

Deregulation:
Growth Through Orientation, Pleasure, and Selfishness
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Introduction

You want to pursue, achieve, and enjoy your happiness: To determine what values will promote your happiness and pursue them, achieve them, enjoy them.

To do so, many people (not me) uphold doing what's uncomfortable.

"Growth requires getting out of your comfort zone." "I know you're scared of asking that girl out, but you gotta face your fears." "If you want the best life possible for you, you have to do what's uncomfortable." "No discomfort, no gain." "You have to challenge your comfortable habits." "You have to become 'comfortable being uncomfortable'." "You have to value 'productive discomfort'." Etc.

Advocating effort is another way people advocate discomfort. "Yeah, doing X is uncomfortable, so you have to effort at it." "Taking the steps you need to take in life may not be comfortable, easy, pleasurable, what you naturally want or are inclined to do, the path of least resistance, the path of inertia, etc.; you have to activate your effort."

Advocating control (and will power and focus and activation) is another way people advocate discomfort and effort. "You need to take control of your life, of your mind, of your organism, of your actions, to activate your effort, to take those uncomfortable steps. You need to activate your behavior. Activate your mind. Activate your focus. Activate your effort."

Advocating regulation, a popular term in the nervous system world, is another. “You need to regulate your nervous system.”

Discomfort. Effort. Control. Will power. Focus. Activation. Regulation.

And if these lead to problems, not to worry: We can troubleshoot them with more discomfort, effort, control, will power, focus, activation, regulation.

The model of regulation is the model of control as the primary way to pursue happiness.

The problem with regulation is that it’s exhausting—all that constant controlling and efforting—and comes at the opportunity cost of growing your capacity to process, do, and handle more in life, more effortlessly, with a more pleasant letting go of control quality.

This book presents a different model: The model of deregulation, of growing your capacity to do life more effortlessly and with a pleasant letting go of control quality.

Growth of capacity enables you more effortlessly to grow in the general, popular sense of the term. The general, popular sense is somewhat broad and vague, but meaningful enough in ordinary use. It refers to your life moving forward, in a positive direction, taking care of yourself, career moving forward, relationships getting better, deeper, emotional healing, more appreciation of life, more knowledge, wisdom, skill, etc. Growth of the organism. “Growth” in the title of this book refers to both senses of growth: The general, popular sense, and the more technical, specialized sense of capacity growth, and integrated. Deregulation grows your capacity, which enables growth in the general, popular sense to be more effortless.

In Part 1, I present the core idea of deregulation, also called nervous system deregulation (NSD): Pleasantly letting go of control, i.e., deregulating, grows your capacity. Deregulation draws from and majorly credits Organic Intelligence®, a theory of capacity growth, developed by Steve Hoskinson.

Your organism has the ability to grow, uplevel, benefit you tremendously, and in unpredictable, unimaginable ways, and all without any effort on your part. Letting go of control of your organism unlocks tremendous and sustainable growth.

In Part 2, I present an analogy between nervous system deregulation and market deregulation (a free market). Grasping fundamental similarities between the two promotes understanding and appreciation of both.

Just as letting go of control of your organism unlocks tremendous and sustainable growth, so letting go of control of the market unlocks tremendous and sustainable growth. Nervous system deregulation increases your quality of life without any effort or controlling needed on your part. Don’t regulate your nervous system; advocate letting go of control. Market deregulation increases your quality of life without any effort or controlling needed on your part. Don’t regulate the market; advocate letting go of controls.

Not only is there a profound analogy between nervous system deregulation and market deregulation, there's also a deep causal connection: They support each other.

Market deregulation supports nervous system deregulation. Market deregulation unlocks new, innovative, unpredictable pleasures, comforts, luxuries, conveniences, and reduction of pain points, all without any effort on your part. These pleasures offer you opportunities for pleasure and pleasant letting go of control, which grows your capacity.

Nervous system deregulation supports market deregulation. The more you experience and appreciate the value of letting go of control of your organism, the more open you'll be to learning about, appreciating, and advocating the value of letting go of control of the market. "You're proposing not regulating wages?! You're proposing allowing employers to set whatever wages they can get employees to agree to?! But deregulating will hurt the poor!" The greater that person's capacity, the more likely they'll be able to objectively examine arguments for example that minimum wage hurts the poor, as opposed to dismissing them without consideration, from a place of reactivity, due to not enough capacity.

"Deregulation" in the title of this book refers to deregulation of both your organism and of the market. Emphasis is primarily on your organism, on nervous system deregulation (NSD); that's what this book is primarily about. But market regulation is an important analogy and integration.

The model of nervous system regulation, of control, of using consciously directed effort to control things—e.g., your emotions, your stress, your work, your progress towards goals, your relationships—tends to override signals of freedom, of letting go of control, of orientation and pleasure. This tends to keep you stuck, not growing.

Likewise, market regulation—the government controlling how people live, as opposed to the government protecting your right to live as you choose so long as you don't initiate physical force against others or their property—locks up the mind, and prevents growth.

In Part 3, I discuss selfishness, the moral foundation of deregulation. Selfishness, correctly understood, is the pursuit of your happiness, which is awesome. Many people suffer tremendous guilt and shame about pursuing their happiness. Reclaiming the correct understanding of selfishness and extolling its goodness is important for their orientation and pleasure.

In Part 4, I present how to help others deregulate. This content applies to both personal and professional relationships (e.g., therapist or coach and client).

