

# [t]he Guide's Role

Context Paper for Novella *I'm Fine* and Audio Podcast *[t]he Guide's Role*

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for a  
Bachelor of Arts Degree  
at Goddard College

August 2013

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ABSTRACT

The following paper, *[t]he Guide's Role*, accompanies two creative works, my novella *I'm Fine* and a six-part podcast with the same title, *[t]he Guide's Role*. The podcast explores the philosophy embedded in the novella through Socratic Dialogues with professionals in numerous fields of 'guiding' who have influenced the approach I have taken to research as well as my aspirations as a climbing instructor, writer, musician, artist, and in exploring non-ordinary realities. This context paper uses the transcriptions from the podcast along with clarifying and reflective notes as another medium to explore and clarify the ideas and intentions behind my work. The core principles in the 'philosophy' revolve around the roles of the *Guide*, the *Initiate* (or student), and the *Gracious Beast* (or unknown); as the Initiate partakes in ritual or unconscious change we acknowledge that 'risk' is certain, 'safe' is illusion, 'security' and 'truth' are conditional to perspective and time, and meaningful change demands 'real' ordeal and/or openness.

KEYWORDS

Guide, Initiate, Risk, Creative Writing, Podcasts, Interdisciplinary Studies, Guiding, Instructing, Leadership, Rites of Passage, Personal Change

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my parents for never pressuring me to go to college, but when I showed interest thirteen years after high school, they supported me both spiritually and financially through much of the process. Additionally, for their non-ordinary perspectives and persistence in 'strange' endeavors that have made the Fantastic seem matter of fact or even casual, and with that have made 'hard-roads' not so bad at all.

I want to thank my brother Jesse and my closest friends (brothers and sisters) who are scattered now around the country for keeping my perspective of the world balanced with a recognition of how others live and think, and for the abundant fodder to keep the fires of inspiration burning. Also for the long 'café-time' work sessions that so many friends have held with me in solidarity. Even for the tough-love, yelling at me for my 'Gonzo-approach' to life. Friends are still the most important thing to me in the world.

I have to acknowledge the climbing partners I have. Those with whom, because of absolute trust, I can push beyond physical, emotional, and spiritual limits. Not only because of their solid belay but a legitimate devotion to me as their partner and as another traveler learning from the mountains. Despite our terrifically distant social spheres – and sometimes values in life – we have become so close, and our adventures continue to inspire me and build the courage to face the metaphysical challenges of the everyday.

I'd like to thank my many mentors and surrogate parents who have allowed me to eat their food, sleep on their couches, learn from their practices, challenge

their roles as 'knowing-elders', transition into their peer, and finally humble myself as a grateful friend.

I reluctantly but necessarily acknowledge the loves of my life. Reluctantly because this is academic work and I am grouping them as a category of people; necessarily because of the significance and influence they have had on my life. The "loves of my life" are of course not limited to women I have dated, but the men, women, dogs, and ideas that have crushed my heart so devastatingly, and filled me up to burst; so many times I thought I would die. For those who have let me wear my heart on the open, and taught me to live with wounds, never considering covering them. To live, not without fear, but recognizing that when you fear something, you face that thing instead, being so brave, in so doing.

I of course wish to thank the participants of the audio dialogues for their time and candor in our conversations. I feel grateful for how rich these people are as resources, as they support and challenge my thoughts, both in this project as well as in living.

I would be mad not to acknowledge the hard work and support of the advisors and other supportive faculty I have worked with while attending Goddard College. Baco Ohama for her absolute trust in me, for thoroughly engaging an atypically long Senior Study, and for keeping my inspiration up throughout a year of work. Karen Campbell for her work as my second reader and for our delightful rapport during residencies. Eva Swidler for her endless support and friendship long after our first semester working together. Bobby Buchannan for so often embodying aspects of the man I aspire to be. Karen Werner for helping me

acknowledge my standpoint and assumptions of the world surrounding while also helping me to develop marathon-like work ethic by way of such passive and supportive feedback. Ann Driscoll for being strong, gentle, and grounding as a program director in my two semesters in Port Townsend. Francis Charet and Meta Sama for taking me well beyond my comfort zone, sometimes into a panic zone, but in so doing stretching my perspective and ability to produce work I am happy with for myself; helping me to understand what my needs are and learning how to communicate them to others.

Lastly I want to thank the many inspiring voices that have impacted my thought for decades now. Many of their names are resources in my bibliography, others are not, but these are the writers, musicians, artists, and unknown persons who continually inspire my work and remind me to live brave and open. Some that have not been named in the bibliography include Jim Henson (Kermit and Gonzo), Parsifal, Knut Hamsun, Fred Rogers, Shozo Kitada, Aunt Hanako, and...

Thank you all very very much.

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## OPENING WORDS

This context paper is one of three components of my Senior Study to complete my Bachelor of Arts in Individualized Studies at Goddard College. The other two parts are the novella *I'm Fine* and the six-part podcast also entitled *[t]he Guide's Role*. Using academic research, utilizing field studies, personal accounts and narratives, fiction, philosophy, podcasts, documentaries, and Socratic dialogues with professionals within their respective fields, I have formed, torn apart, reformed, obliterated, contemplated, and given space to ideas and opinions that I have finally expressed through these two artistic mediums: podcasts and novella.

The “[t]” in “[t]he” is an effort to take some of the certainty away from the title of this project. It is in reference to “small t” truths, which I discuss with Preston Cline later in this paper. For now I’ll simply note that it is intentional: I did not want the “t” to be capitalized, and without overtly emphasizing the first letter it might be overlooked as a grammatical error.

I have emphasized the Socratic dialogues because of the value I see in social resources. They account for a majority of the podcast material and this context paper. The participants of these recorded “interviews” share in that they are all professionals within a field of guiding. By using the actual conversations as the content, including my voice in both the literal sense, in the dialogues and my post-production audio-inserts, but also within the editing choices I’ve made, I’ve assembled an artistic and hopefully coherent presentation of my ideas, learning, influences, and investment in *[t]he Guide's Role*, with a richer perspective than one I could present by my voice alone.

This context paper begins with a dialogue between Danielle Davis and myself. Our conversation focuses on my artistic process: creating the podcasts and

the novella, whereas the emphasis shifts to my philosophical musing in the transcripts of the podcasts. I begin with “My Approach” (the dialogue with Danielle) in an effort to prime readers for the dialogues that follow and to spell out certain decisions I made while writing and editing *I’m Fine*.

Following that conversation are the transcripts of my podcasts, which explore and dissect the lens – [t]he *Guide’s Role* – I’ve used while attending college. By using this perspective, the otherwise disparate fields of inquiry that composed my undergraduate work come together to help inform my grasping at intentionality, my willingness to own choices, and assumptions of truth – my own as well as those I see as common within my peers. The core ideas in the ‘philosophy’ revolve around the roles of the *Guide*, the *Initiate* (or student), and the *Gracious Beast* (or unknown); as the *Initiate* partakes in ritual or unconscious change we acknowledge that ‘risk’ is certain, ‘safe’ is illusion, ‘security’ and ‘truth’ are conditional to perspective and time, and meaningful change demands ‘real’ ordeal and/or openness.

If I were to reduce the intentions behind this work to one concept, it would be the theme from the opening of my story *I’m Fine*: this “urge for adventure”; in other words, inspiration. I have an expectation that people live driven by their inspiration, to serve their inspiration.

I was asked, “how far back do these expectations go?” The expectations that people care about something – anything! That people allow themselves to pursue the spark of inspiration in themselves, such that it drives them to work hard; despite what that thing is, regardless of whether it is cool or fits in with an attractive persona.



The first thought that came to mind was when I was working with “underprivileged” youth in Philadelphia. I had spent the summer with a student working on a student garden. We had a great time fumbling our way through growing some vegetables, and she had really pushed her comfort zones – by the end of the summer she was showing her cousins how to eat berries off of bushes and veggies straight from the ground. In the fall we drove seven hours to a farm conference about localism, sustainability, and farm to cafeteria programs. I got the feeling that she wasn’t feeling the workshops.

I asked her “you’re not really into this are you?”

She admitted, “No.”

“You don’t have to be. We can do anything you want. You like to write don’t you? We can get a grant to publish some of your work.”

In retrospect I feel like I put her on the spot. She didn’t want anything to do with this idea. She played it off like she didn’t care and that she was just “bored”. This sent me reeling and I became disenchanted with everything I was doing in the organization. “Why bother with nutrition and gardening education when people aren’t even inspired?” I was overwhelmed with a feeling that the whole world was out to crush inspiration. I quit my job and began groping in the world for ways to ignite the urge for adventure in others. Of course this was very impulsive and short-sighted, but I was still learning perspective and patience (I still am).

This student I was working with, her mother was a really special person. She was the caretaker of all the orphaned children on her block. She died of a heart attack a few years ago and her daughter, the student-worker I had farmed with for

the summer, filled in her role. It was a role that her mother prepared her for – in terms of place and inspiration.

Whatever drives a person to become inspired, to bravely follow their own track seems so haphazard. Sometimes parents are clearly responsible, but there are so many children with amazing parents who are bored and afraid. It could be a teacher, or a camp counselor, or a group of friends, or a pile of books. It would be easiest to credit an innate quality of the soul, but if that is “true” or not seems a bit irrelevant. It is really impossible to pinpoint what unleashes, or whether or not this urge for adventure will be unleashed in a person. I think the work I am doing and what I attempt to outline in this context paper seeks to facilitate this change. It is not the only way, and it is not necessarily a good way for lots of people, but it is a way.

I’ve been working with children on a summer camp ropes course. When I see them hit a mental wall right away, I lower them back down from the thirty-foot tower they’ve just climbed. But a lot of the kids are super afraid, and they cry, and it’s awful, but I might be able to make them laugh.

I ask them “are you scared?”

And they say “yes, aren’t you?”

And I say “of course I am.”

“Really?”

“I wouldn’t lie.”

“Then why are you up here?”

“Because doing things that I am afraid of makes me stronger. I like being afraid.”

“I can be stronger too.”

“Yup.”

This written transcript includes citations and some quotes not included in the audio version. At times, the transcripts have been altered slightly from the original words spoken; the changes made are minor, only trimming excessive repetition, or filler words such as “like”, “um”, stutters, and confirming comments from the *other*: “yeah” or “sure” when they do not serve the flow of the conversation. As a result the dialogue flows in a less realistic but more *natural* way. I hope that the tone of the conversation is retained despite these changes.

I have also added comments for clarification and further inquiry. These entries are preceded with “**Justin [to you]**” (“you” being you, the reader), or are contained in a separate outlined text box. These formatting approaches were selected to keep the flow of the transcription by bringing “you” into the conversation, and of course they also clarify that the words that follow “**Justin [to you]**” and that are in these text boxes were not spoken in the participant dialogues, but are my reflections.

MY APPROACH

**Justin [to Danielle Davis]:** So you finished “Guru in the Woods”?

**Justin [to you]:** A chapter in *I’m Fine*.

**Danielle:** Mm hmm.

**Justin [to Danielle]:** I don’t know what happens after that.

I had forgotten  
my own story.

**Danielle:** Really?

**Justin:** That’s chapter seven?

**Danielle:** No that’s chapter six.

**Justin:** Six.

**Danielle:** “We found ourselves in a real adventurer’s...” (*I’m Fine* Chapter 7)

**Justin [to Danielle]:** “Refugio.” Ok, scroll down.

**Justin [to you]:** We were looking at the computer together.

**Justin [to Danielle]:** I think there’s two more chap- oh that’s the chapter about Altitude Illness. Can you scroll – like – really far down? Altitude Illness and then Hypothermia, dream... It’s weird that I’m describing these chapters by the medical conditions in them because it doesn’t describe the chapter at all. You know the chapter about the bees? I just call that the Anaphylaxis chapter, that’s the most obvious medical condition chapter in the book, next is the Acute Mountain Sickness and Delirium chapter, and then the chapter after that is Moderate Hypothermia and Dreams, and then the last chapter has one of the characters going back to a town and being in the town. And it ends abruptly. It ends mid-sentence.

**Danielle:** Oh really? So what is the situation at the end?

**Justin:** What is it? “From my own bravery...”

**Danielle:** “For my own bravery, what I fear is letting go, I’ve kept this journal to write all my ideas”

**Justin:** Yeah, I guess that’s paying homage to Rene Daumal who wrote this book *Mount Analogue*. Which I guess was a pretty big influence for *I’m Fine*. It’s based on Ouspensky and Gurdjieff’s the Fourth Way, which is a school of the Occult that came about in the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, the same time as Rudolf Steiner, Madame Blavatsky, and Aleister Crowley. This guy Rene Daumal wrote about finding the tallest mountain the world, it’s taller than Mount Everest, it’s a mountain that’s invisible. It’s unknown. The book plays a lot with- well the subtitle is *A Novel of Symbolically Authentic Non-Euclidean Adventures in Mountain Climbing*. But, that book ended mid-sentence because the author died while writing it. My book ends mid-sentence because the narrator realizes it’s a crutch for himself.

**Danielle:** Oh.

**Justin:** And he’s trying to make an attempt to elevate himself – to take the next step in thought. And it’s kind of implied that he achieves this by stopping the writing of this journal. But it’s questionable which character is writing the last chapter. That’s the thing.

**Danielle:** Oh, do the points of view change?

**Justin:** Mostly the narration is from one character who remains unnamed the entire book. It’s even questionable if that character exists. His direct influence upon the group is almost non-existent. But in ways the last chapter – it’s

implied that it's written by Tom, who's one of the characters who also almost never gets mentioned in the book. I don't know, there are certain things I did consciously and other things that I did unconsciously with the decision to involve that character only in the end in a more substantial way. It's like a progression. Maybe each character takes you through a course of questioning in yourself and the exterior, as each chapter becomes less and less tangible and more fantasy-like? In a sense. The second to last chapter is almost incomprehensible in a lot of ways, the language, the way it's written, the font sizes change constantly from your normal twelve point font down to seven. There's a lot of playing with indentations, and framing of the prose for the sake of flow and also emphasis, and embarrassment too. Because there's a lot of really embarrassing things that I wrote in there but it's essential for the characters. A lot of the embarrassing things get really small so that you can barely read it.

**Danielle:** (Laughs)

**Justin:** But then I think it works, whereas if it were the same font size it wouldn't have been obvious as to why it was there. It would have just seemed like bad writing. And then that plays into the whole intentional use of the kitsch or the cliché, setting that against the more poetic prose. Just having that contrast in tone. I try to do a lot of that.

**Danielle:** To provoke? To evoke what?

**Justin:** To evoke... I guess it mirrors the casual feel of the magical. Magical things can be happening but it can feel as casual as the everyday. Kind of like when

Nine Eleven happened. I was on the Williamsburg Bridge and watched the second tower drop.

**Danielle:** Woah I didn't know.

**Justin:** For me it was like "oh another day." It didn't feel crazy.

**Danielle:** Right.

**Justin:** It was just "oh here's another day." Sometimes I've put myself in crazy situations just to see what happens. I'm curious, rarely has something felt – I don't know if it's a detachment? I remember going to protests just to see the wave of cops marching in lines with the tear gas, just to see that, to experience being close to it, to see how I react to it. Or the few times that I've been around serious injuries. One time we came across a guy who had fallen off a hundred foot waterfall. He had fallen and smashed his head and it was totally open on the rocks. I went over to him to try and provide first aid, I mean he was dead but – it didn't fuck me up. You know what I mean? You'd think that things like that would fuck you up but that as well as seeing ghosts or experiencing reality altering experiences where things just like don't obey the physical laws of the Universe, it doesn't feel much different from any other day.

**Danielle:** Do you think it's because you and the narrator of your book are less attached to a singular reality? Or less convinced by its laws?

**Justin:** Yeah I think that might have something to do with it, how I was raised. My Dad and Mom, when they were super religious, they would talk about speaking with God directly in a very casual way. And the magical was talked

about in a casual way. Like my Dad would give me the wings of fairies “oh some fairies dropped these off.” And it wasn’t like, “this is amazing.” It was “this is just what you do.” Or he’d show us how to meditate and it was “this is just what you do.” Or he’d talk about people walking through walls and it was just “that’s how it is.” We would talk about lucid dreaming and meeting people in dreams and it was just like “oh cool.” It was never this mind-blowing thing. So yeah, the family influence definitely. But also, if you give too much attention to the miraculous then the subtle loses its importance and everyone is looking for these “big experiences”. And everything becomes flashy and shit like that.

**Danielle:** Mm hmm.

**Justin:** And the subtle is often more significant in change – or at least equally significant in change.

**Danielle:** Yeah.

**Justin:** So, I don’t know. What religion would that be where people would be like “the big deal is nothing big, and the small is worth giving real attention?” I don’t know if that is Buddhist? But that kind of resonates with me. What were we talking about? How that?

**Danielle:** Oh.

**Justin:** How that impacts tone?

**Danielle:** Yeah.

**Justin:** So the juxtaposition of something that’s embarrassing and kitsch versus something that’s really beautiful, it’s that same kind of mirroring. It’s



supposed to – if I do it well, and I don't know if I do it well in the story, I think sometimes I do and sometimes it doesn't quite catch, but it's supposed to – eventually since it's a book, it's a hundred thirty odd pages, it should hold the reader for long enough that they can immerse themselves in a different world. Similar to how *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is super ridiculous and silly right? But after you've experienced it you get so engrossed in the characters that you kind of forgive-

**Danielle:** Suspension of disbelief?

**Justin:** Yeah, or just the inconsistencies in their powers as well as how ridiculous the dialogue is, and eventually you accept the dialogue and it's super beautiful and emotive. You know what I mean?

**Danielle:** Yeah yeah yeah. (Laughs)

**Justin:** That must have influenced me too, the kinds of shows that I like, which are often really stupid, but-

**Danielle:** (whispers) never say that *Buffy* is stupid.

**Justin:** What's that?

**Danielle:** Never say that *Buffy* is stupid.

**Justin:** Well, it is! But it's also one of the most beautiful shows ever made. I don't know *Twin Peaks* does it too; that show is intentionally written like a bad soap opera. But the characters and the situations are so deep, or the situations give way so that you can really connect with the characters- through those situations. I'm doing something a little bit different from that, where it's all in the language. It's not in the characters so much – I don't

think much of the story is in the characters, I do try to develop the characters but it's not as character driven as one of these TV shows. It's really just in the presentation of the language; who's even delivering the lines is... well I don't know, from your perspective as a reader, someone who didn't write it, what do you think of the characters themselves? Were they distinct? Or?

**Danielle:** I mean Jimmy seems like the strongest external character. The rest sort of blurred together as a sort of archetype or this group unit – they stood more for me as this idea rather than individual personalities.

**Justin:** Mm hmm.

**Danielle:** And then the character, the narrator, I wasn't so sure about it, I wasn't sure if there were changes in, in the way he was viewing-

**Justin:** He was supposed to be evolving.

**Danielle:** Well I haven't finished reading the book.

**Justin:** He does in a sense, you can tell by just the way that he presents information in the very beginning of the book, which is very "this is how things are."

**Danielle:** Yeah yeah yeah.

**Justin:** "These are the rules." Even by chapter three.

**Danielle:** Pizza.

**Justin:** Yeah, "pizza in the woods," and Jimmy and Nate are giving him a hard time for declaring a destination, and Jimmy explains it to him by saying that he's in love with this girl, basically. I felt like that was an obvious or evident shift and then how he describes the death of Nate in the Anaphylaxis chapter, and

then his questioning process through the “Guru in the Woods”, from being completely-

**Danielle:** yeah yeah, skeptical,

**Justin:** skeptical, to the end being the only one who sees the Guru in the shadows, seeing him in his “true form”. Being like “oh this is the real deal, it’s not all show.”

**Danielle:** Was he the only one who saw him?

**Justin:** Well, it wasn’t written that explicitly but he was able to step back and see him – it was the first time and only time that the Guru wasn’t sitting on a pedestal being deified. And he’s at the culminating event of this process for the Neophytes and the Guru isn’t present and no one notices that he isn’t there. I don’t know. I guess that’s the trick with this book, if this book was read by a lot of people – which I’m not sure that it ever will be – I don’t know what people are going to pick up on. And what are people going to assume? And what is too subtle? So subtle, that I’ve put in there, but no one will get because it’s an inside thought.

**Danielle:** Like? Give me an example.

**Justin:** Like that. Like that idea of a Guru sitting in the shadows expresses my ultimate opinion of how a Guide should behave. Which is “in the end people should feel like they’ve done something for themselves.” And they almost forget who the Guide was, if the Guide does his job well. You know, things like that. Would that be recognized? Or-

**Danielle:** I think it would be recognized.

**Justin:** Or the very end of the book, the fact that it ends mid-sentence, will people understand that the narrator is moving to the next... thing,

**Danielle:** Well, the glory of interpretation.

**Justin:** It's true, it could be read completely differently. People could think I'm a neo-Nazi. I don't know.

**Danielle:** (Laughs)

**Justin:** I mean anything could be manipulated in the mind to be something else.

**Danielle:** Well the text isn't really complete until it's received. And the intent of the author is one thing, but it also depends on the context of its receiver.

**Justin:** Yeah. Totally.

**Danielle:** Meaning is totally-

**Justin:** No, that's true, and that's one of the things, since this book was intentionally written to be a philosophical journey for the reader – it was a philosophical journey for me as the writer already. It was an exploration of ideas, and then I reordered those ideas to have a flow. And I talk about all those ideas in the transcript and the podcast. Because I intended to have a philosophy, and this is the artistic vessel that I'm using to communicate those ideas, it's not just a matter of telling people, but it's a matter of them experiencing a progression of feeling from something that's supposed to be relatable, moving to something that they – if you started at the end of the book it should be difficult to engage. But if you start at the beginning of the book and make your way through you should be able to get to the end and still be able to relate to the book. That is what I was hoping, maybe unconsciously, though it

becomes conscious through the process, and I don't know, I don't know if I'll ever know if that's effective. Because like you said it's going to change for every reader. It'll be appropriate for some people, and other people may hate it, and other people won't care about it at all. Maybe a couple of people will really resonate with it? Although my influences are pretty – I don't have many esoteric influences, I have pretty classic influences. They are well received, like Hermann Hesse and Knut Hamsun. These people, they have a pretty universal message. There's a lot of people who resonate with their stuff. And their delivery, how they're writing, it seems like they were shooting for a real wide-band audience. Just in the way that I use non-traditional structuring-

**Danielle:** It's not that experimental. It's still linear. It opens some questions but it's not so esoteric.

**Justin:** Yeah, you can print it, onto a page.

**Danielle:** It's chronological. It's loosely character based. It has a somewhat identifiable narrator. You can identify a plot. And the experimentations in grammar don't obscure the content.

**Justin:** No, that's true. I guess I am a traditionalist in most of the things I do. I'm pretty... pretty square, (laughs) for the most part. I just don't know if it would get a wide-appeal? I don't know, I guess there's – who's the guy who hung himself? He wrote that- *Infinite Jest*... David Foster Wallace.

**Danielle:** Oh yeah, yeah yeah.

**Justin:** Him and what's his face? *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*.

**Danielle:** Hunter S. Thompson?

**Justin:** Hunter S. Thompson, and there's Bukowski of course, I mean I don't like Thompson or Bukowski very much, they're not my thing. Or Kerouac, I'm not a huge Kerouac fan but they all wrote in experimental ways and David Foster Wallace. I've only read parts of his books. I've never sat down with – I mean all that stuff is like – how people describe them to me is super inspiring. But then when I sit down with their work, I'd rather hear other people talk about it than actually read it.

**Danielle:** I kind of feel that way about him too.

**Justin:** He has wide appeal. Especially after he hung himself, his books are-

**Danielle:** (whispers) don't do that.

**Justin:** What? Don't hang myself? No, I'm not suicidal. (Laughs)

**Danielle:** You're like "I'm going to be famous now!"

**Justin:** No, I got to write some better work first. Before I ever kill myself to be famous I want to produce some better material... I guess I don't actively alienate the audience in my work. The audience is as wide as the times will permit. Which is obvious. That's true of anything. I don't know what I'm saying.

**Danielle:** Can you talk a little about the passage where the narrator questions the "authenticity" of the Guru. Have you had experiences where you've struggled with that question?

**Justin:** Yeah, absolutely, I'm actually prepping to write a large short story/essay about authenticity and entitlement. Authenticity is a – and I talk about this in

the podcast, too – but authenticity is like a double-edged sword. The impacts of declaring authenticity upon a person or a culture – it is so easy to throw the baby out with the bath water because the person delivering the information is questionable in terms of their holistic existence. So they might be saying something brilliant – Carlos Castaneda is a great example.

**Danielle:** Yeah, yeah.

**Justin:** I mean his books are awesome. The *Teachings of Don Juan* are awesome.

Everything that's in there – well most of what's in there I resonate with and I think it's great. But as soon as people found out that those books were fictional, and that he was just trying to make some money, or write a good story, many just threw out all the lessons and said “this is all bullshit!” “It's not true, and therefore it's not true.” And that's just stupid. So the story that I'm writing about authenticity, it's going to be a bunch of short chapters about different types of “inauthentic” Guides or Gurus who, if you actually listen to them, deliver amazing lessons. I had an advisor who I really conflicted with a lot. He gave me advice that seemed really cookie cutter. He said “how can you teach if you are unwilling to learn?” “How can you learn if your cup already overflows?”

**Danielle:** Hmm.

**Justin:** So I tried to take that to heart, and I did, but then I found out that he said almost the same exact thing to three other advisees. I was like “fuck that!” I had this visceral reaction in which I didn't want to listen to anything he had to say because I felt like he wasn't invested and therefore a fraud. But

regardless of whether he was just going through the motions and filling in the cookie cutter blanks, acting the role of the classic mentor and that image, of a Ram Das or some shit like that, I ended up learning a lot from him. Maybe not directly. Even if it was me just being pissed off at him, and me really learning from myself but through the reactions I have from him. And it is not to say that he didn't have really valuable things to say, he did, I just didn't like him as a person. And I think that happens often. So some of the characters I'll create will be: the Guru who is just trying to get your money, and then there's the Guru who thinks they're the best and everything is about themselves, then there's the Guru who has great advice but they don't live it themselves, then there's the drug addicted Guru-

**Danielle:** (Laughs)

**Justin:** then there's the Guru who's life is a total mess. You know? And then there's the Guru who is weaving a web of illusions, and everything is trickery. And I feel like even if something is illusion, if you pull a rabbit from your hat but there is a trap door in your hat, that doesn't take away the magic. If you reveal the man behind the curtain, it's no less magical.

**Danielle:** Yeah.

**Justin:** And I think that's the thing, a lot of people want "authentic" magic, as in they want something that's not explainable. Chemistry was magic a thousand years ago. It's still magic! You know?

**Danielle:** Mm hmm.



**Justin:** It fits right in with all the other forms of magic that are there. That's one of my frustrations of science, is that science often ignores the other forms of magic. So that's one part of the double-edged sword, throwing the baby out with the bath water, because the Gurus are fucked up in some way. And then the other edge comes about when we create a golden image of what an authentic Guide or Guru should look like, then we impose that upon everything else, and then that's the whole thing with cultural appropriation and the idea of the Noble Savage and all that. It becomes a total mess in terms of how we interact with other things because we create an image of what it should be, we commoditize it, and everyone tries to emulate that, and that becomes the cookie cutter, then you don't have room for growth or change because it's become this static picture. "What it should be." So that's why the Guru in this (*Guru in the Woods*) – I tried to run the gamut with him. And that's why three different characters have three different perspectives of his teachings – or really four!

**Danielle:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Brandon and Jimmy sitting in the trees... Does that make sense?

**Danielle:** Uh huh. You also wanted to talk about your creative process of the podcast and the context paper?

**Justin:** Oh yeah. Originally I wanted the podcast to be a series of video interviews. But through the process of filming them all I realized that the video footage was distracting from the conversations and the images didn't really add anything. By making it just audio it kind of like did this cool thing where the

voices became less distinct (in terms of who was speaking) because I don't identify who is speaking every time there is a shift in the edits. I cut up the podcast according to content and the flow of conversation not according to which interview I was having. So it constantly shifts from one participant speaking to another, so you can kind of get lost with who I'm talking to and who is talking with me, and I think that's useful because although there are conflicting opinions between the different participants on certain topics, or where the direction a topic will go changes depending on who I am talking to, all of this resonates with an idea I like that all thoughts come from an ether. Thoughts are not our own, but through us they have their own voice. You know, a particular interpretation or impression impacted by the other things that we've taken in. By sticking fourteen different voices together speaking to similar topics you might get more of an approximation of what the goo is: the *original universal* image. You know what I mean? Which doesn't have a value placed upon it already. And then contradiction becomes irrelevant. All these different subjective truths put together create – well truth becomes a non-player in this situation. It would be even better if I continued doing this and talked about the same topics with a thousand people then of course you would get closer to that meat. But since obviously the participant group that I worked with are people that I have good interactions with, it's already biased in a sense, because they know what I'm talking about. I mean we didn't have mirroring perspectives on things, there were definitely differences of opinion but it is a pool of people who have already influenced a

lot of how I see things. So that's why I made it an audio podcast. Stylistically there are some things I do that are simply modeled after a podcast: I chose forty-five minute acts so that there are logical stopping points and listeners won't become exhausted by the dialogue. You're supposed to listen to one act at a time and give it some space before listening to the next. I give the listener the option to read along to the audio with the transcript so that they can identify voices if they want to. There are some additional bits of written context that aren't in the audio, and I've also cleaned up the dialogue so that it reads on its own, and therefore differently than the audio. So that's another way to experience it, for those who prefer the written rather than the auditory. The context paper is mostly the transcript, but with extra notes from me. All in all, the project is attempting to summarize what I've been doing in school for the last three years, how it relates to my book *I'm Fine*, and then keeping a very open ended channel for where I'm going with learning and maybe ultimately identifying that I'm straying from any kind of definitive answer. I don't know if it accomplishes anything. I mean it's so simple. What I'm saying is so simple. The way I deliver the information is so simple.

**Danielle:** What is so simple?

**Justin:** The concept of *[t]he Guide's Role*, that philosophy that permeates throughout *I'm Fine*, as well as – well all of it. Well maybe it's just simple to me because I think about it a lot? But after spending three years trying to engage in an academic environment it's become hard for me to even identify what is

academic? It's become so interwoven with what I am doing that it seems irrelevant. So maybe there is no distinction save that I am going to get a degree and I spend money for it. You know? And that I have a support network for it. I have advisors who give me really good feedback and a solidarity with my peers. People are doing similarly introspective work, things that impact other people and they care about how it will be received by an audience. And maybe that's the big distinguishing factor as far as my work at Goddard, maybe not in the whole of academia, but at this school, that the work is so personal but also so intentional. But at no point am I going to sit up on a high horse and feel like I've invented something, or come up with something brilliant... It's kind of why I get so frustrated watching sitcoms.

