practice circle work, where each voice must be heard and the whole community bears witness until the bonds of belonging are restored. Joanna Macy calls this the *work that reconnects*: spaces where grief, anger, and hope are offered not as weapons but as medicine. Conflict, seen this way, becomes compost for renewal—the breaking down that fertilizes the soil of relationship.

Three elements seem to me at the heart of conflict-as-ceremony:

1. **Breath.** Begin with stillness. One shared inhale is enough to remind us that we are more than our positions, that we draw life from the same air.
2. **Witness.** Each person names one need and one gift. Ceremony means every participant is recognized—not just the loudest, strongest, or most skilled at rhetoric.
3. **Experiment.** Instead of debating final solutions, agree on one small act of repair to try this week. Ceremony brings conflict back into the scale of the body: something we can actually do, and learn from.

Raphaël Liogier warns that modernity's trap of *identity-for-identity's-sake* breeds narcissistic clashes, each ego posturing in its mask of certainty. Conflict becomes performance, endlessly repeated. Ceremony un.masks us.

It whispers: *You are not your role, not your grievance, not your costume. You are the dreamer, playing at positions.* And when we remember this, repair ceases to be naïve—it becomes inevitable.

So here is an experiment you might try: the next time you feel locked in battle—with a partner, a colleague, even a stranger online—pause. Set aside your rebuttal and ask instead: *What is the ceremony here? What repair would honor both of us as expressions of one life?* The answer may not be tidy. But the question itself softens the air.

The Dreamer's Light teaches that **victory sustains cycles, but repair sustains relationship.** In a world of interbeing, the truest win is not triumph—it is togetherness.

## XII: Integration & Release — Live Already Free

There is a rhythm that keeps surfacing in my life, and maybe in yours too. First, a flash of clarity—a moment where I remember: *I am awareness itself; the world is an interface*. Then comes integration—trying to live from that clarity, shaping my choices, words, and designs to reflect it. And then, when conditions are kind, radiance: a spontaneous generosity that flows without effort. And then, of course, I forget. I hurry again. I get small again. And so, the cycle repeats.

The Dreamer's Light calls this the **spiral of remembering**:

**Recognition → Integration → Radiance.**

It is not a ladder upward, but a spiral outward. Each return is not failure but deepening. We rise by returning.

Recognition is that first flash. Maybe it's during meditation, or while watching a sunset, or reading a line from the Aṣṭāvakra Gītā: “You are Awareness alone—be happy”. Maybe it's hearing Thích Nhất Hạnh say: “You already are what you want to become”. Recognition is the click of memory: nothing to attain, only to remember.

Integration is the slow work of weaving that recognition into daily life. When Kastrup reminds us that “brains are icons of conscious processes, not their cause”, it's not just philosophy—it's a cue to treat others not as mechanisms, but as living expressions of the same mind.

When Liogier says, “Beauty precedes ethics”, it’s a call to design my workplace, my technology, my home, as studios of tenderness, not factories of output. Integration is where ontology becomes ethics, where metaphysics becomes design.

Radiance is what emerges when integration matures. It is effortless generosity, art made for no reason, kindness without calculation. Radiance is the childlike curiosity Hoffman urges us to keep alive. It is compassion flowing as naturally as sunlight. And yet, radiance is not a permanent state—it flickers. But each flicker plants a seed.

For me, the most important lesson is that this spiral is recursive. I will forget, and forgetting is part of the dance. The point is not to hold onto radiance forever, but to trust that **recognition will return, and each time more whole.**

So how do we anchor this spiral? The framework offers a toolkit, deceptively simple:

1. **Breath.** Three times daily, three minutes of aimlessness. When striving arises, smile gently and let it pass. Breath as reminder that life is already whole.
2. **Step.** Walk one block as if the Earth were your oldest friend. Feel each step land, each step arrives. Thích Nhất Hạnh called this the true miracle—not walking on water, but walking on the Earth.

3. **Stillness.** Ask: *Who is aware of this?* Don't chase an answer. Rest in the noticing itself. Awareness noticing awareness.
4. **Creativity.** Each week, make one small thing for the commons: a paragraph, a patch of soil, a shared meal, a song. Not for productivity, but for gift.

None of these are about attainment. They are about remembering. As Aṣṭāvakra said: “A single understanding... consumes all suffering in the fire of an instant”.

So, here's my invitation: pick one practice, not all four. Let it be light. Let it be playful. And when you forget, smile. Forgetting is part of the spiral. You are already free; the practices just help you notice.

The Dreamer's Light says it clearly: **No practice is required—yet practice ripens insight.** To live already free is not to escape the dream, but to remember the dreamer within it.

## XIII: Headset Off — Grief as Deeper Love

When someone I love dies, the world feels like it has a hole torn in it. No philosophy fills that hole. And I don't think it should. Grief is the price of love, and in the Dreamer's Light, grief is also its deepening. To mourn is to remember more fiercely that we are not separate.