This may seem like a dramatic leap between topics. The missing link between the inquiry, discovery, and proclamations made within academia and the miscommunication that is central to conflict in sitcoms is for me also a central theme in my podcasts; it is an effort to see beyond preconceived assumptions, or rigid paradigms of thought. It is a willingness to be open, hence the inclination to dismiss even my strongest opinions. This will continue to manifest in this paper usually beginning with a bold statement about how things "should be" followed with me making a dismissive comment towards my own idea or a contradicting opinion voiced by one of the dialogue participants positioned close to my statement.

Because sitcoms, the driving force is that there's miscommunication, and through that miscommunication problems arise. The whole thing revolves around a person not understanding another person.

**Danielle:** Mm hmm.

**Justin:** It can be a tragic drama or a comedy, but in the beginning of a *Family Matters* episode with Steve Urkel, I'm always screaming at the TV "just have a conversation! Just like, talk. Talk it out!" But then in reality, it happens too!

And it happens to me even though I feel like I'm good at communicating with people. People don't understand each other, and they're not trying to listen to each other, they have way too much investment in what they want and so they don't listen, and unfortunately it takes two people listening to each other before something works. I've had interactions with people that I care deeply about, and I've gotten my brain into a space where I can truly and compassionately understand them even though they are so alien to me. But because they are unwilling to communicate with me regardless of me understanding or walking away feeling good about where they are, they hate me because I do not give them what they want, and it feels awful. Man, people's willingness or unwillingness to hear each other really defines most all problems. It's terrible. I don't know. So that's why it seems obvious to me, because if you care at all, it's very simple. I don't know. I don't know what I'm saying now. Does that give context to the podcast and context paper?

**Danielle:** (Laughs)

**Justin:** (Laughs)

**Danielle:** Well you talked about these general truths?

**Justin:** Yeah, I don't know, you can think about it like this lump of clay, I guess it could tie back into *Plato's Cave* too. Maybe one step beyond how we've been – or at least how I was taught *Plato's Cave*. In *Plato's Cave* there's the golden image of something, and everything that we see is the shadow of that form. So there's the golden image of you, Danielle, and some people would say

that's the image God sees of you, and then there's the image that you have of yourself, which is a shadow of the truth. I would take that one step further and say "that golden image is just a lump of clay and that every subjective perspective is going to create a shadow of that, but that there isn't a golden image of it, it's just the fodder."

**Danielle:** There is no eternal stagnant image.

**Justin:** Yeah, it's all the good, all the bad, all the neutral, everything is in that, and there's no ultimate truth. The ultimate truth is just the fodder. That doesn't make any of the other truths less true. That's the thing.

**Danielle:** There can be duality-

**Justin:** Yeah, there can be a multiplicity of truths, and contradiction does not negate another truth.

**Danielle:** Have you ever read Nietzsche's work on dual perspectivism?

**Justin:** No, I should.

**Danielle:** You would like it, it's about this sort of thing.

**Justin:** I'd like to. I've tried reading other philosophers who have talked about reductionism and dualism. But philosophers are so hard for me. So often they talk in absolutes and that drives me crazy. But I'll try out Nietzsche. People like him.

**Danielle:** He's definitely full of contradictions and he's full of absolutes, but he is also full of open ended...

**Justin:** I tried reading Foucault.

**Danielle:** Foucault is a pain in the ass.

**Justin:** He has really entertaining writing, but I found it really difficult.

**Danielle:** I'm reading Simone de Beauvoir, she's just so lucid in her thought and it's not obstructed by pedantic bullshit. I feel like there's just so much elitism in all that stuff, but with Simone – it's not dumbed down or anything, it's not colloquial by any means, it's just really on point and essential – there's nothing unnecessary in her writing.

**Justin:** That's awesome. If you have some of her work, I'd love to read it after you're finished. I've read some Sandra Harding, she writes about Feminist Standpoint Theory which is really interesting concepts about how perspective influences truth. And then there's a lot of Leadership Theory stuff that impacts how I perceive a lot of this stuff. Actually I was reading this Outdoor Education textbook, and they were talking about different leadership styles, and there's this type of leadership called Servant Leadership.

**Danielle:** (Laughs)

**Justin:** It's awesome! The guy who came up with it in the 60's based it on Hermann Hesse's book *Journey to the East*, on this character Leo who plays a servant role for these people who are doing a pilgrimage to the East. I have a list of books to read about this topic but in reading that I thought it was funny because I came across the Outdoor Education textbook at the end of my studies at Goddard though it could have been my principle resource for the last three years. It would have gotten me off to the right start. But through reading it, and reading all the resources that it cites, I was like "oh I've read

all these articles and their authors. I've read Priest and Gass, I've read Gookin, I've read Unsoeld, I've read Petzholdt." I was like "awesome, I finally get the intro level text book that an undergraduate in an outdoor education major would get on day one, so I can put it on my bibliography, and most everything they are referencing I've already read." And then when it cites *Journey to the East* as this influential piece on Servant Leadership I was like "nice! One of my favorite books!" It's already influenced my perspectives on leadership, and it turns out that it is one of the most influential texts on this form of leadership.

**Danielle:** (Laughs)

**Justin:** What were we? I don't know what we are talking about anymore.

**Danielle:** Truth.

**Justin:** Truth! Yeah truth is a heavy-handed topic. That's a huge part of the podcast.

**Danielle:** Ok.

**Justin:** That's one of the core elements in the podcast and it's also something that is played with in *I'm Fine*. That one chapter about Anaphylaxis, the kind of over-saturation of horror that's described in that chapter, and the detail given about Nate's death, and then in the end the one sentence saying "he wakes back up." And because in the book I'll mention the same thing multiple times and the continuity is intentionally messed up. They were talking about the distance of church bells in chapter two, and then they talk about it again later, but the distance and the time passed don't line up. Or the characters repeat thoughts or revelations that were had before but the



circumstances of their past have changed subtly. There's things like that, and if you notice the details they don't quite line up...

**Justin:** ...

**Danielle:** ...

**Danielle:** Is there anything else?

**Justin:** Nope I think that's it. Thank you.

PODCAST: INTRODUCTION

**Justin [to Nate Franklin and David Spain]:** You fools ready? You fools ready?! You ready for this shit yo?

**Nate:** I think we're ready.

**Juliet Wayne:** Well maybe we shouldn't talk until it's recording.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** We're recording.

**Juliet:** Oh we are?

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Juliet:** (Laughs) Nice! That's what I do too. I have a little Zoom mic and when I hang out with people I just turn it on, and like a half hour later I'm like "I'm glad I got that." And people are like "Wait! You were recording!?"

**Mom:** How many people have you done this with?

**Justin [to Mom, Shoko Moynihan and Dad, Robert Moynihan]:** Eight?

**Mom:** Eight?

**Justin:** Eight or nine?

**Justin [to you]:** Sixteen.

**Dad:** Wow. Let the interview begin!

**Justin [to Tina Brock]:** I didn't prepare any questions.

**Tina:** Oh.

**Justin:** It's supposed to be just free form.

**Tina:** Oh, is it? Ok.

**Justin:** (Laughing)

**Tina:** Am I, am I following you?

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Justin [to you]:** Welcome to *[t]he Guide's Role* mini series podcast. These audio files are one part of a three-part Senior Study to complete my Individualized Bachelor of Arts at Goddard College. This audio podcast can stand-alone and has its own merits in being listened to in that way. At times the many participant voices melt together and identifying the source can seem challenging. So you, the listener, can embrace this along with the contradicting views and "truths" expressed throughout the dialogues or follow along with the written transcript that clearly indicates the speaker and gives additional context and opinion to some of the ideas expressed.  
(a pause)

I recognize that every person travels their path by their own means. What this podcast is, is simply me offering my own biases and inspirations and interests. What I assume to be "better" or "right" or "good", might be that way for me and maybe for some others, but it's likely that it's not for everyone. I look to be intentional in how I go about my work and how I interact with my friends. And I'm using this document to articulate those ideas to my audience, which is you, the listener. You might be a guide or initiate in our own right. Hopefully this is a useful tool for people that don't feel like they understand these things innately, or even for people who do this stuff intuitively and are looking for a way of putting words to what comes to them naturally.

As to my own methodologies it should be noted that although I definitely enjoy reading other people's work, and being influenced by it, inspired by it, my working knowledge of that work is often limited. So while I might reference somebody it's quite possible that I would reference them incorrectly or interpret their work incorrectly. While this hosts a risk, because you are looking for evidence, typically you are looking for evidence in research based on the conversation and studies of other people as well as your own internal dialogue, for me it's less critical how accurate the information is but how it is interpreted and spoken of. So I'll try to limit the amount of name dropping that I actually do within the study, within the podcast and written context papers. And really what's more crucial here are the ideas being conveyed. And hopefully words will be adequate because I know that there are certainly limitations and kind of an inherent trapping that comes about with the use of words, you know, varying from each language. But in this attempt, one of the words that I'll use often that I am trying to be more conscious of not using in this respect is the collective "we" or "us". And I often refer to it when I'm speaking about something that I find difficult or undesirable within the larger status quo or culture. There's an assumptive tone that comes about when I use the words "us" or "our culture" or "we"; and I do include myself in this process because I see myself as falling into the same trappings, however I wouldn't want to identify just myself because I believe there are plenty of other people who can identify and call themselves out for the short comings that we are – that we tend to be bound

to. When I say “we” I am really talking about who ever can identify with what I am speaking about. And often I assume that it is some large minority if not majority of a population within a similar cultural context.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** Yeah, I’m at that crux where I’m in my final year of college – I started college when I was 30.

**Juliet:** It’s a good time to start.

**Justin:** (Laughs)

**Juliet:** Anything before that is a waste! (Laughing)

**Justin:** But I’m in my final year and suddenly I’m like “is it heady just for the sake of being heady?” How applicable is anything that I am doing? I’m starting to worry that my project is alienating and not useful.

**Juliet:** Totally. Yeah, right. That’s how it is right up until... well the whole thing.

**Justin:** What I’m getting at, and what I’m looking at is obvious and understood amongst everyone that I talk to-

**Juliet:** Yeah, everyone that YOU talk to Justin! Like come on.

**Justin:** Yeah, well that’s the whole thing right? I’m choosing this group of people to have this conversation with who are essentially like-minded, at least in some way, they have that vibe.

**Justin [to Preston Cline]:** What I am doing with these dialogues, I am interviewing a bunch of people from a whole spectrum of fields between mountain guiding, your expertise in risk management, and people actually in theatre and the arts,

**Preston:** Awesome.

**Justin:** people that are trained in indigenous healing practices, and then non-traditional educators like people doing homeschooling and stuff like that. And I see there being a common thread between all of them, which is essentially the idea of guiding. And each person I am interviewing brings something different to that larger template that might be applicable, at least in a philosophical way of looking at your own life, but also just looking at how a person might gain learning in a way that's not as simple as "here's a piece of information I'm going to have you memorize it."

**Justin [to Nate and David]:** The things I see us having the most in common is that-

**David:** that we all believe that humans can fly?

(Laughter)

**Justin:** Well, uh, yes. One, that we believe in the magical. Not as in magical realism, but magical as real, right? Magical-real-ism.

**Justin [to you]:** Ok, let's do a quick role call.

**Doug Jerolmack:** So you know I surf Jersey almost every weekend... Do you want any green tea?

**Justin:** That's Douglas Jerolmack, he's a friend I used to ride bikes with. His research working at the University of Penn focuses on

The participants of these Socratic Dialogues are nearly all described as "friends" or connected to me through friends. This is useful information only in how it describes how I value others. In respects to this project it is important that they are experts in fields of guiding. In respects to how I've engaged them as social resources, my friendship with many of them may have colored our conversations and for many of them similar dialogues have been the foundations of our friendships. In this way I see friendship and discourse as inexorably tied.

"the spatial and temporal evolution of patterns that emerge at the interface

of fluid and sediment on Earth and planetary surfaces.”

(<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/earth/dougj.html>)

**Mom:** It's not from within. In this case, it's coming from out from outside, and strike their heart!

**Justin:** That's my mom. She has a business distributing whole food supplements. She also has a healing practice where she uses iridology and sclerology as well as Reiki and Hawaiian shamanism.

**Dad:** And when we were done I read mine, and she read hers and they were completely different. (Laughs) It's just like – they were so – they were the same but they were completely different.

**Justin:** That's my dad. He works with my mom and also has his own healing practice, which includes the Hawaiian shamanism as well as the Reiki but he also practices two point system and Matrix Energetics and lymphatic drainage.

**Paul Haraf:** I like that! “I made ten copies cause I only expected five people, and if I get five more I'm pretty happy.” Exactly, that's pretty humble of him. I love that already!

**Justin:** Paul Haraf, pretty much the biggest influence on my climbing and guiding. He was my mentor for a long time and my boss at the University of Pennsylvania. He's now Senior Instructor for REI's Outdoor School in Denver; he's a certified Rock Instructor with the American Mountain Guide Association.

**Juliet:** I had this light bulb stuck in a vitamin bottle for like a week and I was like “something’s going on here.” ... “Alright lets get down to brass tacks,” she gets out the glue gun, she’s like “I got some hair, we’re gonna do this, I got some paint!”

**Justin:** That’s Juliet Wayne, she’s a story teller and comedian out of Philadelphia. She’s also a really great artist, a painter, she works with dolls, she’s done animation. She’s totally crush worthy. I’ve been crushed out on her, probably still am, at least artistically.

**Preston:** I’m hired to run the programs, which means all the risk management stuff, so I design all the systems. Which are all the operational systems as well as the human factor systems. And then I work with 30 fellows and I support them in running the program.

**Justin:** That’s Preston Cline. He’s the Associate Director for Leadership Ventures in the Graduate Leadership Program at the Wharton School of Business of University of Penn. He worked with Paul Haraf as a guide with Project Use in New Jersey. That’s how I connected with him, through those connections with Paul.

**Raphael Horwitz:** “Well that’s quite a power object Mr. Johnson.” And I said, “well yeah, it was.” And “I think the Universe was really trying to tell you something.”

**Justin:** That’s Raphael Horwitz. He was a roommate of mine in high school. He’s been practicing shamanism for as long as I’ve known him. He’s used it as a



way of communicating with his seizures; which has been his way of managing his “illness”.

**Tina:** A theatre only grows, and people only grow, and we only get larger and expand when the collective unconscious and the experience is larger than what we are doing.

**Justin:** That’s Tina Brock. She is the founder and director of the IRC. The Idiopathic Ridiculopathy Consortium, which is an absurdist theatre company in Philadelphia.

**Justin [to Nate and David]:** Um-

**David:** of guiding.

**Justin:** Guiding, and guiding is really the anchor-

**David:** Guides.

**Nate:** It’s all of us. Guidance.

**David:** Do you provide guidance?

**Justin:** ...do you feel like you provide guidance?

**Nate:** I’m not sure.

**David:** I hope I do.

(Laughing)

**Justin [to you]:** David Spain and Nathan Franklin, these are good friends of mine that I’ve had for a long time, both of them are excellent writers.

**Rob Hite:** I want a better term than the Renaissance Man or Woman because it’s not that. That’s what it was twenty years ago-

**Justin:** That's Rob Hite. I've been friends with him for a dozen years or so now. Rob is an artist in upstate New York. Really one of those people who embodies art in every way that he lives. In my conversations with Rob I'll also speak with his son Aidan. He's a student at Vassar College. I've known him since he was eleven and he's always beaten me at chess.

**Tino Fiumara:** Like we talked about stock earlier. Stock is dirty water.

**Justin [to Tino and Julie Denton]:** (Laughing) oh yeah, vegetable stock!

**Julie:** I thought you meant finances. Oh, that sounds like fun in the climbing gym.

**Tino:** You were like, "what part of the conversation was I not a part of?"

**Justin [to you]:** Tino Fiumara and Julie Denton, friends of mine, climbing partners. Julie works at an elementary school and Tino is a financial consultant. I've had a tradition of inviting myself over to their house for dinner, our dialogue was after such a meal.

**Juliet:** And so when you go to them and say "I have this project where I talk about you." They're like "Man! You gotta do it! It's totally worth it! This is about me!" (Laughing)

**Justin [to Juliet]:** I was thinking about what informs this said philosophy. And it's been conversations with people like yourself, people that I've had influential conversations with. I've gotten more out of personal interaction than I typically get out of reading something, and if I do read something that's inspiring it's usually – it feels like a personal interaction.

**Justin [to Mom and Dad]:** Somebody could read something in the New York Times or hear something on NPR and then tell it back to you in a way that's way more compelling –

**Mom:** Right.

**Justin:** than the article itself. It might have more value, or has gained intrinsic value just by how they interpreted it.

**Mom and Dad:** Yeah.

**Justin:** And it might not even be accurate to what was actually said, but it doesn't matter what was actually said.

**Dad:** It's accurate for them.

**Justin [to Julie and Tino]:** Second generation, third generation resources, they're really key for me.

**Julie:** Like something that might have gone unnoticed if *you* had come across it.

**Justin:** I guess the inspiration is key for me. Something that means nothing to me, or seems totally irrelevant, but another person found a certain magic in it, and so they are able to express it in a way that reaches me.

**Julie:** Yeah.

**Tino:** It's the "how", not always the "what".

**Justin [to Tina]:** And then I was thinking, I don't want it to be stagnant. I don't want it to – "alright, I've developed these ideas from conversations with people like you, and now I'm going to write about it, and here's my dissertation to the world." That seems like really... it's seems... stuck.

**Tina:** It's missing something.

**Justin:** Yeah, it just doesn't have room for going in another direction – I mean it could, but I see having conversations with people that I've already had conversations with as well as new people that might elicit that same kind of inspiration, as being a way of – being like: “alright, this is what I've developed from what we've talked about before,” and then seeing your reaction and how that might change me, or empower me, or challenge me, within that thought process, so.

**Tina:** Yeah, that makes sense.

PODCAST: ACT ONE

**Justin [to you]:** Those are the players. In the Conclusion you will hear the voices of two other participants: Olli Johnson and Baco Ohama. Unlike the primary participants I asked Baco and Olli to speak with me to help release a very specific line of thinking from my mind. Here is Act One: an overview of *[t]he Guide's Role*, looking at the project, my reservations and my investment in it.

**Justin [to Nate and David]:** I wrote “my project is two fold. Complete the novella *I'm Fine*, which has been a consistent thread through my Goddard education. And two, take stock, unpack and articulate the philosophy and the components of that philosophy which inform and inspire the writing of this story. This is an opportunity to complete a thought, to take stock in feelings that have permeated my actions and frustrations for years and share them with others in the most appropriate medium for my skill sets and audience engagement. The story uses fiction as vehicle for philosophical expression; it uses prose, illustration, and the permission of non-ordinary reality to communicate ideals that might inspire the reader if they are already so inclined. It is about friends who move to woods and wander without definitive purpose. This story engages liminality, ritual death, actual death, disenchantment, limitations, perspective, love, reality. For everything *truth* the book assumes I hope to squash that very thought. The anchor of the endeavor is the Guide. Even that role is questioned, but the Guide might introduce the reader, the Initiate, to the power, the unknown or the Gracious Beast, that meanders through the work. I myself need a Guide to facilitate

conversations that might make the Beast agreeable. The context piece will provide a cognitive compliment to my emotional or aesthetic expression. By utilizing dialogues with professionals within numerous fields of guiding I will assemble a coherent presentation of my ideas, learning, influences, and investment in the said philosophy with a richer perspective than one I could present with my own voice alone. For it is my voice within a community that reveals my breath. It is my voice sounded off another, encouraged or challenged by their own that gives my biases ground or checks my ego at the door.”

**Paul:** (Laughing hard).

**Johanna:** He really didn’t understand.

**Justin [to you]:** Johanna is Paul’s wife.

**Justin [to Paul]:** Basically-

**Paul:** (Still laughing) Well yes, I didn’t understand what you were trying to say.

**Justin:** I don’t know that I know what I was trying to say.

**Paul:** Maybe break it down into one or two sentences for me.

**Justin:** Well I’ll break it down into chunks, and then we’ll focus on one or two topics that are actually applicable to what you have professional expertise in, rather than talking about abstractions that don’t make any sense.

**Paul:** I won’t do well with that.

**Justin [to Nate and David]:** I’m writing a short novel, pretty much influenced by some of the shorter novels I’ve read by Hermann Hesse and Knut Hamsun and Rene Daumal.

**Justin [to Tina]:** It's about seven friends who move out to the woods and kind of give up on everything that makes sense, or doesn't make sense.

**Tina:** Yeah.

**Justin:** There's a lot of things that happen that move into the magical realism kind of thing.

**Justin [to Julie and Tino]:** There's a certain amount of magical realism that allows them to do things that obviously a person can't do. So like, they do a lot of hunting at first, and eventually stop eating animals; or there's this one scene where he's eating a deer's leg, and then the deer eats moss that he's been growing on his back. So the deer doesn't die but- you know it's stuff like that- like "why not?" Or "why not this other thing?"

**Justin [to Tina]:** Their actions are absurd but speak to the absurdity of what we consider normal. Which seems to resonate with a lot of the Absurdist theatre that I've seen.

**Justin [to Raphael]:** Essentially I'm writing a short fictional piece that has a heavy amount of philosophy built into it saying "break down all dogma and truth; just melt that shit!"

**Raphael:** Ah ha!

**David:** What do you mean that you want to "squash the very thought"?

**Justin [to Nate and David]:** Um, every... If I ever state an absolute or proclaim a truth within my work, I want to also deconstruct that idea, or slam it down. You know, if I make any claims to truth, I also want to crush them, immediately - or maybe not immediately. I might give them some space, and

then crush them. But contradictions are – I want to contradict everything I say in the book.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** If I write it correctly-

**Juliet:** “It’s not going to be like that! It’s going to be like me and MY friends!”

**Justin:** (Laughing) No!

**Juliet:** “We know what’s going on.”

**Justin:** No, if I write it correctly, I want it to be accessible to everyone and not really say anything, but just create room for inspiration. If I do it correctly, but I probably won’t.

**Tina:** So this is, this is for class?

**Justin [to Tina]:** This is for school. This is my Senior Thesis, or Senior Study of sorts. But it’s one aspect of it. There’s really three components.

**Justin [to Raphael]:** That’s [the novella] like the central piece of my Senior Study. Along with it I want to dissect what that central philosophy- where it’s coming from,

**Raphael:** Yeah, yeah.

**Justin:** and also how it’s relevant to how I’ve studied anything over the last three years.

**Justin [to Rob]:** Yeah, actually last night I had this – or on the drive over to your place yesterday – I had this moment where I was like “how am I even going to try and tackle this project? Because every moment I’m learning something new. My opinions change, because I don’t believe there’s an answer.



**Rob:** Well you can talk about fluidity and the beauty of that. And

transmogrification: any empirical data, any experience, or whatever you do, and then you reconfigure it for yourself and for what dovetails for who you are. And that's a whole process of being honest. It's like, taking your influences and incorporating them and making them part of you as a stew as opposed to – that's not a very good metaphor but – as opposed to having them necessarily change who you are but add to who you are.

So if you're recording this now we should talk a little bit – going back to the pivot of your description to me of what you're trying to do in three parts.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Rob:** I understand what you're doing here as a far as us talking and going back to some of your roots and things like that; your development as a feral philosopher, the theme that's common between us, not wanting to over institutionalize or even over professionalize because we're trying to squeeze as much creativity out of ourselves as we can, so any kind of formalization starts to impinge on that process.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** Alright, I'm going to throw this idea that's kind of central to the whole thing at you. Interrupt at any point, or just be dead silent afterwards.  
(Laughing)

**Juliet:** Yeah. The worst thing someone can do is, you have a shitty idea and they don't tell you.

**Justin:** Yeah (laughing).

**Juliet:** I emailed my friend today cause he was saying “I read something someone wrote and it was like totally embarrassing, it was terrible.” And I was like “If I ever do that, I want you to shut it down! Like immediately! I trust your taste so much, don’t let this happen.” You know? Ok, so go, what you got?

**Justin:** I’ve been looking at school through a lens. It’s similar to how you’ve been using story telling as like a – or maybe not intentionally but you’ve found yourself using story telling as like this analogy to everything or a way of looking at everything.

**Juliet:** Yeah.

**Justin:** I’ve been using this idea of “guiding”.

**Justin [to Raphael]:** *[t]he Guide’s Role.* I kind of half understood what that meant to me and I don’t think I’ll have a complete understanding of what that means to me at any point – I hope. I hope I don’t. You know?

**Justin [to Preston]:** I’m looking at how guiding plays out through all these different vocations. And not to reduce that whole system down to too simple of a thing but giving it a framework, I’ve kind of identified the Guide as being this resolving character, or this joining character between an Initiate, or student, and some kind of greater power or unknown knowledge – or something like that.

**Preston:** Yeah.

**Justin:** I started attributing characteristics to those three roles.

**Justin [to Raphael]:** So I’ve identified these three key players in what might be called a “Rite of Passage” or a liminal experience.

**Raphael:** Ah ha.

**Justin:** Or just the process of living and learning, you know?

**Raphael:** Yeah.

**Justin:** I guess maybe a more deliberate or conscious or meaningful turning of events within the living.

**Justin [to Nate and David]:** There's something that you're getting at. So there's some investment that the student is – or the Initiate is trying to go from being unaware of something to being aware of something and having a relationship with that thing. I'll compare it to mountains, because it gives it a really physical representation and you guys can draw your own parallels.

I'll continue to use mountains and mountain guiding as a way to explain *[t]he Guide's Role* throughout this paper. If you remain mindful that the focus is not mountains or mountain guiding but the concepts I am using them as an allegory for, I feel like you will get more from what I am hoping to communicate.

You have – you have a mountain.

**Justin [to Raphael]:** Well it's not just a mountain, you could call it: another power.

Or the Gracious Beast could be inspiration; it could be a new way of thinking or risk. It's any form of change that is unknown to the Initiate. Some neutral – but maybe not neutral – beast, essentially, that can provide great revelation and revelry, but can also kill you in a moment.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** Well the next part would be the Guide but I'll talk about the Gracious Beast first.

**Juliet:** (Explodes laughing)

**Justin:** It's just anything – anything – for me it's anything that you're going after. It's whatever you're working on. So, you as an artist, it's almost palpable but a more or less intangible thing that you give your life over to in a certain way to have more of an understanding of. Or you know, you give your deity offerings, or whatever you do, you blood let for it.

**Juliet:** Suffer.

**Justin:** You suffer. But, the whole time it – well typically, if you are doing it... “right” the suffering's fine. It's not even painful at all; it's just part of it. Or it is painful but you don't mind the pain, or something like that. Or you understand it to be a critical part of the process.

**Juliet:** Yeah.

**Justin:** However that goes for you. For me, I enjoy the pain and I get off on it so that's fine.

**Juliet:** Yeah, I guess I'm guilty of that as well. I'm like “this is great!”

**Justin [to Nate and David]:** And then you have, the unknown person who wants to climb the mountain but has no experience and doesn't know – it's not just about climbing the mountain they don't even know what the mountain can provide them. They have a semblance of an understanding of what they might get out of it but really they have no clue of what the mountain's about.

**Justin [to you]:** We'll explore in further depth the role of the Initiate and how they prepare for their transition. Each role, the Initiate, the Guide, and the Gracious Beast will continue to be explored throughout this podcast. We'll

talk specifically about the Initiate through the topics liminality, pedagogy, perspective in Act Three.

**Justin [to Julie and Tino]:** And then there's the boundary man, the person in between. We have the Guide who has an investment in both the human who wants to experience the mountain and then their own connection to the mountain. And that connection transcends just climbing, hopefully. It depends on where the Guide is in their process. But they take this person – and there are all levels of expectation and parameters to keep a person “safe”, and decisions you have to make about how much to indoctrinate into the student how quickly because if you move them too quickly through the process it increases their chances of being killed, you know.

**Justin [to Paul]:** And then the Guide, it's kind of a loose term that could also be the Instructor.

**Paul:** Sure.

**Justin:** But it's just a way of describing something. Instead of a teacher, your classic kind of “I have information. Here's the information, learn it.”

**Paul:** Right.

**Justin:** Instead you're carrying a person through a bunch of different ways of thinking, or you have to manage or choose the right way to give just enough information but not too much. Your soft skills or interpersonal skills come into play. Or just your pacing of the lesson plan comes into play. And then, when you translate that to a Guide I'm starting to ask questions like “what

are the outcomes other than them making it to the top of the mountain and back down?" That's a really simplistic way to look at it.

**Paul:** No, it's actually pretty deep. Because most people want to make it to the top.

**Justin:** Ok.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** And I see all of that relating to something like, obviously, indigenous shamanism, mountain guiding,

**Juliet:** Dude.

**Justin:** alternative education,

**Juliet:** Yeah!

**Justin:** and the role of the artist. You know, I started seeing all these vocations tying into it.

**Justin [to Rob]:** Basically I started seeing that all the components of my life pretty easily fit into this title.

**Rob:** Of guiding?

**Justin:** Of guiding.

**Rob:** Whether it's through theatre, or through writing, or through whatever.

**Justin:** And whether or not I am the Guide in the role or I'm being guided.

**Juliet:** Yeah that's like "you" – that's the most natural thing for you.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** It just made sense you know?

**Juliet:** Yeah.

**Justin [to Rob]:** I've used it for my lens for how I've approached my school work and also for, well obviously the philosophy that's come out of my writing.

Sometimes it feels a little bit lofty, but it gives me a good idea of how change happens or how I can participate in change.

**Justin [to Julie and Tino]:** When I was looking at the role of the Guide through the lens of a writer, or an author, I was thinking of how that human touch could be carried through a non-human experience, through written word, through visual arts or something like that.

**Justin [to you]:** Changing pace: doubt. Here are some of my reservations.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** I was trying to think about this with Tina yesterday, does that – I mean what is that template going to do? I mean, it helps me. It helps me think about things. It's a starting point to get me thinking about how to engage another person or where I am in a stage of thought or...

**Justin [to Tina]:** In your own work and your attempts at bringing this work to people – I know that on a certain level you're just bringing them the work because it moves you personally right?

**Tina:** Uh huh.

**Justin:** And it's hard to be hyper conscious of every detail of "why?" But at the same time is there a metaphysical kind of way that you like looking at this stuff prior to engaging it or? Or is it more of an intuitive kind of movement? Or what do you even think of what I just said? Does any of that resonate?

**Tina:** Yeah, I guess. Are you talking about the process the whole way through from steps of looking – when I read plays to consider them for the season and what comes up when I am doing that or what would be involved? Or are you

talking about the rehearsal process? Or are you talking about once the show is up? Or at any stage of the game?

**Justin:** I think the thing that I'm feeling, or I'm up against when I pose this question – it's not even a question, when I pose this idea is how applicable is what I just said to you? You know what I mean?

**Tina:** Oh very.

**Justin:** So I do mean the whole thing.

**Tina:** Oh it's very applicable.

**Justin:** For me it's just the way I continue to look at myself and what I do. I kind of take new information and push it through this lens and look at myself within the continuum. I don't know. I'm wondering how this works, how something like this would work for someone –

**Tina:** For a theatre?

**Justin:** Someone else.

**Tina:** For someone else. Let me just say what my first thoughts are, but if I'm going down the wrong road tell me... This is not a cerebral exercise in any way shape or form.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Tina:** I mean I guess it can be. It can be for a lot of people, but I don't think that's where the gold is in it at all. A theatre only grows, and people only grow, and we only get larger and expand when the collective unconscious and experience is larger than what we are doing. I don't know that – can lasting



and profound change as we call it, like hiking to the next level or ascension on Maslow's Hierarchy, does that happen through?...

**Justin:** *Sigh.*

**Tina:** I don't know. I don't know.

**Justin:** Yeah, I mean... Man.

**Tina:** Something that you said before is – I totally understand the move to – the basis of your novel, which is “we're kind of going to chuck it” – I actually see that as not absurd at all.

**Nate:** That's where the process of creativity comes in for me, I'm just – I mean I could sit here and just talk about it all day to myself or someone else. But if I'm going to be doing that anyway I might as well make a record of it. Because I'm going to be doing it one way or another. So I can choose to preserve it or not to preserve it. And a lot of times, if you do preserve it then it could have some kind of outcome, some kind of positive outcome that you're not aware of at that time.

**Raphael:** Overall, the getting in tune with that higher source, the Gracious Beast, with that neutral source, even with my experience and the experience of many shamanic practitioners, getting in touch with that is a humbling thing. In shamanic terms and in my belief everything has a spirit. Everything has life to it. And various roles are played; by this life that's in everything; on a broader scale, when you think about – there is something in everything. It's not good. It's not bad. There is an unconditional love in it all, an allowing for everything. It really goes beyond words, beyond human explanation. But

fortunately when a person comes in tune with that, that neutral but overall benevolent, loving, unconditionally – this force. You can't even call it divine, or God; there's no name for it. But it's life. And it's in everything. And as a person gets more aware, at first they will have these glimpses – I mean for most people just these glimpses, thought patterns will continue. From my experience and in shamanic terms – the Shaman has many titles, you know around the world: voodoo, witch doctor, the medicine man. When the Shaman first begins his work and in most cultures years and years back, and still today, the Shaman is very often chosen by the spirit or the Guide, and the term – he starts with the term Neophyte.

**Aidan (Rob's son):** What makes a Shaman want to be a Shaman? Is it his Rite of Passage?

**Justin [to Rob and Aidan]:** I don't think it's a "want", I think it's a calling.

**Rob:** And not everybody becomes a Shaman who goes through a Rite of Passage. Some just become citizens.

**Justin:** Or some just become adults.

**Aidan:** Right.

**Raphael:** And the Neophyte is the Initiate, and goes through the initiation process; and so in a sense he starts as a student who learns and through the course of anywhere from a few weeks to a couple months or even a couple of days, he goes from – and learning from the experienced Shaman to becoming a Shaman himself. Though a Shaman, a true Shaman, will never really take on that title. I guess starting with being the Initiate. That process never ends.

The process of learning. For a Shaman could be doing that in a tribe of people his whole life.

**Justin [to Raphael]:** For me that creates two roles, two different Guides, so to speak. There's the Guide that's in this earthly realm, and then there's a Guide that's in the spirit world.

**Raphael:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Or many Guides. There are Guides that are in this world and there are Guides in the other world, within altered states or non-ordinary reality. And that seems essential. If you compared it to education for example. You have your teacher, your school teacher, but you also have Guides, like non-human or non-physical Guides within like the homework.

**Raphael:** Oh yeah, yeah.

**Justin:** And they exist on both sides. So it could be something as simple as a limerick that allows you to remember

**Raphael:** Yes.

**Justin:** you know, grammar. "I before E, except after C, or sound like "A" like in neighbor or weigh." And not it's not this specific limerick or game, but it is accessing certain parts of the brain that will allow you to remember something in a certain way. And your teacher puts you in touch with those Guides within yourself. And really its not very different from the spirit world, save that it's boxed up a little more.

**Raphael:** Well yeah. What you have to remember, particularly in reference to this neutral higher power, this force, is these two worlds, the physical and the

spiritual are connected. A large part of it for me, what shamanism has done is assisted me in staying more and more over the years aware of that connection between the physical and the spirit world.

PODCAST: ACT TWO PART ONE

The Power of science is its ability to establish new truths without reference to fundamentals, to progress beyond prejudice and opinion, and to open the physical world to human manipulation. The great weakness of science is its inability to include all of experience.

Thought, imagination, and experience itself cannot be the proper subjects of scientific study, and are thereby excluded from the world presented by science. This is the great weakness of western civilization. (Avery 7)

**Justin [to you]:** I've divided Act Two into two parts due to the length. Both parts are predominately conversations with Douglas Jerolmack, where we talk about Chaos Mathematics and Quantum Physics. It turns into a conversation about the Scientific Method and other methodologies for discovering "truth". There are bits and pieces from other conversations that I sewed in to give context or to expand on thoughts regarding truth, dogma, reductive thinking, heuristics, and terms like "safe", "secure", and "risk". Enjoy!

**Doug:** The way you get experience is riding waves. And if you're not riding waves in the beginning, it's just going to take you three times as long to learn how to surf if you have a board that you can only ride once you learn to surf; if you're not catching waves then you're not learning.

**Justin [to Doug]:** That makes sense.

**Doug:** I think if you just went bigger. I think you'll have a ton of fun on a Fish, but Fish are still a little bit skatey. But I mean the thing to do is if go out there,

try surfing a bunch of times with people that you know that have a bunch of different boards –

**Justin:** I'm going to hopefully get out in Jersey with my buddy Sal. He's got a quiver of like twelve boards.

**Doug:** You know I surf Jersey almost every weekend?

**Justin:** I heard. You told me that.

**Doug:** Yeah yeah yeah. We should just go out then.

**Justin:** Ok.

**Doug:** I felt like – when I was talking with Anthony he was like “well what do you feel?” I'm like “dude I don't know anything about anything, I want your advice.” But on the other hand, the thing that gets you most psyched about getting in the water is going to get you the most psyched about surfing. Even if you don't know what you are doing, if you try four boards and you like one the best... I love the long board. Do you want any green tea?

**Justin:** Sure.

**Doug:** I had too much coffee today, so I decided – and I was like, “what would Justin drink?”

**Justin:** Oh, green tea sounds perfect. It's an anti-inflammatory too.

**Doug:** Oh yeah? I don't know where you're at right now with diet or anything else, but I was like “I bet Justin's a green tea drinker.” Didn't want to serve you anything too harsh.

**Justin [to you]:** I'm going to launch you all straight into the meat of the conversation. We had already gotten into the topic of Chaos: the sensitive

dependence on initial conditions. I was especially curious about the impacts of friction, the typically ignored details, upon macro-scopic systems.

**Justin:** So essentially when it's acceptable to average things out versus when it's essential to consider every detail you can possibly pull into.

**Doug:** Because if you think about it, if the system is Chaotic you take your turbulent flow system for example, you break into a bunch of smaller boxes, and you could try to model what's going on within each one of those boxes and then just stitch them together, however it's chaotic so what you know is that your inability to model perfectly within each one of those boxes, the errors are going to be multiplicative when you stitch them all together to try to explain the whole system.

**Justin:** Because you are not going to get every detail, just like when Lorenz tried to put the averaged numbers back into the system, it is the same problem. I –

alright not to sidetrack too much and if we can somehow keep track of our thoughts, but this idea kind of parallels how Classic Western Academia has approached many topics; breaking things into categories and sub categories and sub categories, trying to get at something deeper and deeper, but its always breaking things into a smaller field of vision. You have to create your framework through which you see but-

Gleick describes these experiments that lead to Lorenz's discovery of chaotic systems in his book *Chaos: Making a New Science* (16). Doug actually had the honor to study with Lorenz while attending a MIT PhD program.

**Doug:** It's the classic reductionist paradigm. But there's a reason for that. It would be a gross over simplification to just offer a critique of reductionism.

**Justin:** Sure.

**Doug:** What I mean by that is that there are tons of things we do successfully based on reductionist science. The reductionist paradigm essentially comes from physics, which is that, if you want to understand mechanically what is going on, if you want to write a differential equation that describes sometimes in terms of the balance of forces, you need to reduce the system to something simple enough that you know what the balance of forces is. I would say, if you want to be precise and to be quantitative, and in particular if you want to be able to make predictions, and I just mean, predictions of any kind, know where something will be in the future based on where it is right now, you need to understand the physics; you need to have mechanical models, otherwise you are just guessing. And so there are a great many problems solved by reductionism, because reductionism is taking a system, breaking it into constituent parts where each one of them is understandable enough that you can model it with basic physics and then you stitch the system back together. And that *does* work for systems that are linear, which means the whole is precisely the whole of the sum of its parts. For this conversation that's what linear means. When you add the things together it is additive as a result, and not multiplicative. So linearity is important and in the terms of dynamical systems strong dissipation is important. In other words, if I perturb the system it is going to relax right back, therefore any error I have in estimates are not so bad, because the system will relax back to where it "wants" to be.



**Justin [to Preston]:** I've been looking at dualism, even reductionism in general. In everyday life we reduce things into categories and they have their advantages obviously for getting things done but then they have to fit within the confines of the world we decide to see, the objectives and outcomes – expected outcomes are necessary for all this to function.

**Justin [to Raphael]:** Since I started reading a lot about indigenous shamanism I've been curious about non-duality. And it got to the point where I was like “well how do I experience that? How do I live in it?” And it's beyond just dualism, it's more like beyond categoristic kind of like structuring.

**Justin [to you]:** The reductionist paradigm.

**Justin [to Raphael]:** Which is pretty much all of western education. It's based on sub-dividing.

**Justin [to Mom and Dad]:** This is coming up in western education, this is something that people are looking at, like Feminist Standpoint Theory, and some of these alternative approaches to studying history; they try to recontextualize things.

**Justin [to you]:** Thinkers like Cushman, Freire, Feyerabend, and Harding have engaged this critique of method, standpoint, subjectivity, and reductionism.

**Justin [to Mom and Dad]:** But our whole process continues to be very reductionist.

**Justin [to you]:** Reductive.

**Justin [to Mom and Dad]:** So, we're creating categories to understand things, and the only thing they've really successfully done is broken a dualistic

perspective of a “right or wrong” and “good and bad” and created these sub-categories.

**Mom:** I think in the past, people are looking for the commandments, where they feel that they are safe. But now I think many of them are coming out of it.

**Justin:** I don't know I'd still say a large percentage of the population –

**Mom:** (Laughing)

**Justin:** No, I mean science is a great example. It's really wonderful because it has the flexibility to continue to discover and learn, but the basic framework, the basic structure is intentionally limiting so that they can achieve something tangible. You know? The very approach to discovering new information has to be based within a certain framework and what is frustrating about that is if you always work within one method and one framework you're going to have a finite – or it might not even be finite, it might be infinite, but it is not as big as a potential infinity can be. It's limited.

**Justin [to Julie and Tino]:** So for me the Guide creates the link – or the resolution between the Initiate and the greater power, or the Gracious Beast. I called it the Gracious Beast because in one way it's neutral; but it's not really neutral it's just like positive, negative, and neutral. It's everything.

**Tino:** It pushes itself.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** It actually breaks all the paradigms of dualism or even reductionism, because it represents contradictions perfectly well. Because on one hand it could destroy you, the information, depending on how it is received, or whatever the power is.

**Justin [to you]:** The value and quality of the Gracious Beast is determined and attributed by the observer or initiate's initial conditions. By their subjective lens, which is imposed not only by their subjective perspective but their state of being in physical and metaphysical terms. It is the unbiased fodder. The method we use to understand it, defines it.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** We have to recognize that good and bad is just our projections onto that material.

**Juliet:** Yeah.

**Justin:** And it's all on that same continuum.

**Juliet:** Like the bad is just having a limited view, and good is knowing the whole thing.

**Justin:** It's just bad relative to what you want out of your idea of what you are. The easiest way for me to think about it is a mountain. It's not playing any favorites but it definitely has the power to destroy one group or another.

**Justin [to Paul]:** I guess the thing that's difficult for me in terms of how I see how we can use these things in an applicable way in terms of being educators, or at least in terms of helping a person getting to whatever piece of knowledge or understanding that they want to get to is that the way I think that it needs to go is less categories – or no categories I should say because I think it's going in the right direction that we keep dividing it into smaller and smaller things. For example your 70 year old Asian woman. The first category that we create is "old" right? "Asian", "woman".

**Paul:** "No football." (Laughs)

**Justin:** So we put those things together and we say “no football” right? But then we add “she likes football”. We’re like “weird?”

**Paul:** That’s exactly what I said, “this could be a fun conversation, how weird!”

**Justin:** No but we have our three categories and the assumption we make with them, then we add this fourth component, that is “she likes football” so it breaks our assumptions, right? So we can either create a new category of “weird old Asian women”-

**Paul:** That’s the category she’s in, yes.

**Justin:** Or, we can say forget categories and just try not to make assumptions-

**Paul:** I think it goes into don’t look the-

**Justin:** Don’t judge a book by the cover?

**Paul:** Or you gotta look beyond your own... yourself. You gotta look beyond yourself.

**Justin [to you]:** It’s not about dismissing the categories, rather understanding the perspective of the other person, their judgments and how they engage the beast.

**Paul:** I find a lot of time, even myself, and getting back to rock climbing, people are so infatuated with what they did and who they are that they don’t take the time to learn what other people are. Which again is interpersonal skills. If I had taken the time to somehow in our class learn a little bit about them and what they are then they are defining themselves, maybe.

**Doug:** Sorry Jewels [his cat].

**Justin [to Doug]:** Ok, when I was thinking about that, it got me on this whole course of thought that might be super reductive now that I am thinking about it. Especially after watching your lecture at AGU (Jerolmack, “Noise is the New Signal”), I started thinking ‘what parameters?’ – if our perspective – I started getting into these pseudo Buddhist perspectives of Quantum Physics. Like

I was turned on to the work of Samuel Avery by Goddard advisor Newcomb Greenleaf. Despite criticism for Avery’s interpretations of Buddhism or his questionable mastery over the science of Quantum Physics his inquiries into the influence of perspective on the physical and how that correlates to the spiritual or consciousness resonated with me. Additionally the exercise he conducts in reconsidering method from a ground up approach – not basing new theory on commonly assumed “truths” of space and form, but reshaping perspective based on other potential initial conditions – was true to my heart and personal practice.

Quantum Physicists that are also Buddhists that wrote about stuff, and they were talking about the big focus – the kind of popular way to think about Quantum Physics which is our influence on the observed; the observers influence on the observed. Can anything ever be objective? Everything IS subjective, it’s just a matter of whether it irons out so much that our impact – does it just get *ironed out* like you’re describing? How sensitive is the subject to our influence as an observer? So I started thinking about: “how do I define?” If I look at something and call it *true*? Or a *fact*? What are the parameters that define that? I don’t know why this question came up? I think it is because I often have a visceral response to anyone claiming any kind of truth; for some reason it disturbs me and I have to look into that more. But I started thinking: time – the scale with which we look at something, that is critical. We can’t say something is true just by looking at –

we are creating the parameters for what we see. One of the parameters is time. Another parameter would be what the inputs are that we are trying to look at. "Am I looking at just that teapot there" or "am I looking at the teapot within the room," or "the teapot sitting upon the table?" I mean we have to do some reductive thinking but its good to determine what specifically we are talking about. So what are the inputs into what we are looking at? And that makes me think in terms of volume, or mass maybe, or density or something, those are the parameters. I am almost recreating the wheel in this thought process. But if through observation we can influence the most minute – by looking at a really small particle, just the light bouncing off our eye is able to move that thing. Just by observing we can move it. I was starting to wonder if the parameters that we create to look at something, the framework that we use to look at something – how much influence does that have on what we see in the end? Because what we define at the end, there is still a parameter of what we are looking at. A bunch of other things could be happening but we're still looking at the final product too-

**Doug:** It's true. A fundamental premise about science is that the question frames the answer. In the broad a sense, often you don't see what you don't go looking for. And then if you are using mathematics you can predict surprising behavior, but if there is a parameter you are missing that has influence and you are not aware of it, or you don't know it is an important variable in your model. Then you can have a mathematical model that makes a predication and that predication could be wrong or that predication could

be correct but not complete. So it can be correct in one situation but then fail in another situation because of the unknown importance of variable  $x$  that you haven't observed yet. It's true that any prediction that we make from a mathematical model is constrained by our knowledge of what variables are important to go into that model. And a corollary is, from an observational point of view, if you are looking for a relationship between  $x$  and  $y$ , and you take data that has  $y$  doing something as some function of  $x$  you can then come up with an empirical relationship that says that  $y$  is a function of  $x$ . But actually  $x$  can be causing  $z$  to happen which is then causing  $y$ ; and then again you are observing a correlation between these two things but you're hypothesizing; by plotting them against each other you are hypothesizing a causative relationship. And therefore your understanding of the relationship between  $x$  and  $y$  is colored by your assumption that  $x$  is a causative agent of  $y$ . So if you observe one thing and you observe another thing, and you try to relate them to each other, they may indeed relate to each other or be shown to have correlation but that does not mean at all one is driven by the other; they can both be driven by something you are not observing.

**Justin:** So this man, Samuel Avery I was reading describes the smallest molecules that make up this world. I'm going to use the verbage wrong, I apologize. At a certain size, when you get small enough, things stop appearing seamless, but more like a computer screen image where you have tiny little- (Avery 78-83)

**Doug:** Yeah it's the breakdown of the continuum. But even water has properties like viscosity and surface tension; only on scales much larger than a molecule. If you look at the scale of the molecule, you cannot define something like surface tension. You cannot define something like viscosity, which is a bulk property. Anything that appears continuous is made up of particles, and at some level the continuum description of even being able to define macroscopic variables – the idea of pressure and temperature I gave before only make sense at the scale of untold numbers, unimaginable numbers of molecules. Temperature actually is really related to the shaking velocity of molecules in a gas, which is not definable when you are looking at one gas molecule.

**Justin:** It's easy to take a concept like that and project it onto a larger scale. It's so tempting to take the microscopic model and think of it on a macroscopic scale, and also on the day-to-day scale. It's easy to wonder if we approach our daily lives with a similar reductive perspective? And does that shape how we approach every minute of our lives, not only what we see and feel and do but how we think and what defines a reality? Are we only seeing within a scope, within the parameters we have created for ourselves, or that we've assumed? Similar to mathematics that's working off a set of axioms – I don't even know how the initial axioms were even created, but could there be another one introduced that totally changes how we perceive what we are working with?



I am aware that critiques of the Scientific Method and reductive perspectives in methodologies has been approached from abundant directions. My research on this topic has been limited to the thinkers I have mentioned before: Avery, Feyerabend, Friere, Cushman, and Harding. To best serve my progression of inquiry and critical thinking I am inclined to investigate and unpack a course of thought, including my own bias, through some reading, discourse, and introspection before fully immersing myself in the recognized and published voices. At times one page of a book can send my mind revealing for months if not years. To indulge in excessive voices without engaging my own detracts from the depth of my process. I of course intend to continue research, especially looking at writers who directly question the Scientific Method and assumptions of truth, maybe beginning with Thomas Kuhn.

**Justin [to Mom and Dad]:** I would take it a step farther and say that it's a laziness that people have,

**Mom:** (laughs)

**Justin:** to not allow things – people want things to be safe, and they want this illusion of security. Another person I was interviewing, Preston Cline, he's an etymologist. So he studies words like "risk" and "safe".

**Preston:** There's a bunch of different ways to think about risk and ISO definitions of "the effects of uncertainty upon objectives" (Knight 8). But that assumes

The ISO is the International Organization for Standardization, founded in 1947 and headquartered in Geneva. The organization produced a document that aims to "establish a common concept of risk management process... [and] provides[s] practical guidelines to: understand how to implement risk management, identify and treat all types of risk, treat and manage the identified risks, improve an organization's performance through the management of risk, maximize opportunities and minimize losses in the organization, [and] raise awareness of the need to treat and manage risk in organizations" (Knight 4).

objectives. And sometimes while we're living we may not have an objective other than to make it to the next day, and maybe not even that. The moment that you come into the world you are faced with uncertainty. Right?

Uncertainty surrounds you. And also possibility surrounds you so uncertainty doesn't have a negative connotation. It's just that you have both uncertainty and possibility. The moment the world starts to move and you start to move, we create interaction with risk, or a relationship with risk. That's the choice you make entering into the world and the choices the world makes entering into you. It's my choice to enter into that room, but if I'm sitting on the beach and I am hit by a wave, it wasn't my choice to do that. Risk surrounds us and moves around us. How we navigate that uncertainty is risk. How we think about how we are going to chart our own lives, how we are going to make our decisions, how we're going to react or respond, how we're going to do nothing, is all a big long engagement with risk. I'll give you a couple of data points. You should know that when most people talk about risk, they talk about the down side, they talk about error. What they often forget to add is that most innovation happens through error as well. Most great inventions happened by accident because they were looking for something else and they found that. Risk leads us to crisis and crisis leads us to an unknown outcome; it's neither good nor bad, it's just that we don't know. That's the true definition of the word. Often times, the risks that I'm encountering, the challenges or the barriers or the obstacles – people are cautious or fearful of what they don't know to the point that they're willing to hold onto the evil that they know than engage with their potential because it might be an evil that they don't know. And they're unwilling to recognize

that maybe the benefits far outweigh that. They're trapped in their own little world of security.

There is no safe, which creates the challenge of how do we create security right? Because safe is "free and secure from danger, harm, injury, and risk." And it's a metaphysical impossibility. It's a state of being that we can't achieve. What we're left with is security, you see, to be secure is to be "free from anxiety or worry." It's something we create, psychologically secure. It's how we create this that matters. And this fundamentally is the difference between people that are successful and people that aren't. The mechanisms they use to create security.

**Justin [to Mom and Dad]:** As soon as you put safe into a context of time, as soon as time begins to move "safe" is impossible. Because you're always subjected to the potential for change. At every moment there's the potential for change.

**Mom:** Yeah.

**Justin:** So safe is – if time is moving then safe is impossible. But safety – or security is a concept that we create to essentially have the illusion of safety. It creates a functional framework that we can use to get by day to day. So that we're not always thinking about "am I going to get hit by a meteor or an airplane?"

**Dad:** As human beings, as a culture, as a people, human beings are always looking for some kind of order. Because, like you said, it gives us a sense of security. Most people can't embrace chaos. (Laughs) It's like Taoism. It's like, you don't know what it is, you can't measure it, you can't understand it, you can't

even feel it, and yet it nourishes the entire earth and all the ten thousand things.

**Rob:** For me it was basically at somewhere between seventeen and twenty, thinking “ok, I may end up in a muddy ditch with some tropical disease, because of the travel that I’m going to do or the life I’m going to lead, and there’s no security and no I’m not going to work for the electrical company where my father worked or work for the architectural firm where I worked or whatever. That I was going to try to do something else and it was really – it’s so much about a lack of fear. In a way, this is almost cynical, in the way that I learned by making big unrealistic things that weren’t sellable, to making big unrealistic things that people want to buy and show because I’m not making anything with any calculations.

**Justin [to Rob]:** Yeah.

**Rob:** People respond to that. So bravery and lack of fear pays off so hugely.

**Justin:** Oh absolutely.

**Justin [to you]:** I might refine that idea by defining bravery as a willingness to engage that which you are afraid of. So it is not an absence of fear, but a willing engagement with what gives us pause. Risk is a tool commonly used to stimulate growth in Experiential and Adventure Education models. In the risk management talks I give before the climbing classes that I teach I begin with: “climbing is inherently dangerous. If we wanted to avoid risk we would stay home. But we climb because it is risky. Of course it would be easy to go out and get hurt or killed. Obviously we don’t want that to be one of the

outcomes of the day but we have to acknowledge that it could be. Most injuries in climbing come from human error, as opposed to equipment failure or 'bad luck'. We intend to arm you with tools to evaluate inherent risks so that you can actively engage the risks of climbing in a holistic and sustainable way. We are giving you tools to make judgments because at the heart of it, climbing is a judgment based sport."

**Rob:** But to maintain that, you know in the context of the normal world, academia, finance, a family, it is a struggle.

**Justin [to Doug]:** Do you know what I am getting at?

**Doug:** I think there are a few things jumbled in there. If I go back to what humans do in our regular lives, I will say that we are very linear beasts. It is the other reason why non-linear dynamics came late and has been difficult for quite sometime. So what I mean by we are very linear is that we extrapolate in a very direct way based on our past experience. And so we don't anticipate unanticipated outcomes. This is a dumb example, but it is recent. Basically the idea that people have a beach house on the shore and on any given day for many years in a row everything is fine. And then a storm comes, and the storm is "crazy" and it's "terrible" and it's "not right". But what it is, is that we are conditioned not to expect unexpected things.

**Justin:** We operate within a limited time scale. Our scope is kind of tunnel visioned.

**Doug:** Right, so the time scale we are operating within is small, but we also expect things to continue to be as they have been. And the reality of course is that, implicit in that, if you will, is that the parameters don't change. In that

regard, “well if the ocean is not washing over my beach front property for several years in a row” you come to understand that system: “high tide is here, low tide is here, every once in a while we get a spring tide that brings it up to here. And that is the range of tide that is governed by the moon,” and if no big storms come along that is what will happen. That is one set of parameters about what’s controlling the level of the ocean; just the tide controlled from the tug of the moon. So you observe the system and you observe the system where it’s being driven by those parameters, then you don’t expect this other extreme weather parameter. Because we operate within a short time scale, when a storm comes we forget about it again. So it’s a time scale problem. But also, even if people don’t understand how tides work, you see the system has a regularity and so you anticipate that regularity. And that is implicitly assuming that the parameters are not changing. But the parameters do change. When an extreme weather event comes along, the water levels are no longer governed by tide, its still influenced by the tide but if you get a storm surge like in Battery Park- like fourteen feet! I mean the tidal range there is only like five feet. The storm surge is far outweighing the range that you get from tides.

**Preston:** “My car will always work,” or it’s that “my house will not burn down.”

These are small ‘t’ truths that take on large ‘T’ over time. And you have to constantly remember and remind yourself that all of this is temporary. And you have to live in a very Zen mindset of “be here now”. And recognize that if

you want to engage in the world you have to engage with small 't's. Because people cannot-

**Nate:** People can do things that are clearly wrong. And there's really no objective justification at all, but they can come up with one. They can somehow convince themselves by distorting what really happened, so on and so forth, because they have to have that for themselves, even if it's totally made up.

**Justin [to Nate]:** If you think about the soldiers in Nazi Germany who were forced to be a part of the Nazi army and do the things they do. I'm sure it felt like a very valid and justified action, in the course of doing that. I'm sure it wasn't presented like an option to join the army you know? And then the mentality, you either you sink or swim. You know? You either like get used to the new standard – the moral standard – or you fight it and you can't live, because you can't live in that reality unless you accept it.

(Saxophone squeals)

One day they came and took the communists

I said nothing because I was not a communist.

Then one day they came they took people of the Jewish faith

I said nothing because I had no faith, left.

One day they came and they took the Unionists

And I said nothing because I was not a Unionist

One day they burned the Catholic Churches

And I said nothing because I was born a Protestant

Then one day they came and they took me

And I could say nothing because I was as guilty as they were  
For not speaking out and saying that “all men have a right to  
freedom.” (Mingus/Reichman 20:22-21:22)

This poem has been attributed to Martin Niemöller but has been rewritten and adapted for the changing times by many others. This particular version was extracted from Reichman's documentary about Charles Mingus. The scene shows Mingus marching in a protest while he reads his rendition of the poem in an overdub accompanied by his music. I felt it was appropriate to juxtapose the adaptation to societal truths with decisions to stand in opposition based on larger time-scale notions of truth, or “morality”. I can't leave you hanging thinking I would justify the decisions of Nazi soldiers!

**Justin [to Preston]:** So do you see security as also being the other side of being a scapegoat? It's like your get out of jail free card. “Because I'm secure I don't have to do more.”

**Preston:** I know what you mean.

**Justin:** I'll give the bum on the corner like ten bucks and then I feel good about myself but there's still a huge issue of homelessness and poverty – it's like moral security, or something like that.

**Preston:** Yeah, it's that you've reached a place where you're tired of asking “why” all the time. So you come up with some heuristics, some thumb nails to say “this is what this means, this is truth. I can't solve homelessness, but if I give this guy ten bucks, then I can solve his problem and therefore I've contributed and therefore I'm done.” And so yes, you've created this secure sort of mental model, this heuristic, this algorithm to excuse you from having to think about it anymore.



**Nate:** You might have a temporary piece of mind but I don't think in the long run it's going to help you the next time around, when that same scenario comes back up or something similar, you won't be anymore prepared for the next time. You'll just have to have the same automatic reaction. You know? And have to be living in a state a lot of the times where you just refuse to think about certain things. "This is just a little too difficult so I'm going to block that out." Maybe that works for some people but it never really worked for me.

**Preston:** And you see that on every dimension. You see it on the news with right wing folks trying to convince themselves that they were right all along, so they're creating security. You see it with far left liberal sort of folks that are into New Age thinking, they think "if I hold up this crystal" or what ever "all will be good." There's that security as well. It's the magic versus the sophistry. And both are very dangerous. It isn't to say that we shouldn't have magic in our lives. It is to say, that unless we know that that's what we are doing, unless we prescribe intent, that we can lull ourselves into believing that something is certain when it is not, because we don't want to think about it.

**Juliet:** So many ways that you can slip. It's amazing. You just got to get better at knowing how stories play out. Like recently I started working in a restaurant, and I did the training one night. I was looking down the hallway and I was like "I know how this whole thing plays out. There's the guy I'll have a crush on, and it's going to be really bad, but it's going to be really fun at first! But then it's no, no, it gets really bad. And then there's the other girl

who works there, who's sort of a frustrated artist, and me and her are going to be bitching about the other people. This person is going to be my really good friend that I drink with every night." And I just saw the very end of it, instead of these things, and that's the trick to always see "wait a minute, when this has happened eighty times before," you know the first night of work when people are like "don't get sucked into the lifestyle or anything." And you're like "oh I won't."

**Justin [to Juliet]:** I guess the question there is whether or not you want to live out that story or not? Every relationship I've ever gotten into pretty much I've seen the end in the beginning. And I usually convince myself not to pay attention-

**Juliet:** No! All those red flags? (Laughing)

**Justin:** Yeah, "ignore all the red flags. We'll get past it this time!"

**Juliet:** The rose colored glasses. You don't see any – you just see these things waving. You're like "they look good in the yard. That's fine."