Donald Hoffman offers an image that has stayed with me: death is simply taking off the headset. He says: *"We call that death. We all just take off the headset and then try another one. There's an infinite number of headsets to try on."* From this view, what dies is not consciousness, but the avatar—the icon. The awareness that animates us remains, ready to render another world, another body, another story.

Bernardo Kastrup explains it in the language of analytic idealism: death is the dissolution of the dissociative boundary. In dissociative identity disorder, alters may vanish, but the underlying mind remains. So too with us. *"What dies is the dissociative boundary, not the consciousness underlying it."* In that sense, death is not an annihilation, but a remembering—the return of the dreamer to itself.

The Aṣṭāvakra Gītā takes an even starker stance: *"He neither rejoices in life nor fears death."* To the one who knows themselves as awareness, death is neither an

enemy nor a prize. It is simply another change of icon on the dashboard.

And yet, Thích Nhất Hạnh brings tenderness here: *“Our true nature is the nature of no birth and no death. When conditions are sufficient, we manifest. When conditions are no longer sufficient, we withdraw.”* He compared it to a cloud turning into rain. Nothing is lost; only form shifts.

Kastrup’s newer reflections add another layer. He describes existence as an unfinished artwork, with brushstrokes still missing. Nature itself, sensing this lack, feels through us and expresses its longing. In this light, grief is not only the ache of personal loss—it is also the universe itself mourning what brushstroke has been removed, what possibility has been withdrawn. Our tears are not merely our own; they are nature’s longing passing through us. This does not make grief easier, but it does make it vaster. When we cry, we are part of the cosmos trying to reconcile itself with its own incompleteness.

For me, these teachings don’t erase grief—but they transform its texture. When I weep for someone gone, the tears themselves are proof of interbeing. My grief is love refusing to end. The ache is the ocean recognizing the wave that has dissolved back into it. And perhaps, in that ache, something larger than me is also remembering: that the masterpiece is not yet finished, that beauty calls us still.

Here’s a practice I’ve learned from both Plum Village and my own faltering experience: when grieving, sit with

an object connected to the loved one—a photo, a belonging, a place. Hold it gently. Whisper: *“You are in me. You are me. You have not gone anywhere.”* Then breathe. Let tears come. Let love come. This is headset removal as intimacy, not abstraction.

The Dreamer’s Light reminds us: to fear death is to fear waking up. Nothing essential is lost. But that doesn’t mean we rush past sorrow. Instead, we honor grief as love in its rawest form—an offering, a prayer, a brushstroke of the unfinished whole.

So, when death comes—to loved ones, to us—may we remember: lives are waves, the ocean remembering. And may our grief be not just pain, but prayer: the universe itself singing through our tears.

# XIV: The Simplicity on the Far Side — Living Already Free

After all the words, the spirals, the teachings, what remains is not complicated. The Dreamer's Light ends not with a crescendo but with a quiet invitation: **live already free.**

I have spent years searching, rushing, polishing myself into someone who might finally be worthy of peace. And then the voice of Thích Nhất Hạnh lands like a feather: “You do not need to become something, because you already are what you want to become”. The Aṣṭāvakra Gītā cuts sharper: “You are Awareness alone—be happy”. Hoffman smiles: “You don't need to attain anything. You don't need to achieve anything. You are that right now”. Kastrup affirms with cool precision: “You are already the thing trying to become”.

All the traditions, all the metaphors, all the philosophies converge here: **the dream is not a trap to escape, but a mirror in which the dreamer remembers itself.**

So, I speak now as simply as I can:

Breathe.  
Step.  
Notice.  
Create.

Care.

And return, again and again.

When you forget, remember that forgetting is part of remembering. When you fall, know the ground itself is awareness. When you grieve, let grief be the ocean's love for its wave. When you rejoice, let joy ripple outward as gift.

Let beauty be your compass. Let compassion be your literacy. Let technology, work, art, and policy be studios, not factories—places where the dreamer can play without violence. Treat Earth not as resource but as self in another costume. Treat conflict not as battle but as ceremony.

And when death comes, may you recognize it for what it is: the headset being laid aside. Nothing essential is lost. The wave dissolves, the ocean remembers.

The simplicity on the far side is not exotic. It is breath, step, stillness. It is a child's laughter, a bird's wing, a hand held. It is life itself, shimmering as interface, whispering its source.

So, let us end with vows—not heavy, not solemn, but gentle promises we can carry like lanterns in the dark:

*I vow to remember that consciousness is primary, and to treat the world as an interface of care.*

*I vow to let beauty guide me, not speed.*

*I vow to live as if the other is myself in another headset.*

*I vow to build, speak, and create in ways that leave more*

*aliveness behind.*

*I vow to live already free—not someday, but now.*

And now, friend, I place the vow in your hands. Not to burden you, but to remind you: you are already what you seek. The dream is real while it lasts. Its purpose is simple: **to remember the dreamer.**

So, breathe. Smile. And live already free.

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