**Justin:** But then on the flip side, you don't want to pigeon hold everything to the kind of like-

**Juliet:** I know.

**Justin:** I want to give it the chance.

**Juliet:** But how many times? There's just a suspension of disbelief. When I was younger and things would happen I was like "oh that's really good" and I wouldn't see the other stuff. But now when things like that happen I'm like

“that’s really good but I’ve seen that spider into a whole bunch of things and none of them are good.” It’s like wank spider. (Laughs)

**Justin:** If you just assume that – I don’t know, you can see the patterns in anything, but if you look for the things that actually have changed – I don’t know, it’s weird. It’s hard to say, for example, pretty much everyone in their twenties has some sort of existential crisis.

And then some people continue to have them after their twenties.

Other people hit their thirties and “know” who they are, even though it’s a lie. They just make something up and they stick with that and they’re rigid and they won’t change at all.

Additionally I was trying to communicate that regardless of whether the path you follow conforms to a predictable pattern or phase in human development, I feel like it is critical to own the experience in the ways that are unique to you. In both the reasons you feel compelled to walk that road to all the nuances of how you navigate it. It is a waste to walk a road acting out the predictable role, justifying your actions by the permissions of stereotypes, or limiting yourself by the pigeonhole expectations of your peers. Walk the path boldly for your own reasons, regardless of how generic or unusual it appears to others.

**Juliet:** They’re the worst. They’re like Faberge people.

**Justin:** That’s like ninety percent of the American population.

**Juliet:** And I’m like “I have to deal with you!?”

**Justin:** “That’s what you chose!?”

**Juliet:** Yeah, I know! But sometimes the outside is so sparkly! You know they’re – I always picture this Faberge egg made out of papier-mâché and every piece of paper is a part of themselves that they wanted to have “I’m going to pretend like I’m like this.” They build this whole thing that from far away you’re like

“it’s magnificent!” And then you get up close and you see that it’s bullshit. And they’re like “shit. Sorry.” And they know it too!

**Justin:** “I’m only a year and half into this, wait until it becomes real I’m still faking it.”

**Juliet:** Yeah, yeah totally! Totally!

**Justin:** I mean I’m guilty of that too. I’ve had all these little things that – I was all like “that’s really cool, I want to do this and that. I want to be a writer.” You know? I don’t know. That’s why I hate valuing people based on what they’ve done. Who gives a shit about what a person’s done?

**Justin [to you]:** It’s more important to me that they are driven to do anything at all.

**Juliet:** I think it’s this weird kind of like prejudice against people, and you get it a lot in New York. When you go to a party and people ask you what you do and if you’re just like “whatever I’m just living my life.” They’re like “Arrr, that’s a shitty resume! I’m doing blah a blah a blah!” “Oh god, I don’t want to deal with this.” That’s Faberge. And like inside the Faberge egg is like the Silence of the Lambs hole with a small ledge; and there’s that moment that you’re still on the ledge and they’re like “you’ve seen the truth,” and they throw you in the hole and they’re like “time for another one!”

**Justin and Juliet:** (Laughing)

PODCAST: ACT TWO PART TWO

**Justin [to you]:** Welcome back to *[t]he Guide's Role* mini series podcast. This is part two of act two. We are continuing our conversation with Doug Jerolmack, discussing the reductionist paradigm, friction and noise, truth, and methodology.

**Doug:** I do want to put a positive spin on things in that, you can think about, yes, our description of the world in words is constrained by the words we've created to describe the world and our description of the world in mathematics is constrained by the variables that we know of and believe to be important. That does mean that our ability to probe and understand the world around us is limited by the languages we create, but the positive side is that the mathematical language and our verbal language are evolving all the time to account for new situations. One thing I want to make positive is that the beauty about mathematics is that it works. On the one hand our ability to predict something based on a mathematical model is limited to the parameters we put into it, but on the other hand very very many discoveries have been discoveries predicted by mathematical equations before we ever observed them. Now the apparent discovery of the Higgs Boson, with much celebrated result, is something that – this framework that we've built with the parameters that go into it predicted the existence of a particle that endows other particles with mass! And this was a totally wild thing, it's mind bending to think about and I don't pretend to understand high-energy particle physics enough to know the physical significance of this. But the

point is that this was fifty years ago almost that the existence of a particle was postulated, and now tens of billions of dollars and fifty years later we found this thing!

**Justin [to Doug]:** Can I throw in? I, I agree, I see the positive, I'm "on board" but, I just want to pose the Devil's advocate. And this could seem completely left field. But this idea "does it exist because we believed it?" You know? How do I frame that well? "We predicted it before it was discovered." If you stretch the imagination of how the world might exist. And think in terms of a consciousness or an unconscious process that creates what we see; if the world exists because we see it, or because we believe we see it; or we perceive it. Cannot also the discoveries that constantly change and evolve, and our new discoveries be defined by the very imagination or beliefs that are inputted into the process? Like I said this maybe very left field – the idea doesn't do much for our day to day or our approach to science or math or anything like that, but in an abstract philosophical perspective it could easily be seen in that way, couldn't it?

**Doug:** Well, you know, you are asking a hard scientist.

**Justin:** (Laughing)

**Doug:** My answer is a direct 'no'. What I mean by that is just that there are very many people including very smart deeply theoretical people who know much more than I do that – the one take on this is the Multiverse Theory. And it's actually a theory, it's not just a hypothesis. You can read the set of equations that describe the growth and expansion of the Universe and the behavior of

particles within it permitting multiple solutions, and the solution that we have is just one of them. That has more to do with that we have statistical distributions of the variables that can exist and our Universe is one populated by certain initial conditions where within that distribution for each variable we started with one out of those distribution of possible values for each initial condition and there are other universes that we have no access to. That's sort of mind bending and I can't even pretend to begin to understand the physics enough – I'm not equipped to make a judgment whether I believe that or not. But the equations permit it. And I think in that sense I can believe that there is an outcome like the Higgs Boson existing in the mass that it does that we've observed that could be different in another universe. But I do NOT believe that we could by hypothesizing the existence of the Higgs Boson bring it into existence. And the reason why I say that is if you believe in science and the scientific method there is no room to permit that solution. In other words that "we've brought something into existence."

**Justin:** Essentially it disrupts the whole process. It doesn't have a constructive outcome. So even if you could humor the idea it's not useful in an applicable sense.

**Doug:** It's not only not useful – I guess I am saying it's "anti-scientific" to be blunt about it.

**Justin:** Sure.

**Doug:** Which is fine for you, what I mean is it's not that people that are not scientists don't – we have the Scientific Method as our Bible. This is the set of rules by

which you set about discovering knowledge. A lot of people don't pay any heed to that at all, which is why they take belief over *fact* even when there is overwhelming evidence. The reason why I think that science stands on firmer ground and why I would take this angle is we have many other belief systems – and this will sound like a real hard nosed scientist – but our other belief systems – you could create mass hallucinations, but as far as I know, they do not make specific testable, quantifiable predictions that are validated. So it isn't that any one scientist is not subject to error and wrong but science is the only process that I know of that makes inexorable forward quantitative progress in our understanding of the world. If you believe in that then you believe in the tenets of science that underlie it that then say that we cannot bring certain things into existence. I know that there's the quantum level idea that I can influence the behavior of a system by measuring that system but even that, you need to understand a little of the physics, but that is different from creating a particle. The measurement that we take influencing the behavior of the system is not the creation of something that wasn't there. It's a subtle but important distinction.

**Justin:** Sure, but you could easily humor that it's not useful currently because there's not research behind it, there's not enough indication to warrant an actual inquiry into this – but what all these systems stir up in my mind is this idea that one small thing, or a collection of things can have influence over something larger. Influence can result in outcomes that potentially break the perceived framework that we are looking through. So, yes through the



quantum we only influence, we don't create but could there be a cascade of – I mean it would be so complicated to model, to even follow this train of thought, even if it were true and you followed this train of thought it would take so long to try to prove in the scientific way that of course it's not going to be humored. I just don't see it as implicitly non-scientific, it's just so far outside of the scope of how science – I mean it doesn't have to be. You know what I mean?

**Doug:** Well it's not – it is non-scientific though. I'm not saying you are full of crap, what I am saying is what you are talking about is non-scientific. It could be philosophy-

**Justin:** According to the set – what we have discovered so far.

**Doug:** No, not just discovered, I am talking about the whole way in which we go about discovering. You don't need to subscribe to how science has done-

**Justin:** How I have postulated the idea is non-scientific, inherently.

**Doug:** Yes.

**Justin:** Ok, I agree with that. Because I am not a scientist. Ha ha.

**Doug:** One important thing – I am always going to be technical here, to connect this with the earlier part of the conversation, one really important thing here is that all the stuff about the Higgs Boson, particle physics, the standard model of physics and the basic fundamental forces are fundamentally non-chaotic. The math is far more complicated than I could ever hope to grasp, these people who work on the theory are – they are mathematicians basically, they're studying physics problems, but they are mathematicians. And they've

had to invent a lot of math along the way to do this. However, if you go back, you look at the experiments that we've set up to validate – going back to Einstein's General Relativity, we spend billions and billions and billions of more dollars, we validate predictions to like ridiculous precision; we predict the existence of a particle that has to have very specific properties of mass, spin, whatever and it's there. It's remarkable. We cannot do that with weather for example. We can't even do it with the simple problem of sediment transport, particles moving at the bottom of a stream. And so, to me, not to move completely away from your divergent philosophical point, but just to bring it back; but it is related; it seems unlikely that there would be a cascading effect from our influence that would radically transform things because these systems, even the mathematics that describe them, are not chaotic. And the outcomes are not chaotic, they are the opposite. In this regard, at a fundamental particle level the systems appear to be extraordinarily well behaved, which is interesting. That doesn't mean they are not complicated; the math for these systems is as complicated as it gets. But what is shocking is the level of predictability that one can have, which tells you that there's something restorative here; these are systems that appear to have more linear and more restorative type conditions. Whereas in the simplest Chaotic System we cannot predict any level of precision: how the system is going to behave. So it sort of tells you that there's something robust in the quantum world and the description of fundamental particles, at least as we understand the physics, that is not there for Chaotic Systems.

**Justin:** The part that is unsettling for me in that, and obviously I would need to go to school to become a scientist to even attempt to resolve what urks me about all of this, is time scale, that really drives me nuts. I can't help but think, sure we work within these parameters, but think really big, or think really small and how does that change what we are looking at, at all? I just see infinite variables, even the tenets of science that we've known and shown consecutively, we have confidence in their *truth*; I'd be interested in seeing how those things looked a billion years from now. The second piece that kind of bothers me is: we talk about deterministic systems; we talk about linear systems; we talk about non-linear systems; and we talk about non-deterministic systems, right? But it's all within the known physical universe that we are describing. It's hard for me to separate – ok now we are talking about a Chaotic System, and now we are talking about a Classically Deterministic Linear System.

**Doug:** Yeah, yeah, but that zoology has more to do with the physics that describes it. And what I mean is that there's a little more comfort there – so it's true, nature doesn't know anything about, you know, deterministic and non-deterministic, linear and non-linear – I mean the difference between non-linear and linear is explicitly whether the equation has a relation among variables that is not linear. I mean it is very precisely defined. But you arrive at that from physics. And physics in the end, at least classical physics – I'm not going to talk about quantum physics, I mean something can fit into non-linear dynamics and still be classical physics in that you are solving force

balances. From the perspective of classical physics you look for a force balance. You imagine you want to describe the dynamics, the time varying behavior of some process. So you look at the forces at play and you write down a set of equations that describe the balance of those forces. It's not crystal clear for some systems but there is a very good formalism for this approach for a lot of systems. And when you do that you can derive – in other words the equations that come out are equations that are actually derived; somebody didn't guess "this should be a non-linear equation".

People sat down and considered the physics, wrote down a set of equations and you recognize that when the equation has a strong non-linearity in it, it produces a very different behavior. The discovery of interesting non-linear systems was fairly recent but I will say that already between the 1960's, when Edward Lorenz proposed his deterministic non-periodic flow, and now, non-linear dynamics has just now become a mathematical physical framework for approaching a set of problems. It's evolved into the mainstream in that we now understand that when we derive an equation that has a character that is something like this, we know that it will then have these properties of sensitivity to initial conditions and  $x, y$  and  $z$ . Some people are limited in their view, so they will look at the world and a priori try to break it into categories. But from a basic physics perspective it's true that nature itself doesn't know anything about these distinctions and even the physics;

**Justin [to you]:** To clarify the ideas I was proposing to Doug and how this discussion ties into the wider conversation of *[t]he Guide's Role* I'll interject. "Nature" and the physical Universal, and non-physical Universal, is to me a/the Gracious Beast. The Gracious Beast, does not have a preference as to which framework or values we pose against it to describe it and thus understand and perhaps harness it. In my yammering about "belief is form" or the influence of the observer I was suggesting two ideas. One, that the method frames the results. Which Doug spoke to in Act Two Part One. And two, that belief manipulates reality. The second is a tricky statement because we have a myriad of assumptions of what "belief", "manipulation", and "reality" mean. But if one humors the idea that a "church" of belief – say the entire human race and all the plants, animals, rocks, air, and thoughts, believe that they are what they are, then of course the manifestation will appear predominately linear. Because as we have agreed, with people at least, we are linear beasts. But if by a smaller, but large enough belief system, we could continue to "change" reality, just as we may be doing every waking and sleeping moment, say by fifty years of research and billions and billions and billions of dollars plus the thousands of years of research leading up to that discovery, is it implausible that we've manifested that discovery? I am not suggesting this to be truth. It is simply another perspective that accounts for and allows every other major shift in how reality has been described: from early magic to the miracles of religions, to the dominance of the scientific world. The reason I offer this alternative is simply because I feel it

is a trapping to attempt to explain new things from the limits of “proven” or established methods. This suffers from many of the challenges of using religious text to prove to a non-believer that there is a God. “I can prove God exists, it says it right here in the Bible.”

No theory ever agrees with all the facts in its domain, yet it is not always the theory that is to blame. Facts are constituted by older ideologies, and a clash between facts and theories may be proof of progress. (Feyerabend, *Against Method* 33)

**Doug:** If you go down to the level where you actually can understand what the forces at play are, the physics don’t know anything about linear or non-linear, deterministic or non-deterministic either, but when you derive an equation or set of equations to describe it you can say “ohp, this equation right here is unstable.” I mean I can show that it has instabilities in it. “This equation right here is strongly dissipative so it’s going to be restorative.” I know this, like a diffusion equation, diffusion smooths things out. If you have a diffusion equation – if you do the physics and you write it all out and you derive in the end that the dynamics of some system are described by a diffusion equation it’s going to be a very simple predictable system, because diffusion smooths things out. If you introduce a protobation, diffusion wipes it all away, that’s what diffusion does. It’s an examination of the equations that describe the behavior of some system that can tell you whether it will behave in some way or another way.

**Justin:** Yeah, which is obvious because it is constructive in that way, but again it is applying a framework to something that just exists. Which is essential to understand it. It is mildly reductive but-

**Doug:** Well it's science. In the end-

**Justin:** I'm not knocking the usefulness of categorizing things, it's obviously essential for *us* to function, otherwise what would life look like if there was no attempt at trying to have an order about things? It's obviously useful, it's the way humans behave. Or it's the way that everything seems to behave. Even, yeah, it's the way everything seems to behave. At least at the scale that we are perceiving things. So I'm fine with that but I guess those questions for me just raise these larger scale philosophical ramblings based on the little information that I have gathered over the last six months.

**Preston:** So Kahlil Gibran who wrote the Prophet,

**Justin [to Preston]:** Yeah.

**Preston:** he wrote "say not that I have the Truth, but that I have a truth."

**Justin:** Ok.

**Preston:** So part of it is the recognition of deep humility, part of it is recognizing that I can certainly arrive at my own truths, but they are not tall 'T' truths, big 'T' truths, capital 'T' truths. They are truths for me for right now. And as long as I can stay there I'm fine. Now with that said there are some moral absolutes: you don't get to beat your wife, you don't get to abuse your children, you don't get to rape people or kill people. There are some core absolute truths that if you want to be in my company, that if you want to

associate with me, these are things you need to understand. I don't have a lot of them, but the ones I do have are for real.

**Aidan:** ...like if a Shaman – let's say there are two Shamans who had two different Rites of Passage, and they're both giving different truths to different other people-

**Rob:** Then those two different cultural identities could be at war with each other-

**Aidan:** Well, or, I would say through this philosophy, they're not at war with each other, it's almost a Ying and Yang thing.

**Justin [to Aidan and Rob]:** Or it's an accepted – so this happens a lot, there's – during Initiation the Elders give information to the Initiates, and the Initiates also receive information from Spirit Guides – and obviously this is one form of Initiation – and then there's a period of Disenchantment, but truth is never questioned. It's not like what we're accustomed to in education in the states-

**Rob:** Your talking about shamanistic societies?-

**Justin [to you]:** I'm potentially talking about a fictitious society. I admit a certain idolizing of the so-called Noble Savage. But while it's important to understand that while I'm guilty of this, the image I manufacture is not to assume or insist a way of being that I would later define as authentic; rather that I am describing an ideal for the sake of permitting a progression of thought. I will talk later about the problems of manufacturing an "authentic" model.



**Justin [to Rob and Aidan]:** Yeah, so truth, if you had a vision, and you had a truth that was spoken to you in a vision there'd be a conversation about it but there wouldn't be questioning as to whether or not that was true.

**Rob:** Or valid.

**Justin:** They'd be like "that is true! Yes you're right that is true."

**Aidan:** I guess I'm getting at the difference between truth and validity, but what I am questioning is the validity of the "calling". In this philosophy it seems that callings are just part of an overall truth. And that multiple callings are not at war but are together as in-

**Justin:** Yeah I think this is what – and my personal take on it is there is no truth.

**Aidan:** Right.

**Justin:** That's how I resolve it. Or there's no "ultimate truth".

**Aidan:** Just multiplicities.

**Justin:** Just that everything is true. It's kind of how – more of how I approach it.

And obviously there are things that function much better within a collective perception, in a society, in a church of belief – I mean to be functional, to be happy, or to even continue to live there are truths that we abide by in order

I am compelled to reiterate or clarify if I had not be clear enough or if enough pages and thus time has passed that the reader may have forgotten or misinterpreted: I do not believe in "truth" as a static or ultimate thing in any manifestation. Even if it is infinite it is not all encompassing. Thus when I speak of truths I am always speaking of assumptions, or strong beliefs that sometimes create action and form. In this particular example I am speaking of the rules of morality that a vast number of citizens live by and take for granted everyday.

to function. You know? But also the pushing against and what Rob was talking about with me a couple days ago: being feral and pushing, and having

unconventional ideas, with unconventional approaches, pushes the society in large in a new direction-

**Rob:** It creates openness.

**Justin:** That's important too, but I don't feel like even that the ground that we're standing on is necessarily there it's just the church of belief that we function within.

**Aidan:** Totally.

**Justin:** You know? So, when there is a person within a society who has a new vision or perceives a new truth – my understanding of how a lot of these cultures deal with that is they recognize that there is this waking reality that we have and then there's all the other realities that are potential and that the power of the Shaman or the Boundary-Man is that they can coexist within both worlds. They're invested in both worlds and for them it's not divided the way we tend to polarize things or categorize things in this culture. To them they exist in all of these places but they can do it functionally. Even though they are on the brink of being a madman all the time, they hold it together enough to make it useful for other people so that culture can move forward. Because they have access to –

**Rob:** New ways of looking at things.

**Justin:** Exactly. So they're the vehicle that keeps stagnation from happening. In our culture I see that as the artist, and I see that as the educator, and I see that as, you know, even the scientist that's doing the most –

**Rob:** cutting edge research. Or it's the therapist, yeah a lot of different people, or just the grandmother who's taking care of kids because her daughter's on crack.

**Justin:** Or even a mountain guide, even a person that likes to skydive, that can fit right in there too.

**Justin [to Preston]:** So the small 't' and the big 'T', I think even the examples you gave of the big 'T's, they are big 'T's because it is an agreed upon moral standard of a large majority of the human race.

**Preston:** Yes.

**Justin:** And it's not even all, but most people.

**Preston:** Yup.

**Justin:** It's what we see as humanity. But if that were to change... it gets me thinking about belief systems, our whole perspective of reality is functioned around not only personal belief but obviously community belief. And that then ties back to the change that we're willing or unwilling to have or engage in, even death is a form of change. Obviously most people are unwilling to engage that as a potential risk, or a potential direction within risk.

**Justin [to Doug]:** I mean it's useful for me to come back to you and bring it up.

**Doug:** It sounds like, you can correct me if I am wrong, but it sounds to me – actually it sounds more like not even Chaos in particular but that it's a first confrontation with the division between scientific thinking and other ways of thinking. Because some of the things you are describing to me now that we

are getting into are not specific to Chaos or non-linear dynamics, but they are sort of the challenge of –

**Justin:** Well I think that is what Chaos offered to me; it provided me a potential window to look at a model of thinking and how even within that model of thinking there's been challenges that create new ways of thinking within its own model. It's still using the basic tenets, it's using the same framework right? But it's raising these alarming questions that revolutionize the way that we think about the natural world.

**Doug:** I guess my point there is, just that the discovery of Chaotic Systems does not mean “maybe we got everything wrong.” In the sense that you get in your car and it goes, and we send rockets to Mars, and we have lasers that play CD's. In other words, what it means is that there are a whole range of systems that were frustratingly stubborn in our ability to predict them, where the reductionist approach didn't work. From the science perspective what Chaos offered was a potential gateway to understanding why a whole class of systems we already knew to be unpredictable might be inherently unpredictable; meaning that it isn't just that we haven't uncovered the physics yet, it's that understanding the physics tells us that these systems are inherently unpredictable. And this is why it doesn't cascade into things like Quantum Physics. There is a standard model which is working ridiculously well, and it's being confronted now in a way with dark energy and dark matter and we'd better find them, because if we don't – well those things needed to be invented to make the standard model account for the rate or

acceleration of the expansion of the universe. If we don't find them it will mean that the model has some BIG problems with it. But things like Chaos don't cascade back into those other systems. Because those other systems are systems where the mathematical framework that we have is working exceedingly well. It's making predictions about things we haven't observed yet, and we go out and observe them and they are there. But it describes satisfying descriptions of why other – even seemingly simple systems have been so stubborn to any kind of prediction at all. I mean I'm agreeing with you that nature doesn't know anything about categories, and I'm offering that to you to say that you can't decide “well maybe the whole world and the Universe and everything describing the laws of nature are Chaotic and we've got it all wrong.”

**Justin:** Oh no, I'm not, I'm not suggesting that, I'm not. How I see it more is that as we find new discoveries about how the world or the Universe works we identify a category that works for a large kingdom of that field of thought. One of them being a Chaotic System, and that to me makes sense; I'm not riding the teenage existential impulse to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Obviously we have things that work really effectively; what I am thinking about in a more metaphysical way is “how do those things impact us on a societal level? How does this framework of thinking that's very – the classical approach, the deterministic and linear approach that we use on a daily basis – it's obvious how it influences us negatively, you think about

global warming and stuff like that or your description of Hurricane Sandy.  
Right?

**Justin [to you]:** I would expand on this course of thought and talk again about moral heuristics: not taking responsibility for the impacts of our daily choices, including me using this laptop that contains toxic plastics, and precious metals mined from horrific war-torn African mining operations; that everything I eat, wear, drive, and entertain myself with comes at the expense of others. Yet I live day-to-day thinking that I am doing something “good” with my life.

**Justin [to Doug]:** People live their daily life and assume they are safe, which is something I wanted to talk about before; it ties in with what our assumption of what “safe” is. On a practical day-to-day level you can define something as “safe”. Of course there is always that off chance that a meteor could fly down and crush you in your house, all cozy and warm, or the block could catch on fire. There’s always that ‘what if?’; but it doesn’t really help to be factored into the day-to-day. But then I wonder how having that closed perspective, when it is assumed rather than a choice – for example when a person has a little bit of scientific knowledge say from their high school or undergraduate education, and that’s their doctrine, and they limit themselves from imaginative thought or a different perspective, you know what I mean? For me it makes me wonder, how does that impact everything that we do? Because we are going to use that same approach in everything. It’s only people in your [Doug] position who are continuing the research, trying to

look for new things, trying to understand the systems that exist and expand your thought. You are in an expansive mindset within a scientific framework; you are thinking about change, you are thinking about expansion; and it feels like a large percentage of people aren't in that role where they have expansive thought within their framework. They might not even acknowledge what their framework is.

**Doug:** Obviously there is a great pragmatic advantage for not challenging the rules that govern your life and believing that there is a limited range of possibilities. It sort of allows you to get up in the morning and go to work and not wonder, at least not every single day, "why am I doing this?" and "what does it all mean?"

**Justin [Raphael]:** Uh, I think that, for a lot of people, I think that for their own feeling of safety, they're own sense of security, people like the idea that truth can be singular – or that truth is singular and that truth is static.

**Raphael:** Mm hmm.

**Justin:** That um, for example once a thing happens it doesn't change. Or if there's a way that has been proven to be true, that that is always the way it will be.

**Raphael:** Yeah.

**Justin [Mom and Dad]:** You know looking at indigenous cultures for example, like the idea of the word research is very disempowering and destructive to an indigenous

I gathered this idea from the first pages of Linda T. Smith's book *Decolonizing Methodologies*. What I read spoke to me as it seemed to echo the idea that assumptions in method significantly impact the outcomes of inquiry. In this case it also reveals (or implies) a power dynamic inherent to the origins and/or perpetuation of presupposed perspectives and method.

culture because it's suggesting that you can go and look at something in history and say "that is how it is, was, and always will be. That's how it happened." Whereas, in a lot of cultures, the process of story telling allows a story in the past to change with the times in the modern context.

**Mom:** Right.

**Justin:** I think that something we miss in our approach to learning and understanding truth in a western context is that we even think that we can look back at the past and say "that's how it was." And we don't recognize that we're using our modern lens. Our perspective now is influencing what we saw then and we can't truly understand things within the context of what it was.

**Justin [to you]:** To interject, it might be fine that each time we look at the past it is colored by our present perspective. If we admit to our subjective influence at least we'd be intentional with the changes we make to our presumed truths, and maybe we wouldn't be so adamantly bound to them.

**Justin [to Raphael]:** And I think that those thoughts don't allow for the new things to happen, you know within, learning.

**Dad:** I think, this is the point that Shoko [my mom] was getting to is in this new understanding, this new concept that we have, of order, it has to do with *what works?* The old systems don't work. The old religions don't work. Everybody can see that, but they don't know what to do about it. They're afraid to abandon that because they think that chaos is waiting for them on the other side, or the devil, or whatever, but you know, it's a matter of human



beings... I want to say “common sense”? Is it common sense that we’re moving towards?

It’s interesting that my father made this generalization about how obvious it is that the old religions have lost their effectiveness. Both he and my mother were devout Christians before my birth and during much of my adolescence. It took many years of introspective work, disenchantment, and discovery to move beyond this church of thought. What I do think is very valuable about what he is saying is in the description of a transition of epochs, that space of uncertainty between absolutes. From disorganized “magic” based systems, to polytheistic religions, to monotheistic ones, to scientific models... Despite how you might describe the epochs of human evolution, what my dad is describing in terms of the space between is interesting to me; the language he uses to describe what we may be approaching.

**Justin:** I don’t know that it’s common sense at all, because that’s defined by what we learn, what’s common, and “sensible”. You know “common sense” is pretty ridiculous. Like people say “it’s common sense that you should let your kid eat some cake.”

**Mom:** (Laughs)

**Justin:** You know? I don’t know. You know what I mean? I think that it’s like more – what you’re saying right now makes me think about just all the religious leaders in their times and all the great minds within religion, within science, and whatever magical arts. So if you take somebody like Jesus, you take somebody like Rudolf Steiner, you take the Buddha, you take Albert Einstein, or Carl Sagan.

**Justin [to Rob]:** And then when we were talking about religion last night as well. Just the notion that most religious leaders – and we were talking about Jesus at the time – probably didn’t want things to be as static they have become.

**Rob:** Yeah. Or semi-static.

**Justin:** Or even to have progressed in the dogmatic way that they have.

**Rob:** Yeah.

**Justin [to Mom and Dad]:** You know it's the same thing as Moses and the Ten Commandments at least the way that you guys told me about it when I was growing up, that the people wanted some kind of uh-

**Dad:** Yeah, they wanted the rules.

**Justin:** They wanted rules because they were too afraid to speak to God directly and Moses was like "uh that's... I can't do that. Alright I'll go up and see." And God was like "well here's ten impossible rules that

**Dad:** (Laughing)

**Justin:** that nobody's going to be able to follow. If they really want it." It's kind of this sarcastic like "well screw you!"

**Dad:** You think God was laughing when we gave the Ten Commandments?

**Mom:** Yeah, second best.

**Rob:** Yeah, religion is so funky. But there's so many good kernels of stuff. I mean you and I both as teens went into.

**Justin [to Rob]:** Yeah.

**Rob:** I went into Eastern and Western Philosophies and stuff like that, it's a great great way to start understanding things but it can be the stopper that makes the sink overflow instead of letting the water flow too.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Rob:** Outside imposed institutional parameters, they can give you an infrastructure but they can be the death mill of creativity and evolution and things we're

talking about. They can make you static, or they can limit, they can limit the path.

**Justin [Juliet]:** When you take a great mind, Plato, I've been looking at Plato recently, and then, you look at him, if you just stop there and stagnate with that idea – you're like "well that's the answer!"

**Juliet:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Then you're fucked.

**Juliet:** Then you're a fool!

**Justin:** It just doesn't go anywhere, what's the point?

**Justin [to Rob]:** Even alternatives, once people fixate on one thing and think that they've achieved anything, once they feel like they've arrived, I feel like people die.

**Rob:** Yeah.

**Justin:** You're dead like the moment that you don't start –

**Rob:** I agree with that.

**Justin:** thinking that you're an infant or challenging yourself in some way. You know?

**Justin [to Tino and Julie]:** I don't ever want to get to a point where I say something and I think that it's absolute truth or it's the right way. I'm not going to propose a philosophy and say "this is the correct way to be."

**Justin [to Raphael]:** It's at least important – it's an important concept to return to remember to be humble and open.

**Raphael:** Yeah. Yeah, definitely.

**Justin:** Even if you're a scientist, you know, discovering great new things, having really blissed out experiences doing lab experiments and what not. That's totally a legitimate and meaningful practice but then to step back once in a while and realize that it's just as unimportant as anything else. The things you are discovering are just as assumptive as a daydream that a child might have or the thoughts of a dog running around – you know, of how the dog perceives reality. You know?

**Raphael:** Yeah.

I found the following quote on the wall of Raphael's apartment bathroom. It was written over an iconic image of Einstein sitting. It resonates with me, within this Act of the podcast: the most celebrated scientist in history speaking of the soul, the ego, and compassion.

A human being is part of a whole, called by us 'universe', a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest... a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affections for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. (Einstein)

PODCAST: ACT THREE

**Justin [to you]:** Act Three. Looking at framework, Rites of Passage, the Liminal and the Liminoid. Is this applicable in the modern context? What is applicable? Finally looking at the Initiate and what that is.

**Justin [to Mom and Dad]:** On the flip side I think that framework is super critical to facilitate change. And framework is really specific because it can often become a prison and a cage, but there is a way of creating it – as long as you know that the framework can change at some point as well.

**Tina:** In order to give it the freedom to be able to go to the place it needs to go we need to put a frame around it and a lot of people don't understand that.

**Justin [to Tina]:** Yeah.

**Tina:** And they get really mad and it's like "show me your degree from NYU. I don't see it."

**Justin:** (Laughing)

**Tina:** And I'm like "well it's stuffed up my ass right now, so you'll have to look at it later." And I'm not trying to be pejorative about it or whatever, but I don't come to the work from that-

**Justin:** Actually that's beautiful what you're saying because shamanic ritual is based around a pretty well defined framework. Really specific stages of initiation, specific players within that, but then the specific actors or participants of the said ritual bring their own expression to it. And not only they're own expression but they change the rules within it. But the framework

Based on the research of Eliade, Van Gennep, Harner, amongst other scholars of Shamanism, in her MA thesis *Puberty Transition Acknowledgement in United States Anglo Culture*, Meghan Skelding outlined the common components of Rites of Passage that she felt facilitated meaningful change. Expanding the elements beyond the few that Van Gennep describe in *Rites of Passage* she explores ways in which traditionally perceived tribal rituals can be adopted in a Western Culture to facilitate meaningful change in what would otherwise present as “risky-teen behavior” or “Unconscious Ceremony”. I resonated with her outline and reference these aspects of ritual multiple times through this podcast.

**Tina:** stays,

**Justin:** remains strong. It’s amazing how varied – it has to be, it has to be able to live and breathe otherwise it’s not going to provide the change.

**Tina:** Yes exactly.

**Justin:** But without the framework –

**Tina:** without the structure it can’t be authentic.

**Justin:** Well you can’t even define what change is going to be. You know? Because really every – well my feeling is that everything is a construct of our beliefs and we create the framework already, so unless you define the framework you can’t –

**Tina:** You can’t nab the belief! Right exactly, no definitely it’s got to have a frame, and that’s where a lot of stuff goes off I think; it’s like either somebody doesn’t want to put the framework forward or they haven’t figured out what framework they’re working with, or they are just afraid to do that for fear that it will just set it, when it actually sets it free.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Tina:** But, you know.

**Justin:** And then people have illusions of what framework is. You know, they assume that it's "nine to five", it's like "democrats and republicans", they're like "this is how the world is." But there's a whole other underlying framework that we could define and easily manipulate change from that perspective.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** Actually what you said, "meaningful change", "pain", right? It is – alright, this is one framework that I read from an anthropologist that was writing about Rites of Passage... Skelding. Meghan Skelding. She said like, the components, and this is from memory so I'm not going to get them all but: Elders, and Community, and Separation from Community,

**Juliet:** That's the fucking worst!

**Justin:** Sacred Space, and then Ordeal, which could be pain,

**Juliet:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Ritual Death,

**Juliet:** You could have that everyday

**Justin:** Dismemberment,

**Raphael:** But in the beginning and sometimes years later there is a process of death and rebirth, when the Initiate will have to – will usually go through a type of experience, sometimes in a journey. In traditional cultures years and years ago, it usually started with fasting. You know, they'd go out for days to learn from the spirits and this is where the source of power comes in because when the Shaman – or student begins, he or she just knows that he has the help of the spirits of the guides; but in the process of death and rebirth

there's kind of a lengthy experience of letting go of the body. And very often in a journey or a vision, the Initiate has an experience and sometimes a real experience of dying. And visually – in a journey or vision however a person can have – some may be engulfed in flames. They consume the entire body down to bones. And then the power of the spirits is granted to the student.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** Um.

**Juliet:** Psychological Dismemberment.

**Justin:** Um New Lessons,

**Raphael:** The beginning of the process is getting in touch, as you know, with one's power animal. In addition to that, the process of death, the students gets in tune with various other spirits. In years and years ago it was getting in touch in particular with the spirits of the plants of different kinds. Because of illnesses and being wounded, it would help getting in touch with the spirits of the plants.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** Disenchantment, where you question all the lessons. After Disenchantment is Reintegration into Community: Reemergence.

**Juliet:** Which can be cathartic. You're like "I thought you guys all forgot about me." And they're like "where have you been?" Or they're like "oh great, she's back to talk about this shit again!"

**Justin:** (Laughing)

**Juliet:** "FUCK!"

**Justin:** So, I see all those components being necessary – if you don't have some aspect of those things –



**Juliet:** you don't have a story.

**Justin:** Well, I don't think the change is lasting. You know? You could entertain a person really well. You might blow their minds for an evening.

**Juliet:** But that's – it's one thing to be amazing from twelve feet away but –

**Justin [to Tina]:** But what you just said now about impacting the audience through, not only – taking them out of their norm. Taking them out of their comfort zone a little bit and to potentially, and without putting words in your mouth, bring them to a space of growth?

I am referencing a commonly used model called "Growth Circles" or "Growth Zones" to describe the effectiveness of challenge and risk during learning. In her short web publication "Journey Towards the Caring Classroom" L. Frank presents the idea of the "comfort circle", the "growth circle", and the "panic circle"; these subjective zones in which a student is respectively underwhelmed, appropriately challenged to stimulate learning and change, and over stimulated to the point that they are unable to learn and negative gains result.

**Tina:** Yeah.

**Justin:** That's common in a lot of experiential education kind of stuff, that's a model.

And the few things that I read in theatre – I was reading Artaud, I was reading Schechner and Turner; they talk about theatre as a form of ritual to elicit a liminal experience that would potentially, if done correctly, could actually bring a person into a state of lasting change. And if it wasn't done correctly it wouldn't be lasting change but there would be a moment of change.

Without a ritual to contain and inform the wounds of life, pain and suffering increase, yet meaningful change doesn't occur (Meade xxii).

**Justin [to Paul]:** There's something I read in a lot of theatre writing, you can have an experience that actually has lasting change and that's called a Liminal Experience. And then there's a term coined, called Liminoid (Turner 33).

The term "liminal" was coined by Arnold Van Gennep in describing the space between a Neophyte's (Initiate's) role within a culture during a "rite of passage". Victor Turner applied the word to his work with ritual in theatre and created the word 'liminoid' to describe a similar transitional space, but one that does not result in lasting change. What I am describing is certainly a simplification of these authors' definitions. For a more thorough understanding I do suggest the source material: *Rites of Passage* and *From Ritual to Theatre: the Seriousness of Human Play*.

Imagine you go to the movie theatre and you see a movie and it really impacts you and you come out and you feel different.

**Paul:** Sure.

**Justin:** And you engage your world differently. But then a day later you're back to normal Paul again, that's considered a Liminoid Experience.

**Paul:** Oh.

**Justin:** Because you didn't really gain anything. You just had an intense experience.

Whereas there's other experiences like – like when Todd Skinner died because his belay loop broke.

As I am using the terms liminal and liminoid I am really describing more of the ordeal or "critical incidents" that steer a person towards temporary or lasting change. Despite my misuse of these words in conversation with Paul, the query posed is important: what creates a lasting change versus a temporary one?

**Paul:** Mm hmm.

**Justin:** That was a small liminal experience

for me, because from that moment on I always bought new gear.

**Paul:** Sure.

**Justin:** And I made the decision "my life is more valuable than any amount of money I spend on gear."

**Paul:** Yes (laughing) yes.

**Justin:** I'm not going to be a dirt-bag anymore. At all! I don't believe in being a dirt-bag.

**Juliet:** I think that's the thing with pain though, lasting change only comes about with a significant amount of pain. And I think that what we were talking about, pretending to like somebody more than you do, you kind of have this fake cross to bear that looks heavier than it is. And so then you're like "oh this will give me some lasting change!" This is going to give me that rush, that epiphany or whatever, but really it's just bullshit.

**Justin:** But really you got to actually go in there, and actually fall in love and really get your heart broken.

**Juliet:** Oh my god!

**Justin:** You really get your heart broken, then you're like:

**Juliet:** I know!

**Justin:** "Fuck!" For like a year. "Fuck."

**Juliet:** You just want it to end!

**Justin:** Everyday you wake up and you're like "no! Not another wasted day!  
Another one."

**Juliet:** It's hell on earth.

**Raphael:** So many of us, and many practitioners of shamanism in the past, have identified with the pain, in one sense or another. And Eckhart Tolle speaks about this. Spiritual practitioners of all kind really have adopted some story for the identity, because the person believes that this is who they are.

**Justin [to Raphael]:** Yeah, it's the Wounded Healer.

**Raphael:** Yes.

**Justin:** The pain defines the experience. It's actually a pre-requisite.

**Raphael:** Yes.

**Justin:** But I think about that in characters like Merlin for example, in fiction, or whether or not he was fictional is whatever; his story was similar, he watched his entire village get slaughtered in front of him while he was a child. He was hiding underneath a house and watched barbarians kill his family and then he went to the woods for a year and was a wild animal before he had the visions that brought him to become a wizard. I wonder if the purpose, the purpose of these healers who embody the – they seem like tortured creatures in a way because they go back and forth between experiencing these – to the point where it's normalized and they can just embrace the pain and they see it as themselves, before they might move on beyond it.

**Justin [to you]:** To clarify, I was wondering if this embrace of the pain-body is sometimes needed for a particular Initiate to relate to their Guide. If the Guide is too far along in the process of growth, or too far removed from the place of the Initiate, there may not be a way in for the student.

**Justin [to Raphael]:** I think of the ascension, the period of enlightenment where they can even pass that pain-body, they no longer serve that boundary between worlds. I don't know! I'm just using my imagination to go down that road of thought there.

**Raphael:** I'm mean, Eckhart Tolle was a great example because he had these – he was paranoid. And he had these anxiety attacks that were horrific. And sometimes they were so amazing that he couldn't stand it. Finally he had one so bad that that was what ripped him away from his mind. "Over there, is that my mind?" (Whispering) "That's not who I am."

**Nate:** You were talking about the magical realism earlier?

**Justin [to Nate and David]:** Mm hmm.

**Nate:** To me it's like nothing even really spectacular needs to happen for something to be magical at all.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Nate:** Today is a magical day for me. There's really nothing supernatural about it. What actually happened on the ground in a practical way that is making someone somehow have a different mentality, which can be kind of amazing if you've been stuck in this way of thinking for a really long time, and then, you don't have to deal with it anymore. You know?

**Rob:** You know it can be small little experiences too with no set up.

**Justin [to Rob]:** Oh sure, the small wind is sometimes way more critical than the big.

**David:** If you're subtle about something it's more likely to come across, whether it's conscious or unconscious – even preferably unconscious.

**Justin [to David and Nate]:** Unconscious to you as the writer or unconscious to the reader?

**David:** No to the reader... if it's unconscious to the writer that would be amazing.

**Justin and Nate:** (Laughing)

**Justin:** But I think sometimes that happens right?

**David:** Sure.

**Justin:** Like all the connections, if you read *Ulysses* or *Finnegan's Wake*, like half of those I guarantee were unintended by Joyce. I know that in the process of writing that book (*Finnegan's Wake*) with Beckett there was lots of things that accidentally happened, that when they reread they were like "oh that's brilliant." It made all these connections that they didn't intend until the third or fourth pass through the book, if ever.

**Justin [to Preston]:** Specific to Rites of Passage, looking at all the components of puberty rites for example: the Elders, the Community, being taken away from that, being put into a Sacred Space, going through Ordeal, Dismemberment, and then being integrated with New Knowledge, and the period of Disenchantment where you're questioning the new knowledge, then the Reintegration into society, all of that, I've been thinking about those components even when I take people out for a single day of rock climbing. Seeing how that works together and thinking in those terms with my own curiosity of how I can experience non-duality in my own life,

**Preston:** Mm hmm.

**Justin:** I don't even know what metaphysical prescribed notion this fits under but the idea of the single fabric, good or bad are really a part of the same continuum. There are no binaries like that.

**Preston:** Right, it's the tyranny of the either or.

**Justin:** Yes! Exactly. And I don't know if I'm glorifying a society, I know there's all kinds of trappings I could get into working with indigenous cultures but-

**Preston:** It's also that, you're talking about a tribe.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Preston:** And so we're not a tribe.

**Justin:** No (laughs).

**Preston:** The important thing to understand is that Rites of Passage has not really worked in the United States because we don't come from tribal communities. It has to be sanctified by the tribe and there is no tribe to sanctify.

**Justin [to you]:** Van Gennep, as well as a myriad of theatre writers including Turner, Schechner, and Artaud discuss how one can facilitate intentional ritual and ceremony that stimulates lasting change. This conversation could extend into discussion about the unconscious manifestation of puberty rites in our culture. But what follows in the conversation is my attempt to unveil how we can bring about meaningful change intentionally within our cultural context recognizing the limitations of our general social structures.

**Justin [to Preston]:** How do you think this all ties into lasting change? When you're working with your students what components other than just engaging them in a philosophical dialogue or making them aware of certain things within themselves; from your experience what other components are necessary to elicit an actual change?

**Preston:** Let's talk about the Sacred Space for a second.

**Justin:** Sure.

**Preston:** I am very cautious using the term “Sacred Space.” And I’m very tentative when I speak to it because it’s so easily misinterpreted. But this is what I’ll say about it. I believe it exists. I believe that when somebody who is sitting in their own sense of self cracks the window towards their own potential, the space between who they are and who they could be is the Sacred Space. If you believe in God, which I do, that vision that they see is the vision that God has of them. And if they can be brought to see it then as Paul Petzoldt, or Josh Miner, or Kurt Hahn would say “they can never go back.” And that’s the

Petzoldt, Miner, and Han are amongst the famous Outdoor Educators and Guides that have set the stage for our current practices and theories in the Guiding Community. Petzoldt started the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) and a chapter of Outward Bound (OB) in Colorado. He was also a very accomplished mountaineer. Miner was the founder of the American Outward Bound. Hahn’s educational thinking focused around giving students leadership opportunities, consequently his work was steeped in outdoor activities. He founded the United World Colleges.

Sacred work that we do. We curse people with understanding their own potential. And once committed to that they’re trapped by it, so they either have to go on living a lie, which will destroy them, or they have to embrace that which is possible. Fundamentally it goes back to your notes on guiding, or midwifery, right? So a similar sort of process, in that you are recognizing that within a person a potential exists, and a potential that they might not see. And so the question is “what things can you say? What experiences can you put them through that can help them recognize that which they can’t see for themselves, within themselves.” So it goes back to that stuff, it goes back to “yeah we can protect your child from this hazard, but that doesn’t mean



we'll be able to protect him from the next one. And in fact, we may be discounting his ability or her ability to navigate the next one."

...when a parent would come and ask us, "Can you *guarantee* the safety of our son, Johnny?" And we finally decided to meet it head-on. We would say, "No. We certainly can't Ma'am. We guarantee you the genuine chance of his death. And if we could guarantee his safety, the program would not be worth running. We do make one guarantee, as one parent to another. If you succeed in protecting your boy, as you are doing now, and as it's your motherly duty to do, you know, we applaud your watchdog tenacity. You should be protecting him. But, if you succeed, *we guarantee you the death of his soul!*" (Sourced from Martin, *Outdoor Leadership* 251)

This Willie Unsoeld quote really sets the stage for myself and many other Outdoor Educators in terms of how we think about and negotiate "risk". Applying the discussion Preston and I had about the definitions of risk, safe, and secure to models of education such as the previously described "growth circles" or the numerous models of the stages of learning (from Unconscious Incompetent to Unconscious Competent or from Memorization to Systemization and Generalization), we actively engage risk as a tool to motivate learning. And as the theory stands without risk or the associated discomfort that comes with challenge, the potential for change (and thus growth) cannot occur, and therefore "the death of his soul."

**Preston:** And so the question then becomes when you are talking to me about stressful experiences, "when is too little stress bad? When is too much stress bad?"

**Justin:** Well how do you determine those thresholds?

**Preston:** Great question. Well, going back to your earlier question about “what I would do with my students?” Sort of the practical aspects of it. The practical aspects of it is that I hold them accountable for themselves. So I’m constantly in the background challenging their assumptions about things. So it’s a constant sort of Socratic method “why did you just say that?” “What did you mean by that?” “Well I was just saying.” “No, you said it out loud and I was sitting here, what did you mean by it? Ok, why did you say it? What habit led you there?” So it’s this constant sort of mirroring or Socratic effort to engage them and then it’s to put them in situations where they have to go towards that which repels them. The classic thing is if you’re a big huge jock and you’re nervous about public dancing you take ballroom dancing classes. Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. Whatever it is, go towards that thing. Because what you don’t own, owns you.

(pause)

**Justin [to Tina]:** Recently I’ve been thinking about moderation, “all things in moderation.” I was like “what the fuck does that mean?” “Moderation?” Moderate to what? I mean, what are our parameters?

**Tina:** Yeah, and “extremist” have gotten a really bad connotation but it puts everything into perspective. Ionesco’s idea was that “you can’t” – I mean I don’t want to speak for him but my understanding from having read is that “art is” – his feeling about it is that “it should dislocate you from your reality.” So if I’m going and watching a kitchen sink drama, that could easily be done really well on television – I don’t even know what “kitchen sink” means

anymore – the ideas that it’s something that’s supposed to approximate reality. If it doesn’t make you think any differently, or it doesn’t affect your senses in a different way, if visually it doesn’t arrest you, if aurally it doesn’t make you hear things differently – because he felt that all those things were equally important in a theatrical process, not just the actor. And being an actor myself I can say that a lot of times actors don’t want to hear that they are on even keel with the sound or the lighting, but they are all equal players in the experience, to his mind. It’s true that you can’t really do theatrical work without actors if it’s got roles in it. But the idea that it needs to push you off center, whether that’s good or bad, to make you think about things differently, to make you see things differently. So I feel that, to provide that space where people cannot get what they’re expecting, that jars them and jostles them in some way, you do have to take the audience into consideration. Because I’m surely trying to pick something that is going to change people in the same way that I was changed when I first – but then again, I was in a position to hear that and feel what I felt.

**Justin [to Preston]:** How does that all play into –?

**Preston:** Well it’s huge right? Because I agree with you, at it’s most basic form “guiding” is people living in liminality, in the liminal zone. So just like my students, there is the potential and there is the actual, what is sitting in front of me. And I have to first get them committed to enter into the liminal zone, to enter back into being a beginning. What Zen Buddhists would call the “beginner’s mind”. And that’s a scary place to go because people often get

their confidence from their competence. And so you're asking them to give that up. You're asking them to be incompetent. And most people are like "nope. I lived through high school, junior high, I'm good. I do not want to go back there." And it takes a certain amount of courage to be like "I'm comfortable with who I am as a person and so I'm prepared to measure my worth not by my competence but by just my inner self, my own self-worth. I'm a child of God, that's good enough, let's move on."

**Rob:** I think learning, true leaning is about a lack of fear. Being stable enough to be able to incorporate new things.

**Preston:** Take a student that I might work with, that student may be talented, smart, beautiful, and privileged because they are here at the University of Pennsylvania. And they can have all sorts of capabilities, but if they don't believe that within them they have the capacity to make change, then so what? You can be a brilliant violinist but if you're afraid to get on the stage what's the point? You're just entertaining yourself.

**Justin [to Nate and David]:** Without jumping ahead, what ingredients are necessary to convey or to elicit change in the reader? Obviously it helps that we are willing participants. The three of us are hoping to improve ourselves day to day, so we come across a piece of information that is expressed in just the right way, or expressed with enough care or poetics that we'll give it a shot because of either the romance of it or how reasonable it is in terms of our non-reasonable perspectives.

**Preston:** So the greatest barrier for me in helping people understand how to manage risk is that they themselves don't want to look at it. They're afraid of it and fear is a powerful motivator. Even when one is passive one has to deal with risk, so the question then to your point about practice is let's say that you make the decision that you want to become self-actualized, that you want to live a purpose driven life, you want to have an impact, and be remembered for something more than that you consumed air, water, and food. So the question becomes how do you develop techniques to navigate that risk in a sustainable way? Navigate that uncertainty in a sustainable way? And what are the limits? When we think about change, there's internal change and there's external change. There's change I can do to the world and there's change within myself that I'm prepared to engage in. The problem that I have is that I am very much a "know thyself" kind of a person. The work I do with my students here, you can't go out and change the world if you are not prepared to change yourself first. And to do that you have to take your belief systems to your point. And you have to recognize which are helpful and which aren't. And so if you have a belief system that you're not that smart or not that attractive or not whatever, what is that supporting? What is the rationale behind that? How does that move you forward? And I'm not suggesting that one become arrogant because you need humility and you need to recognize your place in the Universe which is quite small, but you shouldn't have voices in your head that are created by external, say religious beliefs for example, that say that "you are less than." It doesn't

support the larger thing that we are trying to accomplish. That's a big risk, for people to take an assumption that they believe about themselves and alter that, and encounter the world in a different way.

**Justin [Tino and Julie]:** All the conditions of the Initiate, how they get there, how they are exposed to it, that kind of defines what they get out of it-

**Tino:** Totally.

**Julie:** Yeah, like in a classroom it would be background knowledge, a kid's background knowledge and how he or she gets information can completely change how everything might go. You can teach the same concept to twenty different students and it would all be different because of what they bring to the table.

**Justin:** And then how you bring them to that new information is another component in that and how they get that.

**Raphael:** My meditation instructor and friend Rose Fillaramo, she once explained to me – explained to us in the classroom – there's this metaphor about how the soul learns. It's kind of like a spiral, it goes up goes down, goes up goes down, goes up goes down, but a spiral that's a spring, like a metal spring. And even though it goes down, though we fall off, the person does get up, learns from the experiences hopefully on some level, and just keeps moving.

**Juliet:** It was a long time ago.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** Yeah well I have the same revelation over and over again. Every other day I'm like "oh my God!" And I write it down then look at the page

before and it's like the same words. I'm like "fuck." But it's fine because it's meaningful in that moment.

**Juliet:** Yeah. Your brain's still like "you didn't get it!"

**Justin:** It inspires me to do something else, but.

**Justin [to Nate and David]:** I know I've returned to books and reread them and they were completely different from what I got from them the first couple times through.

**David:** Sure.

**Justin:** I think anything we return to, be it the memory of a conversation or a work of fiction, it's all going to read differently depending on how we come to it, right? Because we're a different person.

**Tina:** Let's take an event like that, does that jostle people? Does it make them reconsider? Does it reorder things for them? I don't know, but I feel like it should? If you have a major cataclysmic event like Hurricane Sandy and not have – let's just take that as a theatrical event.

**Justin [to Tina]:** Yeah.

**Tina:** Were people ready to receive it? I don't know, you know? Mother nature served it up. Did 911 do something to us?

**Justin:** And did it do... I mean there's a lot any experience can do, there's a lot of different avenues a person can take a thought or experience and the question is based on where they are and what willing investment –

**Tina:** So much of it is where are you?

**Justin [to Tino and Julie]:** Certain people, if you brought them out to some big mountain, Everest is a good example. Certain people would have a horrible experience that would ruin their lives (laughs) if they went to Everest. It would just be the worst. And then there are other people that could have never climbed before in their life, and they have a life altering positive experience doing that. And there's other people that you take them into it and it doesn't do anything for them one way or the other, they are the same person they went into it being, and the same person coming out.

**Tino:** No matter their level of success or failure?

**Justin:** Yeah. Because it's really not the appropriate challenge for them, or all three of the players could be at appropriate or inappropriate places within the preparation for being there. So that's one of the jobs of the Guide to make that assessment. Unfortunately in most of the structures that we have for being a Guide, or a lot of them, there's not that opportunity to really harness that as best we can. Like as a Mountain Guide usually you get clients you've never met before, or some of them you develop a relationship with but you get a lot of walk-ons. And their prior experience is – you try to screen it but you don't really know, and then you're really going after something because you want to make money, trying to get good tips. The intention of the experience is different from what I'm saying a Guide should want. In my opinion they should develop a love for the mountains and a love for the experience that one, challenges them to want to face their fears in other ways through their lives, so that they can bring it back to their daily life and be



more adventurous in their own choices day to day; and two, that they have investment in the mountains themselves that makes them want to continue nourishing that relationship, so that they can continue learning lessons from the mountains. And if that leads to stewardship and doing nature conservation that's cool but it's not necessarily the only thing they could develop in that relationship.

**Justin [to Tino and Julie]:** Yeah, I want to reach everyone, anyone that's ready to go through change and challenge themselves. I see change as being very positive; I see embracing risk as very positive.

**Tino:** So you always want people to view what you do out of an interest and a yen instead of feeling an obligation?

**Mom:** All I can do is pay respect and trust that this man has his own purpose of his growth in his own time. That's all we can do actually.

**Justin [to Mom and Dad]:** ...well... we can guide as well.

**Mom:** Yeah you're right.

**Justin:** And I think that everything you're saying is true of the Guide as well, the Guide can't tell a person what to do, can't force them along a path.

**Mom:** Of course.

**Justin:** Because, for a Guide to be *effective*- this is my understanding, they need something they're invested in, some power, that they're invested in. And that power can be yoga, it can be shamanism, it can be anything, for me it's often the mountain but it's not limited to that, for me it's more inspiration.

**Mom:** But you see Justin, when you guide a mountain or when you give counseling or advice to other people, if you don't have that attitude inside of you to pay respect to this man or this woman, although you are still advising this person with your wisdom, your knowledge, if you don't have that then-

**Justin:** Well yeah, that's the thing, I don't think – I hardly think you are advising at all with your wisdom or knowledge, that's the trapping. That's your classic western educator. I think a Guide needs to be invested in their student just as much as they are with the power. It's more than just a-

**Mom:** paying respect.

**Justin:** Yeah a "how you doing?" You have to be invested in humanity.

Reflecting upon and in revisiting this conversation I realize that my mother and I may be talking about the same thing, but due to a visceral response to the words she chose, I dismissed the content. I think this comes from my exposure to too many insincere gestures towards spirituality, so when a phrase is used such as "paying respect" or "Namaste" I am suspicious of the intention of that statement. Have words and phrases in religious and spiritual movements been reduced from their original meaning to become something similar to how we casually say "how's it going?" I certainly think so, but in the case of my mother it is better to assume that her intention is sincere and that she isn't going through the motions. That wouldn't be in line with her past. Paying respect is potentially a deep compassion and respect for the path someone else travels. While we make great efforts not to project our assumed truths, pace, or moralities onto them. This is in fact a very difficult, beautiful, and significant action.

**Mom:** Right.

**Justin:** Or something – I, I, I haven't, for me I haven't quite worded it the way I want it, in terms of describing that. It's similar to what you're saying but-

**Juliet:** I've been there. I've been in those places where I'm totally living a lie, totally in denial about things, I'm treating people like shit, cause I'm like "the world isn't worth it." But then, when I'm not like that – like I've not been like that

recently, only very recently – the people that are around me that are still doing stuff like that, or they're in a phase where they're doing stuff like that, it's so heart breaking because you're like "I know what that's like and it's not fun. It's hell on earth."

**Justin [to Mom and Dad]:** And then what that requires is that the student has a want also to be invested in this greater power. Just the difference between you and that student is that you have some level of a relationship with that greater power already, and your student may not know anything about what to expect yet. They just have some kind of desire.

**Tino:** It's interesting because it kind of gets into that thing of, despite the façade that many people put on, how many people out there just want to be led around by the hand?

**Justin [to Julie and Tino]:** When I talked with Preston Cline, we were talking about his students who he takes on to essentially guide. And what he does is he looks for space in which they can challenge themselves and figure out the hard questions they can ask themselves so that they can change.

**Tino:** Interesting.

**Justin:** In a way that will make them better leaders or better at anything that they want to do, essentially. And he filters out people. He doesn't take people on as apprentices, students, or whatever you want to call them. I guess there's this age old idea of the leaders and the sheep, and it's kind of sad to think about it in those regards because you want everyone to have the capacity to be inspired, to be independent, and to be strong and alternative and creative,

but people aren't. And it doesn't need to be a sad thing if you thought about things in terms of multiple lives for example, they don't have to do it this time around (laugh).

**Tino:** (Laughs)

**Justin:** They'll get to it. So it's ok. But it's a little hard to swallow sometimes because you want to be fair and even. It's funny I said to Preston "well you know, there's a certain amount of privilege that the students have being here, and there's also a certain filtering that's already done to admit them into the school to begin with.

**Tino:** But he's another filter.

**Justin:** Yeah, exactly. It's interesting, I always stray away from thinking of valuing or rating people at different levels but really the values are subjective. "Oh Justin thinks of independence and inspiration as a positive thing, and not having that as a negative thing, so that's why he's valuing these people as better than others."

**Tino:** Absolutely.

**Justin:** And in the end, it's maybe not even important to be inspired, but to me, it's really important. So that's why I'm going after that. Other people, their great learning could be like, discipline or listening or – there's got to be a lot said for the people who just do the daily grind. They work in a factory from when they're 17 til 75.

**Tino:** It's not a diligence, not a callousness, but a persistence.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Tino:** Durability?

**Justin:** Every once in a while you find a person who is sagely in their kind of mundane choices. You know?

**Justin [to Nate and David]:** Either the magical within life, or the magical we wish people could see is definitely content in your work. I see that you guys do insert definite...

**David:** mystical?

**Justin:** Well you're trying to impart something on your reader. There's some influence that you're trying to have on your reader. Without a doubt I feel like that's true. Well if I'm wrong tell me but I feel like both of you guys – I mean we like a lot of the same writers, and if we don't like the same exact writers we like writers with a similar "mission". This kind of education through art, but a non-traditional education. Trying to get people to live big, or live dreams, or just think big.

**Preston:** Do we have a right to do that? That's an interesting question because people are like "Preston it's the same old story of someone who's steeped in poverty and you take them to a rich person's house and let them spend a few days so they understand what luxury is and drop them back in poverty. But what have you done for that child but cursed them to know what they don't have?" Yeah. And that's part of what we're doing.

**Justin [to Preston]:** The analogy is useful for the negative and the difficulty that it stirs up, and definitely that difficulty is inherent in the work we are doing however like any analogy it's not perfect because what you're showing them

is something that is potentially inherent in themselves rather than something that is an external asset. The analogy, it's useful in both reflecting the difficulty of the process and the challenges you create for the student or the potentially unassuming – in any rite the student will be somewhat unassuming because they are unconscious, they don't know what they don't know as of yet, and then when you show them what they don't know then that space is created.

“They don't know what they don't know” is an unfortunate, but commonly used phrase in Outdoor Education. It describes the Unconscious Incompetent student, before they become Consciously Incompetent to progress to Consciously Competent and finally to Unconsciously Competent (Spear 6). It is a flimsy model in its rigid linearity and encouragement to become Unconscious in the end. Other models have been developed by educators at Outward Bound to resolve these issues but this model remains the popularly used one.

**Preston:** The question is whose choice is it?

**Justin:** And in a certain way you have to assume that there is a want.

**Preston:** Why?

**Justin:** Because we don't just grab someone and pull them off the street and say “look! Look at yourself.” If you do this, say I took a person – a mountain is a great example because it's physical – so we take a person that never wanted to go climbing, and we just shove him on the mountain, they're going to have an experience that will impact them, but one that probably won't have a productive outcome.

**Preston:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Whereas, if we take a person who's always wanted to climb a mountain, and what they don't know that they don't know is that they don't know anything

about the process of mountain climbing. They have all the assumptions that the public that never climbed will have about the mountain. But when they get up there they'll be willing to learn the things even if they don't know it's a component of what it is. So they have to learn self-care, they have to learn the rope-systems, they have to learn how to pace themselves through all the un-glorious moments of climbing right?

**Preston:** Yeah.

**Justin:** And that's just not going to happen with a person that has no initial interest.

Whereas if you get somebody who comes here and you tell them in the beginning "we're going to help you become better leaders and part of that is that you have to be able to face yourself. You have to be able to access something yourself." Now they know a semblance of what they're getting at, and they've already signed up. They've read the syllabus or they've read whatever it is that let's them know that you're a resource here. So there's already an awareness or a want. And part of our decision, just like when we're guiding on the mountain is to make the decision "is that person's want really appropriate for what they've come here for?" And then that's when we're splitting hairs and we have to make decisions that could be completely wrong, you know?

**Preston:** Yeah.

**Justin:** But still there's the assumption that they want something because they're here in the first place. They have to come to you in the first place. So the example of taking the poor person off the street and showing them luxury,

they might want to see that but it's not a perfect analogy because you're introducing them to something that isn't inherent to human beings. And what you're offering them is something that is potentially inherent to themselves. It's something that exists within themselves but there's all these barriers to get through, the impacts of the exterior world, how they've adapted to those influences, and how that has changed them up to that point. It's more metaphysical barriers than physical barriers.

**Preston:** I'll buy that.

**Justin:** It's arguable which is more difficult to bypass.

**Preston:** Yeah.

**Justin:** I guess there's just as much of a societal effort to keep a person where they are – you know the difficulty of moving from poverty to being really rich.

Certainly this is not the case of all friends. And if this instigates conflicting opinions I am glad, but in my generalizations of the status quo and their popular clutching to static truths and predictability, I have also found that many friends and lovers unconsciously assume and sometimes demand that same predictability from the people they are closest to. The lover who says, "you've changed. Why can't you be like when we met." Or the friend who tells his buddy that "you are always late" even though his buddy has made concerted efforts with some success in changing that. At times this manifests in self-fulfilling prophecies where the projections of character actually influence the actions of the target.

That rags to riches story is so rare. It's the American Dream but it happens to nobody. Most people stay within their class. And I wonder how true that is of a metaphysical growth? Is there as much of a keeping a person down? Keeping them where they are? I mean we do it to our friends, right? We tell them how they are and we pigeonhole them; we're not very permissive to allow a person to change.



**Preston:** It's true. Everything you're saying I agree with. Your point about changing among your friends. Are you prepared to – are you prepared to walk away from your friends? Are you prepared to walk in opposition to your friends? Belonging is one of the most important things that people have. The path that we've been talking about is a path that takes us away from belonging. I mean it takes us towards another potential state of belonging, but in the mean time you're in that liminal zone where you're alone. You're isolated.

PODCAST: ACT FOUR

**Justin [to you]:** This is Act Four: Guide traps, authenticity and commoditization, interpersonal skills, the Guide's investment, and a little bit about the terms "Guide" and "Instructor" as they are used in the mountain guiding community.

**Justin [to Paul]:** (Laughing)

**Paul:** "We had the most amazing guide, he was 50, he was tough-"

**Justin:** "He climbed K2 twelve times-"

**Paul:** No actually they said "he had his hip replaced eight weeks ago and was guiding." I'm like "eww. That's awful." Yeah so they built him up as this character you would see in the movies. I think it's really funny that a majority of it surrounds around iconic guides. Yeah it all comes back to –

**Justin:** image.

**Paul:** Image and super instructor. I find the common theme is somehow these instructors build themselves up to such a level that students believe everything that they say which directly contradicts the whole idea of –

**Justin:** judgment based –

**Paul:** Judgment based thinking! Yes! (Laughing)

**Justin:** That's the situation where your guide is overshadowing the learning.

**Paul:** Yes. *Sigh*. And you learn that this guy's great, "I'd better memorize this because he must be right." One of the things that I've noticed is a lot of these Certified Guides or Instructors, whichever ones that they are, their students walk away talking more about the Guide that they had than the course that they went on. I hear the same guy's name and how great he is, how he's the

most amazing person in the world, which makes me think “what are they talking about?” Are they talking about actual instruction?

**Justin:** Or their war stories?

**Paul:** Or are they talking about how great the Instructor is? (Laughing) At the end of the day you should be talking about what you learned from that class, how impactful it was, how fun, how much they grew from it, but you very rarely hear that. You hear how amazing this Guide was. You know, we could name a million of them, which I’m avoiding at all cost, but we can name a thousand of them.

**Justin:** And I think there is an effort to get away from that –

**Paul:** I think it’s a culture. It’s a culture that was developed a long time ago that’s hard to turn around.

**Justin:** So that’s something that we’ve talked about for years; I brought it up to Ron Funderburke because he was using this really binary kind of description: “this is what a Guide is; this is what an Instructor is.”

**Paul:** Mmmm. Right.

**Justin:** I was like “Ron, just so you know there’s a lot of people who think that’s a gray line.” I feel that all Guides are Instructors, first of all, and most Instructors are probably Guides in some capacity as well.

**Paul:** Yeah. No, I’m with you on that.

**Justin:** So calling this subset “Guides” and this subset “Instructors” is misleading.

**Paul:** I had some clients this weekend and they were guided up the Tetons. And when they came to me – they had climbed the Tetons, they were happy with

their experience, they had a great time, but they didn't know how to rappel, and they didn't know how to belay. Yet, they did a three day training period where they "learned to climb." And they also had to rappel off the mountain. And that leaves me to wonder "what did they learn?" (Laughs) If you spent four days on a mountain with a Mountain Guide and you spent a lot of money yet you don't know how to belay – come on how long does that take? 30 minutes? At most?

**Justin:** Yeah, yeah. Just make sure they do it everyday and they'll learn it right?

**Paul:** Exactly. So they climbed this amazing peak and had a great experience but they couldn't repeat it. Because they didn't know how to belay and they didn't know how to rappel, which are very easy basic skills. Obviously throughout that whole intensive – and they said it was an "intensive" training by the way.

**Justin [to you]:** In the Exum Guide's defense, their three day training program is specific to climbing the Tetons with high ratio groups on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class terrain with some 5<sup>th</sup> class moves, they don't focus on traditional climbing techniques. Regardless of Paul and my ignorance to their pre-climb training, I am leaving this in here because there are very applicable concepts discussed in regard to a more general scope

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| <p>"3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> class" refers to a "hiking" system. Class 1 is hiking on relatively flat terrain. Class 2 involves simple scrambling, with possible use of hands. Class 3 is scrambling where hands are used for balance and a rope might be carried. Class 4 is simple climbing, with exposure. Ropes are often used and a fall could be fatal. Class 5 is rock climbing, where ropes, belaying, rappelling, and removable and fixed protection are indicated; unprotected falls would result in serious injury or death. (Mountaineers 564)</p> |
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of guiding.

**Justin [to Paul]:** Interesting.

**Paul:** So how do you have an intensive training and you forget all those skills?

**Justin:** Well maybe it was intensive in that they were so out there, it was so alien to them, the experience?

**Paul:** Yes.

**Justin:** So it wasn't the technical skills, it was that they were scared.

**Paul:** No, they did bring this concept up "I was scared all the time." What really shocked me about that was a lot of times you go can do away with making someone nervous by not building it up as this crazy epic thing and maybe just teach them a little bit. And if you physically taught them how to do it, well sometimes when you teach people they become less scared.

**Justin:** So they called it "intense" but –

**Paul:** When they called it intense, they never referred to the climb as intense, they referred to their instruction as intense. Like their instructor was very intense, and very abrupt and almost demeaning.

**Justin:** What's that called? "Autocratic."

In *Outdoor Leadership* Martin describes numerous Leadership Styles. One of them is the Autocratic Leader (45) or authoritarian leader of the Style Theory of Leadership. The balance to the autocratic leader is the democratic and abdicratic or laissez-faire leaders. As the name implies the autocratic leader is very directive, not permitting much from group input.

**Paul:** Yeah, very super instructor.

**Justin:** "When I tell you, 'you have to eat,' you have to eat. Cause I know best. When I say 'it's time to shed layers,' it's time to shed layers."

**Paul:** It wasn't very, "here's what we need to do, as a team if we do all this we can be successful. And here are the components that you need to master in the next two days to be successful." It was very "you do as I say, and you'll have a good time, you'll make it to the top and down."

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Getting back to Guide and Instructor, I think certain people do buy into that. You know, "they're paying this money to go up the Tetons, I'm only going to guide them." I do think some people do buy too much into one concept versus the other, and hence they neglect the fact that you should be able to determine what someone may want, or at least people that I take out that only want an experience, they still learn the foundational skills through me. Because I also know that they might not understand that a technical skill might make or break their experience. Like learning how to belay for some people makes their experience, makes it that more impactful, or teaching them a little about movement even though they just want to make it to the top allows them to get to the top, and then they know about a balance triangle, and they get to the top and they have a great time.

**Justin:** I guess, I guess –

**Paul:** No, I know what you're talking about when you talk about Guide and Instructor and I do think you hit the nail on the head because it just defines the culture of why certain people are turned off. Because it automatically pigeonholes certain people into a structure that isn't familiar to them, like in a college setting "you only instruct," which is untrue. "You only guide in a

commercial outfit,” that’s so untrue. I think it’s so sad that people are so black and white and pigeonhole them and then it’s reflected very directly upon what the client gets from it. And I think that that’s really sad. And I don’t know how that applies to like teaching. I don’t think that in a public school system or a private school system there’s necessarily all that but those components do exist. Like some people think that teachers are just there to deliver information and the students absorb it, yet other teachers like Johanna just described actually pull in a dissection for kids who are under the age of five. And they decide “ok we can give them an experience, like they climbed a mountain, yet they learned some technical skills that they’ll rely on later.” I mean I think that that’s kind of cool.

**Justin:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Paul:** And I think AEE [Association of Experiential Education] is on target when they developed an association that talked about experiential education, and that teaching has been defined rigidly as presenting information while you write on a board and people repeat it back to you. Whereas teachers can be very inspirational too, they don’t have to – they can take it out of a physical four-walled building. Which is what you’re talking about, you can have a “peak experience” and learn too. You can combine them both.

**Justin:** Even if you intended it only be a peak experience, the clients are probably learning something and you’re just not cuing into it.

**Paul:** And you should cue them into it, why not? Why shouldn’t they walk away and say “my guide service was awesome, I made it to the top and my Guide was

good because he taught me 'x, y, z.'" Not "my Guide was great because he's cool and got surgery eight weeks ago and is now hiking up this" which makes me think that he has no other choice and gets poor insurance and is paid bad.

(Laughs)

**Justin:** (Laughing)

**Paul:** That's what that makes me think! I draw other conclusions from that, that he has no other choice.

**Justin:** Ok, so this ties back into what my project is.

**Paul:** I tried to steer you right back into it.

**Justin:** Ok, so that's one component of it, that I have trouble with "truth". It seems to me that a lot of how people look at truth is really black or white.

**Paul:** Sure.

**Justin:** Everything is like "this is here. And this is air." If not one or the other, at least very categorical, they like rigid definitions.

**Paul:** Right.

**Justin:** So that things feel solid. I think that it has to do with security. People want a sense of security. Right?

**Paul:** Right... or where you are. I know for me, that's the way that it was. I was very unclear with what I was supposed to do, then the way I figured out what I was supposed to do was I made it very compartmentalized "now I'm instructing, and now I'm guiding." And now I get a group of twelve and I'm ok with it being two different things, or I'm ok with it being in the middle.

**Justin:** Yeah.



**Paul:** You know, because you become more comfortable with the material.

**Raphael:** The thing about shamanism, particularly these days you know, as people learn about it, they don't necessarily take on the role as a healer, but will simply turn to the Guides for instruction.

**Justin [to Raphael]:** Without discussing "authenticity" because I feel like that's a very loaded concept –

**Raphael:** Ah ha.

**Justin:** Well, let me give a five-minute spiel about how I feel about authenticity.

**Raphael:** Sure.

**Justin:** Just so that it's on the record. Um. I, I have trouble with – you know you started the conversation with talking about how the word "Shaman" or "shamanism" has been adopted as the kind of generic word to describe lots of different practices around the world. I think originally the word came from uh, Russ-

**Raphael:** Siberia.

**Justin:** Siberia. It was the Siberian Boundary Men that were called the "Shamans" or it had a name similar to Shaman. Most other cultures don't use that word in their practice it's something that we've created for anthropologists and what not.

**Raphael:** And the New Age too.

**Justin:** And Michael Harner and the whole Neo-Shamanism kind of movement that's become something for better or for worse.

**Raphael:** Yeah.

**Justin:** (Laughs) But I think, in our culture, in the American Western culture there's a lot of emphasis on the idea of "authenticity". When you get into something like the practice of Yoga or Martial Arts or Shamanism, people want to talk about "is it the real deal? Is it authentic?"

**Raphael:** Hmm. Yeah.

**Justin:** The standard by which we call something "authentic" is usually based on our own imaginary pedestalled golden image of some practice that – you know, we imagine that an authentic Shaman would also embody certain personal practices that would be "perfect." They have to be a perfect human being that would never cheat you or never look to make money for themselves let alone to feed their family. "This person needs to be some infallible creature." Or authenticity is labeled by their magical abilities within the world. "Can they materialize something in front of me from their hand? Or can they float? Or walk through a wall?"

**Raphael:** "Or teleport?"

**Justin:** Or teleport, exactly. So I feel like authenticity is really an ugly word in a certain sense, because it doesn't allow for change within a culture, or it creates a cartoonish caricature of a person.

**Raphael:** Yeeaaaah...

**Justin:** But on the flip side there are people doing certain practices and just doing it for the sake of cashing in on a movement.

**Raphael:** Yeah.

**Justin:** But then, to counter argue that, even in their practice, even if it's not sincere to them, they might still be doing something good, unbeknownst to them, and that might speak to the idea that the Guide is always an Initiate, that they are always growing. They could have fallen off course in some way, shape, or form and it takes the right student or the right Spirit Guide to be brought back into a direction –

**Raphael:** Yeah. Yeah. Authentic does kind of – it can block things out for a person and the value of what they see. But it's all a matter of how the student perceives everything, and the real student who's maybe on the Shamanic path – it's very common, and this was emphasized by my uncle in workshops, but it also applies to spiritual students throughout the world, is that even though I may be on a particular path with particular methods of learning and adapting, I still have to be open. There may be another path. There may have to be changes that take place. You know, one day the East could meet beginnings, you know in some other age, the East could mean other things. But you know the student allows this and is ready to allow the possibility of learning from other people whether they are authentic or not.

**Justin [to Tino and Julie]:** And you know what, that's another problem I have with these pre-scheduled courses and the structure.

**Tino:** “You paid, so you go”?

**Justin:** Yeah, or just all guiding.

**Tino:** Like Everest man.

**Justin:** Like it's a scheduled course that you're doing. I think in certain ways it's the fault of how our purchasing system exists in the US.

**Tino:** Consuming experience?

**Justin:** Yeah, how something is commoditized. There are different structures for how you could learn something like that; you could have an apprenticeship, where you go in that day and your teacher decides that you're not going to do anything physical, "we're going to have a talk about it." And then another day you come in and you move buckets of water all day long, or something like that right? Same thing with Yoga, you don't necessarily go in and do this thing with a group, maybe there's some group time but you're not necessarily working within the restraints that are built into our –

**Tino:** It may not be the best platform for you.

**Justin:** The selling structure where a person can show up their first time and "ok you're in the beginner class that's fine but" –

**Tino:** In a perfect world most people would have a single person guided experience, one to one hand holding... though I appreciate that, I think there might be a percentage of the population that needs to watch other people.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Tino:** And that's the way they operate, even though I would say it's better to still have a one on one.

**Justin:** Well I think a group can work, but for climbing for example, the ideal situation would probably be two to one. Because then you teach people how to climb in parties of three. You know, which is commonly done

recreationally, so it is fine. It's probably more complicated than a one to one ratio so they are gaining more out of it. If you had a structure that wasn't based on this "you bought this class" structure, but is more of an ongoing relationship with that client who's made a life investment, like the ancient Martial Arts student or the student of the Yogi or the Initiate in a Shamanic experience.

**Tino:** So is part of our consumerist culture somehow rooted to the fact that we grew up with, for lack of a better way of saying it, syllabus? "Ok, so in this period of time these are the twelve things that you will go over and thus you will be accountable to reciprocate, regurgitate, whatever."

**Justin:** Yeah it's like: "checklist, here's the information that you're going to learn, and this is how we demonstrate competency." You know what I mean? It's really checklist oriented and it's really, like you said, syllabus oriented, and the space is really specific for where learning happens. I think that a lot of people, if you talk to them, if you say "hey where does learning happen" they would say "oh, in a school." And it's true, learning does happen in a school but probably ninety percent of the learning that we gain is in the world. Maybe more than that. So I can't help but feel that that's implicitly fucked up about our culture, or problematic, or at least limiting.

**Preston:** In terms of compensation for the mountaineering, when I was younger and I was trying to eat and do what I loved I was like "we should get paid more." But as I've grown older I've realized that "no, the system's not really designed

for that.” You’re never going to be a multi-millionaire and be a mountain guide, it’s just not how it works.

**Justin [to Preston]:** Yeah. I’ve never thought it makes much sense in the first place.

I mean according to our conversation it really becomes something more like: you live in the mountains, somebody comes to you and they want to be guided up something,

**Preston:** Yeah.

**Justin:** and they had to find you in the first place and get that far to even be there,

**Preston:** Yeah.

**Justin:** and at that point they might spend a month with you acclimating and learning your ways until they’re ready. And that kind of ties back to the Chamonix guides, like way back in the day – or not way back, but like a hundred plus years ago – who were taking people up as they came and found them. It was kind of more of that ideal – well we’ve probably made it golden in our memories.

In *Starlight and Storm* Gaston Rébuffat writes about the guide/client culture in Chamonix, France in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The clients – known as the “gentlemen class” for their socio/economic backgrounds – relationship to the guides, though fraught with similar idiosyncrasies as today (stemming from ego and objectives), mirrored something more of this ideal that Preston and I discuss. Maybe this was due to the challenges of transportation and the novelty of the sport. This may have forced clients to travel to specific locations for instruction such as Chamonix and the distance may have encouraged longer stays for the clients. As opposed to the single day programming and the “weekend warriors” of today.

**Justin [to Raphael]:** In terms of pace and then also how our culture has shared or is trying to share shamanism or trying to expose that as a passage.

**Raphael:** Yeah.

**Justin:** I guess the part I'm troubled by is that there is no Rite of Passage. You go to a workshop,

**Raphael:** Mm.

**Justin:** and you kind of just jump right into the mix. You experience a journey led by some kind of workshop leader, and it's not to say that it's not effective. I've had very effective and meaningful journeys at these sorts of workshops but I think about it and I can't help but compare it to some of the anthropological accounts that I've read where there is reports of symbolic if not actual death and there's the idea of Initiates strapped to a pole and stuck into frozen water for three days and is pulled out and then reintroduced to the group and you know, the ordeal is very real. They go out for seven days and eat straight from the ground with their teeth and then they're visited by their spirit animal and then they experience ritual death and then they're reintroduced to their culture and there's the disenchantment, you know that whole process, and I feel like – I went to a Michael Harner workshop –

**Raphael:** Oh you did?

**Justin:** which was a very, very good experience in a lot of ways but I remember there was a student who was scared of their power animal and they had fear of the experience they might have. They had a lot of reservation about going on the journey. And the workshop leader said "don't worry, you can never be harmed. You'll never be hurt in this process." And I'm thinking in my head "well, it's not so much that, it's not that you'll never be harmed, you should be able to be harmed, because being harmed is a very necessary step in growth.

**Raphael:** Yeeeeeaaah...

**Justin:** "Pain and hurt and ordeal are very necessary." Maybe it would be better to say "be brave, if you are obliterated you'll come back something entirely new." You know?

**Raphael:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Do you feel like, the way the practice is taught now, the way the practice is shared amongst our culture,

**Raphael:** Ahh.

**Justin:** is allowing people, or encouraging people to take that healing direction? To become healers?

**Raphael:** Well I think that for some people it's very helpful and it's a very important step to simply learn about spiritual practice in general. Because there's a lot of people these days from whatever experience or for whatever reason who – some who are even atheists but who get a knock on the head from the Universe, and get a feeling that they need to go on the spiritual path. It's healthy and good. On the other hand, people are becoming more interested in shamanism as just another New Age thing that has all of the answers. They're looking for all the wisdom and everything, but they might not have the willingness to look deeply, to come back to the retrieval of these difficult memories, in soul retrieval and things like that. Some people just use "shamanism" as a title because it sounds cool. Or the idea that a "person is chosen," sounds cool in the same way that having the title –

**Justin:** PhD.



**Raphael:** Doctor. Yeah, exactly.

**Juliet:** Yeah and be satisfied with a false sense of accomplishment that that provides with money or titles or some kind of clout.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** It's remarkable how long people can go.

**Juliet:** Their whole lives.

**Justin:** I don't know how that's satisfying? At some point the ego – I don't know, for me, that just doesn't feel like enough.

**Juliet:** It's not fulfilling.

(pause)

For me this speaks to the idea of adopting a persona, being driven to accomplish tasks to fulfill a role rather than pursuing that which inspires you. This is a terrific bias I host. One I unabashedly promote. People should do things because it speaks to them not because it will make them cool.

**Justin [to Mom and Dad]:** I don't disagree that that is happening but I wonder if it is happening anymore than it ever has. I think one of the major differences is that it's open – it's out in the open.

**Mom:** Right.

**Justin:** Whereas a hundred years ago, a hundred fifty years ago it was all contained within secret orders- the world was containable enough that if somebody showed an interest of that there was a built in support within some sort of secret lineage that was passed down, and now that information is much more free and open.

I am referring to the shift into the Age of Aquarius. My understanding of how this has impacted knowledge and secrecy comes from the Occult writer Ophiel. An example of this conversation can be found in his introduction to *The Art and Practice of Astral Projection* (ii).

**Dad:** Yeah we have Facebook (laughing).

**Justin:** But there's also less of a framework to support that in terms of the classic apprenticeship mentorship kind of process.

**Mom:** Really? You think so? I think there is more.

**Justin:** No, because I think that, for example like New Age,

**Mom:** Right.

**Justin:** it's a commoditization of spiritual practice.

**Dad:** Yeah.

**Justin:** And there's a lot of good stuff within it, but there's a lot of

**Dad:** dog and pony show.

**Justin:** Yeah it is. Essentially – there are like brilliant messages and ideas within people trying to make money.

**Mom and Dad:** Yeah yeah, of course.

**Justin:** And essentially our structure, our buy and sell, cost and compensation kind of framework has already imposed itself and also the speed with which we need to do things is really forcing itself upon a spiritual practice. So, sometimes I'm a little bit worried about what we're doing "is it really good?" Is it good that so many people are into Yoga? For instance, is that a positive thing? And on one side you're like "well people are getting exercise, it's something accessible for older people who aren't going to get out running. It might have a hip flavor to it – actually it can be compared directly to when Martial Arts were brought to the United States. All the old masters were like "what's going on? You're ruining an art form." By commercializing Karate you're ruining a practice because there was a long lineage of discipline,

dedication, and the apprenticeship that goes into it and now people are just not committing themselves to it. But on the flipside, for example myself, we [my brother and I] studied Judo, we had a good teacher but still, it was something we did as kids for while, it still had intrinsic value to it.

**Mom:** Shamanism is the same thing, that's why in South America Shamans kept themselves secret. Now it has come to the West. Always there's positive and negative polarities.

**Justin:** Well, but then things get lost. So shamanism, martial arts, pretty much anything, yoga, all these things, the question is "where are the people who are dedicating their lives to it?" Sitar players for example, musicians, artists, even academics; academia didn't used to be this widely commercial process, it wasn't something you paid money to do and you made money because you were. Original academics were monks locked up in towers that just dedicated themselves to learning. And it was a lifelong learning whereas now you go through four maybe nine years of adult education and then you come out with a terminal degree, a PhD.

**Justin [to you]:** The problem I have with this is more than just that a practice with a long tradition is commercialized and maybe watered down in that process, or the related issues that are raised in appropriation and the golden images that are manufactured by our sample and "take as you please" position. I also struggle that we adopt "new" or "unfamiliar" ideas, practices, and teaching, but in that process manipulate the thing to meet our default "value" system, our pace, and the unconscious status quo. As a result instead of taking

something new in that might forever change our perspective we wear the dead thing around like a new fashion accessory, regardless of whether we genuinely believe it's actually changed us or not.

**Dad:** Yoga's even worse, I mean Yoga, you can become a certified instructor in Yoga, depending on what style it is, you can get that in a weekend sometimes, these days, you know? It seems like that, it's not a weekend but.

**Justin:** They want to see that you have a certain experience but it's a fast track process. Even mountain guiding, the track that I'm on; it's actually really difficult to become a fully Certified Guide. I'm very low in the process. I have a long way to go. But a lot of these people, they dedicate themselves to it for six to eight years, or even less, sometimes for five years and they get the full certification. Granted they put a lot of effort and a lot of time into the process, I mean they're climbing everyday, thousands of feet everyday, guiding everyday, you know, working hard, but I don't think that makes them real mountain guides. I think that they're losing – the guiding industry is just as impacted as any other practice. Be it martial arts or a spiritual practice or something like that. Because there is a very specific spiritual component to it that is lost in the way that we sell courses. The classic example is you have the rich CEO's or lawyers, these people with tons of money who want to go and climb Mount Everest. They have success based on the skills of their Guides and the luck of the weather and obviously some hard work from them but they come through the process and they've just climbed the biggest mountain in the world and they've put in less effort than some people do on

much smaller peaks, you know? They haven't really learned anything. There wasn't any real hardship that forced them to learn; the failure in the process, even if they don't summit isn't – they aren't really going to understand that failure. I think that when we make a Yoga class so accessible, when we create a Karate class where we can have fifty students in the room that come whenever they feel like it, or not show up for a while then come back, when you have a mountain guiding experience where you can just show up for the day and get guided around the mountain, you lose this other thing.

**Mom:** Yeah.

**Justin:** This slow thing that gives a person a real understanding of something else.

And I don't know what that is, that ether, or that fodder of inspiration, that is the spark of life, that allows a person to be unafraid, allows a person to embrace risk, and not need structure all the time, that allows a person to live in the Taoist way and not call something "good" or "bad" and feel justified in their actions.

**Mom:** Yeah but if you look at it from another perspective, I grew up in Japan where life-long discipline whether they are a craftsman, or martial artist, or musician, or anything, ten years is still a baby. For example –

**Justin:** Sushi.

**Mom:** Sushi, yeah.

**Dad:** First ten years you cook rice.

**Mom:** My cousin who is a sushi chef, he graduated junior high, that is about twelve years old, he didn't go to high school because in Japan high school is not a

compulsory education. So he went to apprentice himself under a sushi master. First ten years he was not allowed to do anything but cook rice. That was all he did. And at the end of the tenth year, he started making sushi. But you know when you grow up in that kind of environment, it really makes you sick with tradition. I mean nothing moves fast. Except people walk fast. Also the masters are very critical, very judgmental, I mean not all of them, if they came to themselves or enlightenment. I didn't see many enlightened, or very spiritually matured masters.

**Justin:** Well every culture is going to have it's flaws right? So maybe part of that problem is that their focus is on the craft and nothing else.

**Mom:** No often times this happens, although that kind of tradition is beautified in American movies and stuff, what happens is when you are trained for so many years, a lifelong training, thirty, forty, fifty years, and finally you become a master, then you want to dump the same shit on other people.

**Justin:** Oh yeah it's the hazing tradition. Fraternity hazing.

**Mom:** Yeah, you have suffered that much so you want your apprentice or disciples to go through the same thing. I'm not saying they're all like that. Some of them really have the enlightenment from this art. But many of them want to dump this same shit on others. So what I'm trying to say is this, when we sent you and your brother to Judo I was quite disgusted by how they're teaching Judo in America or Aikido or Karate, yet America's culture gives a certain amount of good things that the other world cannot provide. In other words, you cannot continue worrying about "what happens if this happens?"

Or “all these people are not getting it. They are giving up in five or six years, or they think they have reached mastership having trained for five or six years.” You can’t continue worrying about it. You have to trust in the process of spiritual growth in the individual no matter what.

**Dad:** Yeah.

**Mom:** I mean it could be slow like a turtle, but it’s still moving. So you really have to trust in the individual’s higher self no matter what. Otherwise you’re going to want everyone to move as fast as you expect. And there comes your expectation.

**Justin [to Paul]:** Here’s another really big thing I want to get into but I don’t know how to engage it and maybe you have an idea or maybe it’s something that we have to think about more and we can return to the topic but – so interpersonal skills,

**Paul:** Right.

**Justin:** they don’t get taught on course.

**Paul:** What do you mean?

**Justin:** I don’t even know how to define them.

**Paul:** Oh interpersonal skills?

**Justin:** Yeah like, ok, say you had a student,

**Paul:** Yes.

**Justin:** say it was part of the curriculum for the SPI course to teach a SPI candidate how to improve their interpersonal skills, their soft skills, with clients.

**Paul:** Sure.

**Justin:** How would that lesson plan look? How would you teach them – because the way they treat it right now is it's either inherent or it's gained over time.

The SPI course is the American Mountain Guide Association's Single Pitch Instructor course. It is the most popular program with the organization. Currently it does not include a section on interpersonal skills. I am an Assistant Provider for these courses and exams and am certified as a SPI.

A single pitch of rock indicates a climb that is climbed with one rope length or less with no intermediate top rope anchors (or stopping points). ([amga.com/programs/SPI.php](http://amga.com/programs/SPI.php))

The American Mountain Guide Association is the only certifying organization in the US with international oversight providing guide and instructor trainings and certifications. They are monitored and accredited by the International Federation of Mountain Guides Association (IFMGA) and the Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme (UIAA).

**Paul:** I think that's completely false.

**Johanna:** I think you either have it or you don't.

**Paul:** Aw yeah I don't a – well... you're probably, Johanna's really good with interpersonal skills so I think that some people –

**Johanna:** *makes disagreeable sounds*

**Paul:** Yeah you are Johanna.

**Johanna:** That's so funny.

**Paul:** You're good at reading people.

**Johanna:** I'm good at reading people, that's different than interpersonal skills.

**Justin:** Well ok so here's an example, a lot of how I instruct is intuitive. I do a lot of intuitive instruction –

**Paul:** Maybe because someone hasn't defined it for you.

**Justin:** Exactly! So Patrick Weaver, what I gained more than anything with that workshop I did with him is that he put names and a way of teaching others



how to teach to what I had considered intuitive. When I decide to take a person to the side and do a one on one teach versus when I teach to a group, when I make the decision to use a person's error as a teachable moment to the group versus when I just tell them personally and then bring it up separately, unrelated to that person within a larger group, all of these things I've considered within myself as intuitive.

**Paul:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Then I saw Patrick Weaver take everything I thought was intuitive and he showed other people how to make those decisions consciously.

**Paul:** Right.

**Justin:** Right? So my question is, the things that I do intuitively in terms of interpersonal skills, how would I teach those?

**Justin [to Preston]:** That brings me to another thing that I was hashing out with Paul about interpersonal skills, or soft skills. How do you make that judgment call of what's appropriate terrain for a client?

**Preston:** You make a lot of mistakes. Unfortunately my experience is because you have to get really good situational experience around reading people and understanding what's happening and that means getting way outside of your own head. And it's not always possible especially when you're cold, wet, tired, and hungry, and so what ends up happening is you end up making a lot of mistakes – and God knows I've made about a billion of them. And each one you're like “ok, note to self, don't do that again.” Cause you say the wrong

thing, or whatever, you're trying to be provocative, or you're trying an angle that doesn't work.

**Justin [to Paul]:** Usually people can give pretty compelling anecdotal examples.

They say "oh yeah, the classic example of a husband and wife," and maybe the husband's really too hard on his wife so you separate them, you make the decision to work with them separately.

**Paul:** That's one way.

**Justin:** Yeah, that's one way.

**Paul:** Maybe not the best either.

**Justin:** Sure, and it's going to depend on the situation, so I guess my question is "how do you teach how to make the right decision?" You know what I mean?

**Paul:** Aw yeah, it could also have to do with your comfort with the material. You know the more comfortable you are – like I'm very comfortable with the material I teach a lot of times so I can focus more on communicating with clients and enjoy my experience with them. And if I'm enjoying the experience then they're enjoying it. You know what helps me actually with my interpersonal skills? Is being able to predict a pathway of outcomes. Maybe not the exact outcome, but speaking to my first time there, the reason I was more tight and rigid with my interpersonal skills and communicating with people was because I was worrying about things like "what if I went up there and my area was taken?" "What if my climbs were?"

**Johanna:** "My area!"

**Paul:** Yeah exactly, “my area”, it IS my area! And what if I went up there and the climbs – the area I had selected was taken. What if I went up there and the climbs were too hard? There were a lot of unknowns.

**Justin:** You’re spending more time just being stressed out about the “what ifs” and “buts” rather than knowing you can manage anything that might come your way.

**Paul:** If you can take some of the unpredictability out of a very unstructured environment and you can predict a few outcomes and make a few different pathways – I mean I know three or four different areas I can use for rappelling. I know how to link them into courses. I think that allows for comfort in interpersonal skills. That’s why it’s very key, a lot of times, when you’re instructing, guiding, or teaching, that you practice your material beforehand. Such as, if you’re onsite guiding, you’re probably not going to have great Interpersonal skills and that could be the determining factor of how much information a person takes in. I mean certainly if they have a connection with you they are going to learn a lot more.

**Justin:** Yeah, that’s definitely one facet that should be focused on in this topic because that’s something that’s actually tangible and applicable.

**Paul:** So if the AMGA (American Mountain Guide Association) was going to teach that, they would talk about preparation and practice of a lesson plan and then have people teach a lesson plan and become more comfortable teaching, and they can give them a few tips on how to create better interpersonal skills throughout the way, which bleeds into Johanna’s

**Justin:** use of icebreaker type –

**Paul:** or just the fact that she says that it's gained over time. She didn't say that it was gained over like twenty years. It could be gained, if you're good enough, it could be gained over a few short classes, to learn how to interact with people and enjoy yourself.

**Justin:** And intention goes a long way.

**Paul:** I think of it more as reading the person you are teaching to so that you know how to engage them best.

**Julie:** It's almost like a sound mixing board. "Ok, this person has a lot of anticipation of what might not happen or what might happen so then you like tweak it to compensate or this person is feeling pretty adventurous." I always think that it's a combination of all – you're reading all the different types of people and you're adjusting subtly to match that, which is why every experience is just different.

**Paul:** Someone comes up to you and says "I'm really excited for this class, I read John Long's book."

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| John Long is a famous climber who wrote a popular book on climbing anchors published by Falcon entitled <i>Climbing Anchors</i> . |
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**Justin [to Paul]:** Yeah.

**Paul:** And then you obviously want to acknowledge – good interpersonal skills might be acknowledging whatever previous experiences they've had or things like that and then teaching to that.

**Justin:** That informs you as to what kind of learner they are as well.

**Paul:** Correct. Not only what kind of learner they are but where they are in the learning process. Like you could have a class where if you did your standard Intro to Rock it wouldn't work out because nine out of ten of them came to you and they knew how to belay and climb at a climbing gym. You know, if you were listening to people in your class, you would kind of just breeze over that, and spend more time with the person that was – you know so adjusting your teaching style based on how people interact with you. So they're interacting with you.

**Justin:** Sure. So this all applies to how we engage teaching –

**Paul:** Yeah unconscious incompetent to unconscious competent.

**Justin:** Obviously interpersonal skills are going to tie directly in with teaching but they don't always need to. There are other types of interpersonal skills that play into your more classic guiding situation –

**Paul:** Having fun?

**Justin:** Having fun.

**Paul:** Yeah! Yeah, I agree with you. I have people who come in and teach for me and they go through all the curriculum and they're great but I'm like "you never had fun with them." That is a lack of interpersonal skill. You're so focused on the lesson plan and engaging people – like I do have instructors that come all the time they really want this person to climb this type of climb because it's the cool way to go instead of saying "who cares if it's a grungy 4<sup>th</sup> class corner? They made it to the top, they had a fun time." To them they did the best they could and more than they ever thought they would.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Metaphors. Like the stupid little metaphors that we use to be able to allow people to see whatever we want them to see. Which bleeds into interpersonal skills as well. Like our stupid little metaphor of “imagine I put a ladder up against the climbing wall” or “your shoe should fit like a glove but not OJ Simpson’s glove” which combines a lot of what you just talked about: a joke, but it plants an image in someone’s mind, something they can really relate to. It brings it out of the climbing context, something they’re very familiar with. You know and those to me are very valuable interpersonal skills, like even if they’re little cliché things you say over and over, as long as you can really sell it or come up with new stuff.

**Justin:** Yeah, or believe it. I mean I can say the same thing over and over again but I still think it’s funny.

**Paul:** And if the joke doesn’t go over well, if you’re willing to say “that was a bad joke, but hopefully you know how to fit your shoes now.” That is an interpersonal skill “oh yeah, bad joke, I tell it every time.” If you can at least sell that part.

**Justin:** Yeah yeah, it’s true.

**Paul:** Yeah, you’re either giving a good joke or bad joke the whole damn time! Or you know what, one thing I’ve been working on a lot, and certain people are really good at is when you’re instructing it’s not just giving information that they came there for. That to me is another interpersonal skill, and that goes into what you were saying “learning with your students.” Like you should

know the history of the area you're in. Give them something that they didn't think –

**Justin:** and that'd actually elicit excitement in yourself, "hey I was thinking that I didn't know enough about this area and so I did a bunch of research and this shit is cool!"

**Paul:** Yes! Right! "Did you know they were going to build a white house for the president on this piece of property? We should go up and see it it's really silly."

**Justin:** (Laughing)

**Paul:** And there is a place around here that does that. I think interpersonal skills go beyond the technical, it goes into talking to people about things that aren't related in the classroom at all. Like I've talked to people about – somebody just happened to bring up football.

**Justin [to Tina]:** Interpersonal skills or soft skills is an aspect of guiding that's really important and actually resonated with me numerous times in our conversation when talking about evaluating your audience and evaluating the players in your production. And based on this both global as well as regional as well as production scope you're making certain assumptions but you're trying not to assume because obviously you're cognizant of that but there is some assumption in that process. Or not even assumption but this gut feeling of what's appropriate, or what's going to be.

**Tina:** What's going to be well received. Is it going to be too heavy? Is it going to be too dark?

**Justin:** Exactly, are you going to put something out there that's so intense that connecting –

**Tina:** Can they find their way in? I mean *The Empire Builders* approached that.

That we found – I love the play, but it was a really dark, intense play, that a lot of people really had a hard time to find their way into.

*The Empire Builders* is an absurdist play written by Boris Vian.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Tina:** So that is an outer limit for us right now. You gotta open the doors wide enough,

**Justin:** and that might be something more appropriate if you have a production specific to subscribers of the IRC [Idiopathic Ridiculopathy Consortium], or people that have been to other productions, a select audience almost, like a hand picked audience. That would be interesting right?

**Tina:** Yeah.

**Justin:** So interpersonal skills or soft skills, it's this essential component to guiding but it's hardly ever been defined. Nobody likes to talk about it, and people just see it as something that's intuitive. And I can resonate with that, it's fine with me because it's intuitive to me, but I see other people struggling with it. And I wish there was a cognitive way to dissect it and teach it to somebody else. "This is how you have soft skills" you know? And I see that being something similar in your field, I just think that maybe it comes from two sides, one your ability to be sociable at all,

**Tina:** Mm hmm.



**Justin:** and two, your investment in the inspired work. You need both. You need to be inexorably tied to the work. Obviously you're not going to care enough or you're not going to know it in your heart enough, because we're working on a heart based level rather than a heady level right?

**Tina:** Mm hmm.

**Justin:** And then you actually have to really care (laughing) about who you're sharing it with, otherwise it's irrelevant.

**Tina:** It does lose something, I'll tell you. I mean the heart starts to shrink a little bit when you're not quite resonating on the same level and then you have to figure out why is that? Is it because they just – I mean, do they want to but they just don't have the skills?

**Justin:** Yeah yeah yeah yeah.

**Tina:** You know what I mean? You kind of have to really look beneath the surface and see what's really at work there, what's really going on, and what really are they able to take in?

**Justin [to Paul]:** Oh ok, so this is something that I've been thinking. It's not that profound, it's actually pretty simple.

**Paul:** Well somebody's probably already researched it.

**Justin:** Well no, it's way smaller of an idea than that.

**Paul:** (Laughs)

**Justin:** This is something that I had a huge epiphany about on this trip, and it has to do with your investment in – like to be a good Guide you need to be – your investment in what your guiding a person to needs to be just as profound as

the student's – or more than what the student is going towards. So we are guiding people, say again toward a mountain, to simplify it; or towards skills on a single pitch crag.

**Paul:** Mm hmm.

**Justin:** Ok? Our investment in our skills on the single pitch crag need to be exceptional. We also need to be constantly learning.

**Paul:** Right.

**Justin:** If we ever get to a place where we feel like we've gotten there "I'm there! I've hit my terminal degree. I can't learn another thing."

**Paul:** Right.

**Justin:** Then I feel like you're going to be a terrible instructor.

**Paul:** Yeah, I don't know.

**Justin:** Or at least your interpersonal skills are going to suffer. Because you're not in it with your students anymore. If I'm still learning from being in the mountains, which I feel like an infant most of the time, I feel like about the age I've actually been climbing. I feel like a ten year old.

**Paul:** Right.

**Justin:** But because I feel that way, I feel kind of humbled or pretty shitty about who I am as a climber, I know that I can engage my students really well, because they're novices and they're like "oh I don't know anything." "I'm right there with you man, but this is what I can show you."

**Paul:** Right.

**Juliet:** Compassion is the most difficult to get through, you have to go through so many different obstacles to get to that point. So when you see someone that doesn't have it you're like "oh you're still struggling in this bottom part of the pyramid," you know? I mean not like I'm fucking perfect or anything now, I'm just like –

**Justin [to Juliet]:** Sure are you saying that getting to the point of compassion – because you have to wade through the shit yourself – to actually truly have compassion you have to get it?

**Juliet:** Yeah.

**Nate:** Often times I won't be able to work on a new writing project or I won't be able to begin it or make progress with it until somehow I've learned some kind of personal lesson for myself in real life, because then I just don't have the perspective needed in order to convey the message that I want. So if I have to write a character that has to gain some kind of mastery over something, and it's analogous to me gaining mastery over some practical aspect of what's going on around me – if I can't do it myself then I can't make my character do it. And if I try to make them then I can but it doesn't seem to me to be very authentic. So I seem to always have to make progress in daily living before I can make any progress in fiction.

**Justin [to Paul]:** Something that I used to see that I really liked amongst a lot of Instructors that worked for Art Mooney was that in the beginning of a weekend – say we spent two days with clients, they'd be like "I'm really excited to do this course because" and then they would describe something

about the potential learning outcomes and what people would gain from the experience and then also how much they really liked being up in this particular environment themselves.

**Paul:** Sure.

**Justin:** So it connected them to the students and what the students were going to get.

**Paul:** Right.

**Justin:** But it also humbled themselves and said “hey I’m still getting my rocks off on this.”

**Paul:** Yeah.

**Preston:** I think though that what’s important in that, what’s implicit in that is that you’re guiding somebody else’s experience. I think why Guides are often giving a bad experience is so often, too often you get a typically male, typically sort of middle-age guy who’s just trying to relive his glory days. And instead of trying to chart your experience he’s trying to relive something and chart his own experience back to his own certainty through you. And you see this in religion, you see this in guiding services – I’m not saying women don’t do this, I’m saying I see it more commonly in men.

**Justin [to Preston]:** Yeah.

**Preston:** And that can be a really destructive process. That’s why often times people say “oh Guides.” They get this image in their head of a bunch of wack jobs.

**Justin:** Yeah, I mean the investment in the student is so key, and what you're talking about the bad wrap of the Guide is often because their investment is only in the mountain and not in the student as well.

**Preston:** Or their ego.

**Justin:** Or themselves. They're still trying to enter into liminality themselves but they don't even know that that's what they're getting after.

**Julie:** The love of whatever that activity is – should that be greater than the ability to read a person?

**Justin [to Julie and Tino]:** So then that's the other side that I see, is that, then the investment in the student needs to be ideally equally matched but at least strong enough to be able to read a person and be able to truly empathize so that you can figure out how best to introduce them.

**Julie:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Or to facilitate the connection.

**Justin [to Raphael]:** I like the clarity that the Neophyte or the future practitioner of shamanic arts remains an Initiate though out the process. Because for me that does a number of things. One it prevents them from ever resting on their laurels and they continue to have a humbleness that allows them to learn more and to grow with the world that is also growing at all times. Second it gives them a direct investment in their own students, the Initiates that will be underneath them, because they themselves are on that same path, and it's kind of like the reverse of hazing in a Fraternal order. It's like you're invested in making sure that the ones that are – not even below you

but in the initial stages of being chosen by a Spirit Guide or which ever spirit helpers are helping or selecting them, you are encouraging awareness or helping to ease them into the process.

**Raphael:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Maybe create willingness, helping them with the willingness or something.

**Raphael:** Yeah a big part of it is directing and showing the way. It's the leading them.

**Justin:** Or at least helping them with the parameters, showing them the boundaries so that they can be more effective in their wandering.

**Raphael:** Yeah.

**Justin:** Maybe, something like that.

**Preston:** I think what's hard is that when you encounter a true guide, a Keith King, or a Phil Costello, or a Paul Petzoldt, these are folks that, while they have

I actually don't know much about Keith King other than his association with the Association for Experiential Education. Phil Costello was the director of Project Use, an Outdoor Education Institution based in New Jersey that works with at-risk-youth.

their flaws, no question they were human beings, and they made mistakes, when they engaged, when they fully engaged, they engaged on your behalf. And I think that that is something that's extraordinary because they can stand in the liminal zone with you without getting in your way or distracting you, but at the same time keep you from falling into the abyss.

PODACST: CONCLUSION

**Justin [to you]:** In the Conclusion I've brought my advisor Baco Ohama and undergraduate peer Olli Johnson in to help me express my ideas around the Guide versus the Instructor topic. After that the podcast moves on to discuss tracking success and finding the "true self". Hopefully this will bring together many of the ideas previously discussed into a place of temporary completion.

**Justin [to Baco Ohama and Olli Johnson]:** Remember yesterday we were talking about – I started going on a rant about Instructor versus Guide? I had emailed Ron Funderburke who is a Certified Rock Guide who works down in North Carolina, he was one of my evaluators for becoming an instructor for the American Mountain Guide Association, for their Single Pitch Instructor pool, to become a SPI Provider. He's a really smart, well thought Guide, a really good Instructor, but he has a very different opinion about the difference between a Guide and an Instructor. This is kind of a common division made within the industry but I'm starting to realize more and more that it might have just come out of, kind of, assumptions made in the industry?

**Justin [to you]:** The model used by the AMGA to divide the Instructor and Guide is rooted in a Transactional Leadership Style; specifically a very reductive Contingency Leadership Theory perspective in conjunction with a rigid application of Style Theory, using terrain as the major determining element in regards to which leader we prepare in which manner.

“Transactional leadership applies to leaders who are task oriented and able to direct their groups in specific ways to accomplish finite goals” (Martin 47).

“Contingency leadership theory explains leadership in terms of an individual’s style of leadership and the response from the group... leaders...focus on either the job to be done or the people in the group” (Martin 46).

Style Theory is the theory of leadership I outlined before that chooses from an Autocratic, Democratic, or Abdicratic approach (Martin 45).

**Justin [to Baco and Olli]:** And it’s frustrating because the outcomes in terms of how

Guides and Instructors treat their clients in terms of interpersonal skills, I feel like, are negatively impacted by that division made in just the language. So I asked him for his opinion. And he wrote me: “Sure Justin, the topic usually comes up when we talk about the AMGA. I discuss how the association has three major credential branches: the Instructor certification, the Guide certification, and accreditation.” And obviously accreditation is just them monitoring an institution making sure that they meet certain minimum standards, but then the fact that the AMGA has a defined Instructor certification and Guide certification makes a distinction which to me seems problematic, and he was surprised that I didn’t see the clear difference. And I was like “yeah a lot of people in the industry don’t see the difference, they are frustrated with that distinction.” And he’s like “really?” Then he rattled off a list of defining characteristics of each. So I asked him for that list again on the email I sent him “well here’s the differences: Guide’s work with objective goals, usually the summit of something, they have low ratios” between the clients and the guides, “they usually work alone, they use directive language like ‘you climb first’ ‘you will clean’ ‘you will belay’.” Which is very



Autocratic, for me that describes that style of leadership. And then “Guides usually call their participants clients. Whereas an Instructor has subjective goals, usually something skill based like teaching a person movement or teaching a person how to put on a harness, how to tie knots, how to belay. They usually work in higher ratios,” like a six to one, six students to one instructor. “They often work in teams,” multiple instructors out in the field together, “and they use more interrogative language like ‘who’d like to climb first? Who’d like to belay?’” So more of a Democratic Leadership Style. And then Instructors have “students”. So the first problem I have with this is that there are plenty of Guide services like Exum Mountain Guides which is a Guide service that works in the Teton National Park, and they do a three day training before they take people up the Grand Teton where they teach the group how to work in rope teams of seven. So they have really high ratios to begin with. They’re also teaching subjective skills before their summit bid day. And maybe they use Directive language, maybe they use interrogative language but I see that more of a Leadership Style based on when it’s necessary. So if you’re in an environment that’s hostile and it’s important to move people around in a very specific way, not giving them the choice for how they move around, like if you’re in an area where you could get frost bite in what feels like a few seconds if your skin’s exposed you’d be directive with a person “get your gloves back on!”

**Olli:** Maybe it’s to the particular personality of the –

**Justin:** Exactly! So it's super subjective. The leadership style that you take, the approach that you take in talking to the student has to do with: your terrain, the amount of time that you have to work with, the objectives of the day, those being personal objectives, guide objectives, group objectives, the interpersonal skills with the students, and the capacity of the Guide to do what they have to do. And all of those things factor into a decision of leadership style, but it certainly isn't defined by whether or not you're a Guide or an Instructor. And whether or not you're a Guide or an Instructor certainly isn't defined by the terrain that you're working in, like whether I'm on a big mountain or I'm working with people on a hundred foot cliff. He [Ron] does go on to say, once he defines these types of roles, that "sometimes a Guide acts like an Instructor or an Instructor acts like a Guide." So he does recognize that there's cross over between the two, and I'm not arguing with him that this is the popular thought amongst a lot of people in the field. What I am arguing is that because we continue to perpetuate this language and create a separation between one and the other, it negatively impacts both Guides and Instructors in how they deal with their students. How they interact with them interpersonally. Because "an Instructor's goals are delivering skills", and "because a Guide's goals are getting them to the summit and back down." This takes out all the other objectives that might be unspoken or unconscious to the student, and it also insinuates that Guides should always be

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| <p>His name is Michael Useem. I continue to reference his book <i>The Leadership Moment</i>. The particular section of the book I emphasize is on page 54.</p> |
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autocratic or that Instructors should always be interrogative. The example I gave Baco yesterday – there’s a guy who writes about leadership and works for Wharton School of Business, he talks about this incident report in which a Firefighter took trainees out into wildfires to train them in this high risk area. And the entire time he was speaking to them in a very autocratic way, just telling them what to do and kind of bossing them around for days. And when they got into a situation where the wildfire was out of control and they’re surrounded by fire, he did come up with the first idea of creating a back burn, he invented the back burn on the spot.

**Olli:** The what?

**Justin:** The back burn, he’s like “let’s burn this area that we’re in and then the fire will jump over us. So if there’s no fuel left in this area then we’re going to be safe.” So it was a controlled burn.

**Justin [to you]:** He actually lit an escape fire. Reimagined, but once popularly used by Native Americans in prairie wild fires. I don’t have the story perfectly spelled out here, but the leadership moral maintains, that because he did not build group trust and communication he lost the confidence of his team before he utilized an inventive, but to them seemingly untrustworthy, technique.

**Justin [to Baco and Olli]:** So he said this to the group in the same leadership manner that he had been delivering and since the stress was so high at that point, people were fed up, they hit this breaking point and they finally said “no, we’re not listening to you”. And they all died,

**Justin [to you]:** thirteen died.

**Justin [to Baco and Olli]:** And he was the only one that survived,

**Justin [to you]:** two others survived.

**Justin [to Baco and Olli]:** It speaks to – on one hand –

**Olli:** Because he had been using this tone the whole time –

**Justin:** Yeah because his interpersonal skills sucked!

**Olli:** Because they were feeling a power thing – somehow in this moment of panic –

**Justin:** Because he was abusing – he was abusing – it was probably appropriate at that point to use an autocratic tone like he did but –

**Olli:** Yeah.

**Justin:** But because he had been doing that – it's like crying wolf. He'd been doing it the whole time in moments that it wasn't essential to be so directive, that then people just kind of stood up for themselves. They were just like "no, that's not how we're doing this."

**Olli:** As opposed to having trust be built throughout that process.

**Justin:** Yeah, exactly. And I see that – certainly not amongst all Guides. There's plenty of Guides who understand the incorporation of the "Instructor" sensibilities with the "Guide" sensibilities. And they probably don't even think about it, they just naturally do both. I think that it's just a disservice to especially young Guides coming in or people who come into the field and their intentions behind the work is largely personally motivated, they just want to spend time in the mountains. Because they're not consciously thinking about improving themselves as a Guide or an Instructor, they're just

thinking about fitting the mold that is created. So, I think that, when you create a template it's super important for that template to be holistic, otherwise the people who need the "cookie cutter" and just like "fill in the blanks" are going to be thrown off track. And so I think that's the huge problem with creating this division between one and the other.

**Baco:** But wouldn't they be – I don't know what you want to call them, clients, or whatever; some of them are there literally to learn so they take other people out on guided trips and some just want someone to lead them on this adventure. Isn't that the difference?

**Justin:** Sure, that's how *they* define the difference, you have an experience-based day, and that would be with the Guide and then you have a skill-based day, which is with the Instructor. But part of the problem is that the AMGA divides those tracks according to terrain. So the Climbing Wall Instructor is indoor terrain, the Single Pitch Instructor, so that's like one rope length, anywhere from two hundred feet and below is an Instructor. And the Rock Instructor terrain climbs up to eight hundred feet or so. And once you branch beyond that and you get into more demanding terrain where you have thousand foot climbs that are difficult –

**Baco:** Then all of a sudden you're a Guide?

**Justin:** Now you're a Guide because the terrain – they create this arbitrary – well it's not totally arbitrary, it definitely has some truth to it, it becomes harder and you have more situations,

**Justin [to you]:** bigger terrain exposes climbers to more risks, often demanding a faster pace and more situations that call for autocratic leadership.

**Olli:** Well if you've reached that point of terrain it means that you already have skills probably –

**Justin [to Baco and Olli]:** No, no, because people – for example the Alpine terrain, the Tetons are considered Guide terrain, kind of makes sense right? Twelve thousand foot mountains, long day climbs, but there are students who've maybe had no experience before, and have never climbed a mountain going there, and often they come out of it without transferrable skills to other forms of climbing. They just know how to climb that mountain. Because Exum Mountain Guides has developed techniques specifically for moving large parties through that terrain.

**Baco:** Why would they want to take people out on a trip like that if they've had no instruction?

**Justin:** Well they do a couple of days of pre-instruction. It's not a 'why?' Really the why comes down to "push them through, make some money." Because it's such a little respected industry in the eyes of the American population; the low demand for it, forces the cost to stay low and therefore the way that they go about it – it's interesting, the economic dynamics of why we do things the way we do is weird to me. I mean, ideally for me, you are invested in the mountain, you're at the mountain, somebody comes to you, they've had a certain amount of experience before they come to you, they seek you out, and

then it's the classic mentorship sort of role. It's just not set up for that in terms of our –

**Baco:** So it really makes me think of – it brings you right back to the word “Guide”.

There are so many ways the word is interpreted and used.

**Justin:** Yeah, yeah.

**Baco:** Obviously in that industry it seems like it is used in a particular kind of way.

**Justin:** It's become a commodity in a sense.

**Baco:** But the word “Guide” on a deeper level is something quite different.

**Justin:** And that's what I think, it has application within this industry. It definitely has transferrable components. But because it's not intentional in the way that we define roles we lose something huge. And I'm all about hitting the summit and getting the group objectives done for the day, I think they're great. You know I think that it's awesome to fulfill people's egos and for people to be psyched on getting to the top of something really hard and feel accomplished and make it back “safely”, back to the ground, you know I think that's all groovy. It's great, but –

**Baco:** So is the problem one of language for you then?

**Justin:** No, the prob –

**Baco:** And the implication of what lies behind that categorization?

**Justin:** The categorization keeps people lazy (unintentional). It gives them the opportunity to be lazy in – I mean it's a problem I have with people in general – not people in general but some people, who want a set of rules rather than to make judgment based decisions, and to define something for themselves.

Because I certainly don't want to create a new template that would create another dogma. But I do think that creating some kind of guideline that does have an opportunity for openness, or that encourages judgment based thinking and in terms of how we define ourselves and how we can define success to a client and to address what other outcomes come out of a day beyond just summing.

**Olli:** So is your ideal situation sort of a fluid motion between instructing and guiding and something having the ability to make the judgment in the situation of what is needed?

**Justin:** Yeah so I see them just like leadership styles right? Just as you switch back and forth between Autocratic and Democratic leadership styles you are constantly switching back and forth between being a Guide and an Instructor.

**Olli:** Based on the situation.

**Justin:** Yeah it's really simple in terms of practice. It's very simple, I just feel like because that distinction is made people aren't doing that. Kind of a laissez-faire attitude you know?

**Olli:** Yeah. Well I mean, it's a different field but, in education –

**Baco:** I was just thinking, in so many fields.

**Olli:** There's different kinds of teachers, the Montessori School of thought, or the Waldorf School of thought, I don't even know what the dominant school of thought is but –

**Justin:** I don't think it's defined.



**Olli:** More of the putting information into people as opposed to drawing information out. If there are distinctions made, sometimes those categories are helpful because you can be like “shoot I didn’t know I was doing that thing where I was imposing knowledge on someone, so now that I know this other category I can shift my thinking” but then, the danger I guess of that category is that you can reject one category and only –

**Justin:** Yeah so it’s about taking bits and pieces from everything right? So instead of defining your role and naming you, it’s naming pedagogies, it’s naming leadership styles, it’s naming risk management styles, it’s not naming you. And then you can be like “yeah, I borrow from these categories. These are things I pull from through the day, and then ultimately I’m using judgment to make those decisions based on my student, based on the terrain, based on what I think the explicit risks are of that moment.”

**Baco:** Yeah and the weather – I mean really being present in that moment, whatever is going to be involved in what you face. I don’t know if it’s the ultimate hope, but that you have this growing set of skills and ways of understanding various situations and all kinds of knowledge that keeps growing, and in any situation you tap into what’s the most appropriate, and use that.

I was really pleased with that conversation with Baco and Olli. Knowing that they are both thoughtful and insightful persons, but also knowing that they had little to no prior knowledge of the Climbing Guide world, allowed me to really hash out some ideas in a way that I would not have if I were speaking with a peer in the industry. This dialogue was recorded after all the others, and in revisiting it, it feels clear that I had formed a better understanding of the information and opinions I had gathered through my research (both the social and traditional resources). So moving past this topic of “Instructor vs. Guide” I revisit the doubtful voice in the back of my head, “is any of this useful? Are we trying to change people? Probably not, but if we wanted to, how effectively could we?”

**Tina [to Julie and Tino]:** It's interesting I always wish there was follow ups to  
guided trips that really gauged –

**Tino:** Like thirty days after or ninety days after?

**Justin:** Yeah “what do you remember from the trip? What has changed from your  
life? Has anything changed?”

**Julie:** Beyond a day, not just the next day but –

**Justin:** Has anything stuck from your experience? And it's not even “oh yeah,  
mountains are really cool.”

**Tino:** Aside from frost bite.

**Justin:** Oh yeah, exactly, aside from the wind-nip on your face. It's always kind of  
bothered me about a lot of things we do, the temporary impact.

**Tino:** So you're assuming that a lot of results of what you do is just not taken in and  
ingrained, that people just do it for an experience like an amusement park  
ride, where they get enjoyment and they get value from the experience but  
ninety days later they're not going to be talking about it.

**Justin [to Preston]:** Have they done post-graduation kind of um...

**Preston:** Studies?

**Justin:** Studies to see how people that have gone through your program fared  
comparatively in terms of –

**Preston:** Um, as you probably know from the research, one it's very hard to do that  
research; which variable do you write, and which decline, and which to  
reemerge? And so um... no. The answer is “no”.

**Justin:** I guess it would be largely anecdotal at that point, anything that you derive from it would be a personal victory that you might hear via email or something like that.

**Preston:** Yeah. Yup, absolutely.

**Tina:** We just got done doing this – we got some money, a little bit of money to do what’s called an Intrinsic Impact Study. So, a lot of times you look at the numbers behind shows “ok it’s this much box office, this many numbers, this many people.” But this idea of measuring the emotional value of something, “how do you measure the impact something has on you?” So that’s the sort of area of study – it’s been going on for a number of years now and there’s a group out in California looking at this, and there was a little money available to organizations – so anyway we did this. And we tested, we used this intrinsic measurement on our last show which is *Ivona*. It’s by Gombrowicz who’s a Polish writer – very well known in Poland, like the Shakespeare in his time; in America hardly anybody knows him. And we thought it would be an interesting show to measure because the question is always looming up there “how far out can we go with this? Can we only do Beckett and Ionesco, is that all the diet can take, or can we introduce writers that no one’s ever heard before?” That show that I saw, that changed me for good, *the Chairs*, had a universal message. Even though it was 290 something people or apparently 90 something people and a bunch of imaginary people on stage and a bunch of chairs and a bunch of what some people consider non-sense language although in that play there’s a little more of a plot than in some, it

had universal meaning. What we found in that survey which was really fascinating is that most people did not know the author and yet it was the most recognizable. Like many people rated it, of those who had seen other productions by the company, as one of the most accessible. They'll say "I loved it." And this is what intrinsic impact is about "well, we're going to try to define what 'love' is, so what do you mean by that? Can you tell me?" "Well it was just the whole..." and they don't have a word – and this is even in the people filling out the survey. "Tell us your feelings about the show," right after the show, within 48 hours of having seen the show, it had to be fresh. "What did you feel? Did you talk to other people? Did it make you want to do anything as a result of that? Like act in some way? Or did it give you a greater understanding of yourself and the world around you?" And the responses that came back were fascinating. And in some cases it's instinctual for them too, "I can't really tell you," a lot of them answered on the survey. Cause we said to them "did you do anything to prepare for this? Did you read about the author? Did you read about the work?" And they were like – most of them said – I mean like thirty percent said "I did some kind of reading" or "I read a review." But a huge number, and this is really surprising to the guy out in California who's running the whole thing, "an enormous amount of people came because they were curious."

**Justin:** Interesting.

**Tina:** Who knows, but you could interpret that as they were receptive, they were open to it.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Tina:** And feeling as you're performing the work on stage – and a lot of what we do is direct address, there is no wall between us and the audience, you can feel on any given night – it's just energy in the room floating around, you can feel where they're kind of at when they come in and then they see the kind of style of it and get where it's going and then depending upon how many other seers you have in the audience that will allow that to be broken down even more – like what's most amazing and why I like working in the small environment is you get to see each and every night this new exchange of possibility that can be smashed down in any number of ways. But what's fascinating about it is even though the communication, the feedback loop in the exchange might get a little bit static because people might not be entirely open or because they're hiding a little bit in their heads because they're not quite ready, that's what's happening on this end of the stage, in this sort of unabashed, unapologetic... stance can soften – I mean it's enough energy that people want to jump on the bus. The idea is “I want everybody in that audience to get on the stage and do exactly what we're doing.”

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Tina:** When you start from the fact that public speaking is like the number one biggest fear next to snakes or whatever.

**Justin:** (Laughing)

**Tina:** But getting up in front of people – and even with actors I try to say to them, and I say to myself all the time when I get caught up in the performance end

of it that you're just as much an audience for me right now as I am for you. I'm talking, but what you're doing is affecting, to some degree – I haven't been paying that much attention because I'm kind of in my head.

**Justin:** (Laughing)

**Tina:** But if I really was paying attention, and I was paying better attention I would realize that I'm probably on a tangent right now.

**Justin:** No, you're on.

**Tina:** But you know what I mean? I think that's what I'm trying to train everyone to be in better communication with each other. Because I don't know, it's taught me time and time again, that there is this intangible.

**Justin:** I'd be curious to see what a follow up –

**Tina:** I can show you.

**Justin:** No I mean a follow up, the uh –

**Tina:** the survey?

**Justin:** A follow up survey say six months down the line?

**Tina:** Right.

**Justin:** You know what I mean? Like just in terms of thinking about permanence of change or –

**Tina:** Yeah “are you still thinking about that?”

**Justin:** Or is it something that actually turned thoughts into action or?

**Tina:** To measure did you take any action as a result of this?

**Justin:** Exactly.

**Justin [to Preston]:** I felt a certain comfort or security with the way that I've read about Rites of Passage being played out. That there is a reintegration into community, because there had to be. I think the big difference between some of the indigenous cultures that practice Rites of Passage and some of our more unconscious efforts at it within our society is that the entire community, since it's small enough was really ready to accept that person as the new person that they come back as, if a boy went off to become a man, when he came back his mother wouldn't treat him the same, wouldn't treat him like a boy anymore, now she treats him like a man. Are there not spaces within our culture for something that resembles more of an intentional community? You know, it's not going to be a tribe obviously.

**Preston:** Yes, but you're talking to me about isolated and extreme examples, so yes you could absolutely – if you were willing to put in all that commitment, you could create that, but for the guiding that you're talking to me about it's more of a one on one kind of a thing. You're not going to get the reemergence. The reemergence has to happen within you. You have to reimagine yourself. You can't allow for the reinforcement of others.

**Justin:** ...what does that do to a person? Our culture has a tendency of becoming more individualized or what's the term I'm looking for? "Isolated," in a sense, right?

**Preston:** Even the leaders of tribes are isolated. The king of a tribe is isolated, because they have to make decisions that will benefit some and cost others, and as a result they have to remain distant. And so I would argue that the

path towards self-actualization whether you're in tribes or not, is a path of isolation and independence. If you want the comfort of community you cannot travel the path that we are talking about.

**Justin:** Yeah, and that makes sense for why the Guide classically is the madman who people both revere and are scared of as well.

**Preston:** Yeah.

**Justin:** He lies in that boundary between the civil and the wild.

**Preston:** Yeah.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** So you're working in painting, are you still doing stuff with dolls and sculpture and things like that?

**Juliet:** That's the thing I've been worrying about. I've been like "should I go 3D with the dollhouse thing?" But I don't know if I'm as good at it. It's weird, you don't get to pick what you're good at.

**Justin:** No you don't.

**Juliet:** Sometimes the thing that you're good at, that's more liked by other people, isn't the thing that you want to do.

**Justin:** Yeah. My buddy Rob, I interviewed him for this as well, Rob said the same thing. He was like "you know if I had it my way I'd be a concert violinist or something." You know?

**Juliet:** Yeah.

**Justin:** "That would be the expression I chose." He's like "this is alright. This works. It's fine." But –



**Juliet:** But it always feels like some other medium will be – you think someone else has it easier –

**Justin:** Or something is way more appropriate for what you're trying to communicate.

**Juliet:** Totally.

**Justin:** And you're like "fuck, I have to try and communicate this with a painting? Or like, words?"

**Juliet:** Yeah.

**Justin:** For me it's like "words?" Are you fucking kidding?

**Juliet:** Really?

**Justin:** I mean, sometimes words are adequate, but then sometimes you're just an asshole for writing words. Like you can be an asshole so easily for writing words, you know what I mean?

**Juliet:** Yeah.

**Justin:** And other people can just express themselves – like Jesse, my brother, works with words, but he works in a series.

**Juliet:** Yeah and images.

**Justin:** So he never has to spell it out, ever. He's never responsible for spelling it out. He keeps on drawing and there's no end in sight, there's no final – he doesn't work within the confines of a short story or a novel, he works in a non-stop –

**Juliet:** Yeah.

**Justin:** And so his world creates its own rules and anyone can play into it and see what they want. He gets to be there, and people can be like “oh Jesse’s like this or this or this, or his world is like this, he’s trying to communicate x, y, and z” but it’s constantly changing and there’s no confines imposed on Jesse besides a basic framework that he initially set. You know?

**Juliet:** Yeah, so he’s not trapped.

**Justin:** He’s not, but then I’m trying to write a short novel and I’m fucking trapped.

**Juliet:** But you don’t know, Jesse might feel trapped too.

**Justin:** Well he probably does. I mean I’m just complaining about my shit.

**Rob:** You know, you got to stay in one place sometimes and stick with the same theme.

**Justin [to Rob]:** Yeah.

**Rob:** Michelangelo would never have done *Night and Day* and *The David* and stuff like that if he hadn’t gotten static and they’re the masterpieces of humanity. Looking at *Night and Day*, this incredible sculpture in the Medici Chapel, there had to be – there had to be a solidity to this man who made these sculptures, and his infrastructure and all that sort of stuff but he was obviously sky rocketing into the Stratosphere –

**Justin:** Well, exactly! So –

**Rob:** There is a dichotomy there –

**Justin:** It’s seen as contradictory that “ok you’re trying to be free and open” – for me it first assumes this idea that you’re wafting,

**Rob:** Right.

**Justin:** that you're never anchored,

**Rob:** Well.

**Justin:** but ritual for example, is such a critical component in change – and actually Anna's aunt Sandy Huckleberry brought up this point "it's really hard to give yourself away and to allow yourself to change completely if you don't have a sense of who you are in the first place." Like having that sense of self, even if it's illusionary –

**Rob:** The goal is never –

**Justin:** You build that foundation and then you give it away. And then you build a different one and then you give it away.

**Rob:** I kind of disagree, at least with the language that you're using. I see it as always building and just looking for what the "true voice" is, and I think that true voice is maybe innate. Maybe it's developed in the first five or six years, who your parents are, what your DNA is, where you were born in the country. I mean you have a really interesting mix, culturally, you've had exposure to Japan and stuff. But I've always recognized you as who you are, you're name's Justin – I mean I'd be really shocked and upset if you became a different person. You're a more nuanced person; you're a more disciplined person; you find the tools to be the person who you are, with the right voice coming out. That the challenge, it's not really being up to shake yourself up all the time, only if it's natural or needed, it's not like – maybe when you're forming you need to do a Peyote experience or a Carlos Castaneda type experience or those types of things but at a certain point, if you're going to be

a type of person who is a contributor of art of any form then there is something that has to be – the core aspect of it needs to be solid, not immobile, but like I'm saying, like Michelangelo, you got to have all that marble, you got to have all those weighty things and have spent the time to develop the mastery of the tools. And if you're a wordsmith you can be wherever, unless it's too distracting, but a supposed mastery in the "ten thousand hour rule" of life is really so true; even you practicing the cartoons, those kinds of practices and those kinds of disciplines. So you have to evolve, but for me Michelangelo, he could have been a real asshole, you know the Medici, he was very political, he was dealing with all that, but internally what must have been going on in this man to create this art, you know? It's not about the external stuff sometimes so much as about the internal. The traveling, the evolution, you know, was less definable but it went to a level that I think that if it's been hit by any other human being – it's kind of questionable if it's ever been hit.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Rob:** We're at different points. You know we feel a real kinship and we always have, for thirteen years since you were nineteen or twenty, and you're one of the rare people I don't feel an age difference with unless you want to go paddle in a canoe or something, but we're the same slice of the pie, there's no doubt about that, but we're at different stages. I mean, I'm at a stage where – actually I want to kind of break out of some things, but you know I have put in the time regularly now for twenty years to do what it is that is my

expression. And you're just entering that phase of – you got your bottles pretty close (laughs), no your writing and all that sort of stuff, you're doing well as far as experience, but you're on the cusp of it. You're on the cusp of entering where you start to build master level craft.

A reference to my ability to play over 13 notes on a Five-Hour Energy bottle.

**Justin:** Sure.

**Rob:** So if you have an internal path going and you have things that you're developing with nuance and depth, you know, quality as a philosopher and artist, you have to have a vehicle to put that stuff out, otherwise it doesn't keep flowing. So either you have an output that you have techniques available, whether it's a piano or for me found materials, cameras and stuff, it doesn't really matter to me, you know?

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Rob:** I mean if I could chose I probably would have been a violin player or a singer, trying to get the same thing. Though that's a little bit different, we're more like composers than players.

**Justin:** For sure, I've always felt like I am more of a composer than a technician. I'm definitely not a musician; I'm a composer; I'm definitely an artist and not a technician.

**Rob:** I do feel like now when I come to do work, I'm thirty years into doing this on a weekly basis at least, if not a daily basis, and thinking about these things all the time, something changes when you get twenty years, ten years of working in a realm. I've painted and did sculpture, drew and took

photographs, and played the guitar, all these different things, but at some point it's culminated to it doesn't matter what the materials are or what the art is, it's more about if you have enough proficiency and enough experience to be able to use your true voice and make that connection to the output, it's in there.

**Justin:** Sure.

**Rob:** If I have done anything... well maybe if I've done anything I've found my true voice. I'm trying to expand on it and develop it so to me the idea of imposing anything I'm about on somebody else, that would be counter intuitive because it's all about them finding themselves. It's not them repeating anything that I've done. You can arrive though, you can arrive and rest with enough insight into who you are and what life is. Arrive and rest, looking out the window to where you're going, or taking a set of stairs and walking on a different plateau. For me it's been simple my whole life. I'm hoping not to be disappointed when I die, and it's about the process and you know the cliché is the road traveled more so than the destination, you know?

**Justin:** Mm.

**Rob:** And for art I actually think that if the process isn't about evolution or exploratory or stuff like that you can see it. The work flattens out, it's non-emotive, it's all cerebral instead of heart. You know if we're talking about art, or literature, or writing, and all the types of things that you do, everything that I've known about you, that you've done, it's always about stretching yourself and learning; and you're always putting a goal that's slightly beyond

you that you catch up with and then keep moving. It's a hard life because you don't ever really get to sit back. You'll take a path that feels instinctually "this is where you'll learn, this is where you'll create, this is where you'll resonate with your true self." You'll go there whether it's theatre or music or performance or cartoons or writing, I could go on and on, or climbing a mountain or guiding or through safety, I mean all these different things, it's going to culminate into a picture and it's actually that we're in a time where you can do that. That's the Renaissance Man, you know, who learns science, and he learned husbandry, and he learned how to make a woman satisfied, and all these different things. The whole thing in Universities and Academia has been "specialize, specialize, specialize." That's what we've grown up with. It really started in my age, but by your age it was really really intense. You're rejecting that.

**Rob:** Basically you're talking about resonating with life and ideas. You're talking about openness.

**Justin:** I think that ultimately everything I'm talking about can be reduced to just people being chill and open (laughs).

**Rob:** Yeah.

**Justin:** I mean it's really pretty simple.

**Rob:** So much of the world is set up not to accept that. Yeah openness is a place for artists, and thinkers, and poets. I'm not sure that everyone can have that.

Hopefully in years society will open and people will chose roles for themselves.

**Justin [to Tino and Julie]:** Yeah so for my own work and the philosophy that I'm playing with I see my audience as whomever wants to take it. The rest can leave it. And it's not at their exclusion, it's at their interest. And it's not important that everyone gets it. I don't think that there's something that's for everyone.

What I am suggesting here is that while I value my opinions and clearly have strong preferences, they are not for everyone. As strongly as I declare my biases I acknowledge that they are subjective truths – small 't' truths. I won't make an effort to impart my perspective upon others or expect that anyone will be dramatically changed. This may seem like a copout: that I won't align myself with a belief while I simultaneously argue and am compelled to try and convince people of my perspective. It is a conundrum. I suppose it is not a matter of "why?" or "what?" but "from what spark?" My audiences are those open to change and those seeking community in perspective. Namely they are people exploring intentionality and people willing to own their choices. I don't expect that everyone will agree.

**Tino:** That helps you deal with the sadness? If it is a sadness of the people in the world.

**Justin:** Yeah I guess it doesn't need to be sadness maybe it's just a lack of understanding and if I'm ok with the fact that I don't understand than that's ok. We can, not leave it at that, but pause it.

**Justin [to Paul]:** So when I think about truth, a different way that I might frame what we see, or how we perceive something, I think that everything's subjective but you need constraints: what goes into the equation to make you're outcome?

**Paul:** Yeah.



**Justin:** If we take it back to climbing, and we're going to have a client out for the day, what's going into whether it's going to be guided or instructed or the myriad of gray areas that go in and around and beyond those terms is the expectations of the clients, or what they might want, what the course is defined as?

**Paul:** Right.

**Justin:** So if you have a prefabricated course versus when you don't, and then their prior experience, obviously sometimes they don't even know what they don't know, so their expectations can't even be that accurate, so we're going to make assumptions, there's a give and take.

**Paul:** Right.

**Justin:** Say you did just bring somebody up a mountain, like the learning experience that maybe isn't said out loud in the lesson plan can be pretty profound.

**Paul:** Yeah.

**Justin:** And somebody can walk away from that experience, like I might not know what their outcome is as a Guide.

**Paul:** Mm hmm.

**Justin:** But they probably had a really significant outcome.

**Paul:** Right.

**Justin:** And it has to do with how you connect them to their learning environment.

**Paul:** Right.

**Justin:** And that learning environment is the mountain. A kind of simplified way that I think about it, is that, you have the student, you have the greatest

potential of what they could gain, anything, it's pretty infinite but in our situation I'll just simplify it as the mountain, and that could mean all the skills it takes to engage the mountain,

**Paul:** Right.

**Justin:** or maybe a spiritual experience, or maybe a growth experience from being scared out of your mind,

**Paul:** Hmm.

**Justin:** or a growth experience of not being so scared anymore because you've gone through it in more of a slow spiral up to the harder harder things.

**Paul:** Right.

**Justin:** And then, all of the factors that go into it, our job in the middle be it called an Instructor or a Guide, is to evaluate "at what pace they can actually get this information? Or have these experiences?"

**Paul:** Right.

**Justin:** So everything is conditional to time.

**Paul:** Right.

**Justin:** Then all of a sudden it's almost impossible to nail down categories, because it's that learning cycle constantly going around and you're hitting back at it over and over again. You're starting with "ok I'll teach you a new piece of information, or I'll expose you to this level of climbing, it's going to be pretty easy, and over time we can start adding things and maybe I'll make you conscious of something, or maybe it's not time to make you conscious of

something yet?" And we can build upon it, and eventually they might get the whole mountain. But probably not through us.

**Paul:** No.

**Justin:** Eventually they'll need a different Guide. And it might not even be a person, it might just be them engaging the mountain with the skills they already have. Because we're on that same path; we're still students. When I go out and I climb, even by myself, I'm still learning stuff. So I don't know. That's how I've been thinking about it instead. And that's kind of how all these topics tie in together. It's cause I think that template, even though it's really vague, it kind of works in terms of any – you can transpose the mountain as any other thing.

**Paul:** Sure.

**Justin:** It could be like feeling emotion, or learning mathematics. And then the Guide could be different things. I don't know.

**Justin [to Juliet]:** I've been using this as a tool. I didn't know really how to define it, and at first it was way more heavy handed than it is now, and now I'm trying more weight off of it, as much weight off of it as possible, because I don't to be a "leader" you know? That's weird.

**Juliet:** You want to make it something that um... more accessible.

**Justin:** There's this thing I read about mountain guiding, and this one famous Guide from France from like the mid-twentieth century, I think Gaston Rebuffat was his name, and I'm butchering the pronunciation, but he was like "a great guide, at the end of the day, his clients will say 'we did this ourselves'."

**Juliet:** EXACTLY! Exactly!

**Justin [to you]:** That's the end of the podcast. Thank you for listening. I hope that some of it resonated with you. And if some of it was challenging, maybe sit with it and see if it speaks to you later. And take what you want and leave what you don't want. Maybe revisit what you don't want. Let's see, and if I seem like I'm full of it, well of course there are some holes, I'm not going to be "on it" completely, so forgive me for anything that may be assumptive or deluded. But I appreciate that you've taken the time to listen to the work I've put in for the last couple years. Thanks.

CLOSING WORDS

A two hundred-page paper to give context to a hundred thirty-page story! And for your dedication in reading this work I wonder if I've left you with anything more than additional questions? What a terrific balance it is to navigate: intentionality, sincerity, the ability to laugh at one's self, that cosmic giggle, a willingness to be the fool...

For me to scribble down hard statements that summarize or tie up loose ends would undermine the approach I have taken in this paper. You are left without answers because I don't have any. I do have biases: the things I like; but they are not 'true'. But this paper reveals something about myself; maybe there are more points of entry for the reader in this format as opposed to a book of fiction or an audio podcast? Maybe the telling is more transparent?

What I will leave you with is one more idea that didn't have an adequate place within the paper until now; it might be a helpful analogy. It is simple and almost physical. I didn't speak much about *fear*, but fear is a powerful motivator to inhibit one's willingness to be exposed, one's willingness to engage risk. Maybe because I am one part rock jock I like to make these comparisons to exercise, but if I can explain this well it may reveal why I am so drawn to the mountains, and why I'll push myself to do the things that seem really scary.

I've always thought of fear as a notable negative finding. In other words, it is not a thing itself, but the negative space that reveals the 'size' of what *is* there within a person's state of being. Think of weight lifting. Whether you are a body builder or just starting out in the gym after making some New Year's Resolution, you can bench

press a certain amount of weight. Then think of 'weakness'. That word means something entirely different to each athlete who speaks it. To the gym-newbie it might refer to their inability to lift half their own weight. To the seasoned athlete it might mean that they can't press 4 times their own weight. But it is a notable negative finding. It is not a thing itself, not until the subjective objectives of the athlete conditional to his/her personal state at that moment in time are included in the equation. Of course if we lift weights, with proper form, rest, nutrition, and by increasing intensity over a course of time, careful not to injure ourselves or cycle into negative gains by over ambitious overtraining, we will break through our prior notions of weakness and will establish a new meaning to the word.

Now imagine that there is some muscle in the brain that we can exercise through exposure – engaging in risk and new experiences or ways of thinking. We can stretch and strengthen those brain muscles with intentional exercise. We can also strain the muscle – tear it by over training or performing at a level way beyond our present capacity. The training that results in positive gains might be called a growth-zone. The training or performing that tears muscles might be called a panic-zone. And the training or lack of training that results in muscular atrophy could be called a comfort-zone. What we feel when we try to lift some metaphysical weight but it feels difficult I am calling 'fear'. And of course there are degrees of that notable negative finding; some that we can push through and others than are absolutely debilitating.

So fear is muscular weakness of one's will. It can be exercised and strengthened. This is why I climb. This is why I often choose 'hard-roads'. This is

why I attempt to be intentional with the choices I make. This is why after years of rejecting 'higher-education' I have decided to get my undergraduate degree. And there of course are many more examples and many more ways I could better engage this personal training.

But maybe that idea is helpful? It has been for me. It reminds me of the values my high school yoga teacher, Bob Butera, would teach: "slow and consistent, balanced. Do a little more. What's important is that you continue the practice everyday."

There's so much more to say about guiding, and living, and doing, and mountains, and being in love. It is an incredible weight of goodness and pain, and responsibility and things to care for – such endless fodder for stories and drawings, and songs, and friendships. To gather it all together is a Sisyphean ambition; but if you can love the labor of pushing the massive thing and being crushed again and again, it is a delight as well.

But remember, setting out does not by itself guarantee success. There is beginning, but there is also preserving, that is, beginning again and again and again. You are well advised to set out with a *professional pilgrim as a guide*. Such men of lifelong calling (or penance) are easily recognizable, "adorned with many tokens, the witness of many wonders, the hero of many adventures." And remember too, you can stay at home, safe in the familiar illusion of certainty. Do not set out without realizing that "the way is not without danger. Everything good is costly, and the development of the

personality is one of the most costly of  
all things." It will cost you your  
innocence, your illusions, your  
certainty. (Kopp 10)

Kopp wrote *If you Meet the Buddha on the Road Kill Him*. This book lays out the ideas of [t]he Guide's Role from the perspective of a psychotherapist and of the Initiate's from the perspective of the patient and/or searcher.



ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

A word about the following resources that were selected as my primary resources, thus warranting annotations: they are not necessarily the predominant resources used for in-text citations, nor are they necessarily the most revealing texts in terms of theory or method. Some are the books and films that I return to time and time again. Others planted ideas into my head that have persisted and “haunt” me (beautifully so) as I immerse myself in my work. With that said, there are dozens upon dozens more resources that I have listed after these annotations in “resources” that have had just as significant of an influence on the work I have done with this project. I urge the reader/researcher, which ever you may be, to utilize not only this “primary” list but also the comprehensive list.

Artaud, Antonin. *The Theater and Its Double*. New York: Grove Press, 1958. Print.

*The Theater and Its Double* was the first resource I read that tied ritual or ceremony together with performance. Artaud explores Balinese theater and the traditions of the Tarahumara, and expounds on his philosophy of utilizing the stage to traumatically impact the audience using what he dubs the Theatre of Cruelty. What was most significant for me about this text was the introduction which through dense poetic language lays out an overture for his biases, philosophy and the content of the rest of the book. While I find the writing inspiring and beautiful in its severity I feel that the applicable ideas are bound (or dated). It is evident that decades of exploration in the theatre and societal evolution has occurred since Artaud was a fixture in the scene.

Chekhov, Michael. *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting*. New York: Harper, 1953.

Print.

I was first turned on to this book by a friend who was studying the part of Puck from *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*. I found that the philosophy embedded in his suggestions for preparing for a role resonated with me well beyond the stage. Chekhov discusses inspiration, expression, and the artists' responsibility to the craft. His work is also steeped in the magical and non-ordinary reality. While not directly addressing notions of liminality or ritual change, the exercises serve as very pragmatic tools for an artist to carry themselves through some form of transformation.

Cline, Preston. "The Etymology of Risk." Portsmouth, NH: Unpublished. 2004. Print.

I obtained a copy of this paper from Preston directly. With some searching I am sure interested parties can find the work online or contact Preston for an electronic copy. Taking an etymological approach to the topic Preston attempts to guide the reader through a reassessment of what we might think about risk (if our perspective is inline with the vernacular or cultural norm). He discusses how the word "risk" has changed through history from a neutral, sometimes even positive word to the predominately negative one that impacts insurance and risk management, as well as popular cultural comfort with chance and adventure today. His opinions and research surrounding "risk", "safe", and "security" have significantly impacted how I think about my work as a climbing instructor and the philosophy that I use to engage the day to day.

Daumal, René. *Mount Analogue: A Novel of Symbolically Authentic Non-Euclidean Adventures in Mountain Climbing*. New York: Pantheon, 1960. Print.

*Mount Analogue* engages mountain climbing, occult thought, and non-ordinary realities in a beautiful and engaging fictional narrative, and it was never finished! Daumal died while writing the book; most editions include his notes for the rest of text, but in many ways I am happy that the book is incomplete. It definitely had some influence on why my novella ends mid-sentence. More importantly, Daumal unabashedly, but artistically inserts his musings and explorations in the occult; specifically the Fourth Way, a school of thought developed by G. I. Gurdjieff and coined by P. D. Ouspensky. Some of the ideas that especially captured me were: disrupting comforts and expectation, his views of perspective, timing, and the certainty of the existence of the unknown by “supra-logical deductions involving the curvature of space” (Lachman par 26).

Feyerabend, Paul. *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*. London: NLB, 1975. Print.

I sought out this book in an effort to validate my frustrations with the limitations, dogma, and subjective biases that are often ignored within scientific and academic methodologies. Feyerabend suggests that for anything new to be realized or discovered one must engage with contradicting or unconventional perspectives. I admit that his work is super dense and almost incomprehensible at times. But his chapter outlines, intros and conclusions clearly describe many inspiring notions. I fear that he often

succumbs to reductive and overly rigid academic standpoints as well, but because of his popularity in academia he has blazed a trail for critical thinking that is not bound to a pre-prescribed method.

Gennep, Arnold . *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960. Print.

Van Gennep coined the phrase “Rites of Passage” and this book has been very influential for myriads of others researching indigenous cultures, juvenile development and risk taking, and ceremonial transitions. Much of the language I use in this senior study is borrowed or “bastardized” from Van Gennep’s original work.

Hesse, Hermann. *Wandering*. London: J. Cape, 1972. Print.

A classic “slim killer”, this collection of poetry, prose and drawings has lived in my back pocket or backpack for years. I’ve bought several copies, and I reread the thing often. I can’t say that I know the book cover to cover, because it changes for me most times I open its pages again. As the title suggests, the vignettes share wandering as a common theme. Wandering is the ether (so to speak) of my novella, and the method by which I have gone about my research and dialogues with participants in the podcast.

Hesse, Hermann. *The Journey to the East*. New York: Noonday Press, 1957. Print.

I’ve loved nearly every book I’ve read by Hesse. *The Journey to the East* maybe holds more significance to my senior study because of its historical influence on Leadership Theory, specifically Servant Leadership (developed by Greenleaf). This take on the book was not consciously apparent to me

until I read about its influence on Greenleaf in *Outdoor Leadership: Theory and Practice*. Prior to reading this passage the importance given to animals (notably dogs), my own heroes Parsifal and Don Quixote, and again non-ordinary perspectives/realities captured my interest. Additionally Hesse wrote about an occult pilgrimage in 1932 (first German printing) and with an almost timeless voice, that really got my juices flowing.

Higa, Tomiko. *The Girl with the White Flag*. Tokyo, Japan: Kodansha International, 1991. Print.

This autobiographical account of a woman's experience as a child in Okinawa during the bombings of Japan in World War II profoundly validated my urge to integrate the magical, strange, and typically assumed fantasy to the generally assumed reality of our daily lives. What I mean by this is that her experience in a horror strewn time through the perspective of a child (further more as a Japanese child in the 1940s) provides an amazing example of how vantage point can create entirely new truths and in so doing embed the "story-book" in a real life experience, even in one so horrific as the one she experienced. This book, as it is non-fiction, validated or permitted my unapologetic approach to my fictional/non-fictional work.

Shawn, Wallace, André Gregory, Louis Malle, and Jean Lenauer. *My Dinner with Andre*. United States of America: Saga Productions, 1981. Film.

Almost a Socratic dialogue, loaded with subject matter revolving around liminality, theatre, ritual, and the magical, relying on subtlety and finesse, this of course is a major influence on my work. I had originally wanted to

invite Andre Gregory and Wallace Shawn into my Socratic Café podcast but decided not to thinking that my conversations should be limited to the social resources I had utilized already in my collegiate efforts. In retrospect I feel like my original inclination to do this was valid, and they would have fit right into the conversation. Maybe for a future inquiry?

The, Mountaineers B. *Mountaineering Freedom of the Hills 8th Edition: 50th*

*Anniversary 1960 - 2010*. Mountaineers Books, The, 2010. Print.

This is the “bible” of mountaineering. It has been for fifty plus years. I have used it as a regular resource throughout my academic work and through out my professional work. I felt it necessary to include in my annotations due to its significance as a climbing resource.

Turner, Victor W. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York City: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982. Print.

Turner has been a primary resource for his work in discussing the use of ritual in theatre and liminal and liminoid experiences. I feel like his work picks up from where Artaud leaves us, and leads perfectly into the application of Chekhov and Gregory (despite timelines).

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