In Part 5, "Deregulating cognitive behavior approaches," I present the idea that cognitive behavior approaches, at their best, are deregulation.

In Part 6, "Deregulating relationships," I illustrate doing relationships on the deregulation model.

In Part 7, "Deregulating compassion," I explain how compassion fits into deregulation.

In Part 8, “Deregulating shame,” I apply deregulation to shame.

In Part 9, “Deregulating addiction,” I apply deregulation to addiction.

In Part 10, “Deregulating trauma,” I apply deregulation to trauma.

In Part 11, “Deregulating delayed gratification,” I apply deregulation to delayed gratification.

In Part 12, “Deregulating your needs,” I apply deregulation to your needs.

In Part 13, “Deregulating productivity,” I apply deregulation to productivity.

In Part 14, “Deregulating your identity,” I apply deregulation to your identity.

In Part 15, “Deregulating multicultural approaches,” I apply deregulation to the idea of respecting different cultures.

In Part 16, “Deregulating ‘avoidance’,” I apply deregulation to the idea of “avoidance.”

In Part 17, “One-on-one session work’,” I apply deregulation to one-on-one session work.

In Part 18, “Orienting to reality’,” I discuss a broader notion of orienting to reality, which is supported by orientation in the sense of connection to the environment through the senses.

Part 1. Growth through orientation and pleasure

Suffering and discomfort, according to Organic Intelligence, indicate that intensity is too high, too much for your organism to process easily, comfortably.

Contrary to the view that discomfort and suffering is what grows you, makes you stronger, OI holds that discomfort indicates that you do not have the organismic capacity to handle the information and intensity coming at you, easily. Being able to handle that information and intensity easily, comfortably would be a sign of capacity growth.

The two conditions that enable capacity growth are orientation and pleasure.

Orientation is automatic, effortless connection to the environment through the senses; being able to see, hear, etc. what's around you in the immediate environment as opposed to having your attention be hostaged by your interior, e.g., thoughts, feelings, images, memories.

Pleasure is feeling good, which includes pleasantly neutral; doesn't refer only to pleasurable excitation, but also relaxation and feeling pleasantly neutral. (Later I'll go into orientation and pleasure in more detail; capacity growth, too.)

As you do more orientation and pleasure, orientation and pleasure will increasingly become automatic, effortless aspects of your experience and you'll be able to do life and handle more, more easily and pleurably.

To the extent you're in orientation and pleasure, according to Organic Intelligence, the ebb and flow of intensity of your biology will be such that intensity reaches certain setpoints, called in OI organic intensity thresholds, and then settles from those setpoints. This rising of intensity to reach these thresholds and then settling afterward results in capacity growth.

According to OI, you can't and shouldn't try to consciously aim at reaching and resting from thresholds, just as you can't and shouldn't try to consciously aim at digesting. You eat; digestion will happen automatically. You get into orientation and pleasure as much as you can; capacity growth will happen automatically. And you want orientation and pleasure also to be as automatic and effortless as possible; notice and lean into the automatic, effortless quality whenever possible.

This book does not get into what is often described as "the science of" something, e.g., "the science of" Organic Intelligence, biological intensity, thresholds, fight-flight-freeze, the nervous system, Yoga, sleep, digestion, etc. It focuses on explicating orientation, pleasure, capacity growth in the context of living one's life and being oriented towards living one's life.

By the way, nothing is more scientific than observing that when you get a good night's sleep, you experience more pleasure during the day. You have rationally validated that sleep boosts your mood. If someone says you need to support your claim

with research (beyond firsthand observation) and an explanation of what happens in your organism as you sleep, in terms of biochemistry, etc, they're being irrational.

And the displeasure they create for you is a signal to maybe limit your interaction with them, for the sake of your sanity, epistemology, rationality, pleasure, happiness, well-being.

This book is not a proof that orientation and pleasure will grow your capacity; it's an explanation of the claim that orientation and pleasure grow capacity. Your doing orientation and pleasure and seeing whether your capacity grows would be the proof or disproof.

OK: The essence of Organic Intelligence, in five words, is: Orientation and pleasure grow capacity. Deregulation emphasizes the pleasant letting go of control quality of orientation and pleasure.

Capacity growth enables you to do and handle more in life, more easily. It is a huge value that you want to promote as you live.

You want to live, to pursue your values—e.g., career, relationships—in a way that prioritizes orientation and pleasure as much as possible. That doesn't mean quit your job just because you hate it; you may need it for now to pay rent, etc. (to avoid the displeasure of losing shelter). Deregulation assumes a context of sane, rational living, oriented toward your long-term well-being and happiness, within which you prioritize orientation and pleasure as much as possible; incubating your pursuing values, your doing of life, within orientation and pleasure as much as possible.

In the ensuing sections, I get into orientation and pleasure in detail. Here I want to give a few examples of how orientation and pleasure can show up in life; and how mainstream approaches to living ignore and override them. To give you an immediate, clear, and stark sense of orientation and pleasure, before getting into their detailed explication. Here are some examples::

A guy is in therapy session. He sought therapy for various reasons, e.g., heal trauma, figure out how to meet and date women and get a girlfriend, figure out what he wants to do career-wise, improve relationships with family, etc.

The guy is silent, looking out the window, not making any effort to face his therapist or talk about anything.

The therapist assesses this as "avoidance."

"Where did you go?" the therapist says. "Come back and let's talk about what's wrong," she adds or is privately thinking.

The therapist reflects the mainstream approach. The guy needs to confront right now things that may be uncomfortable, not avoid doing that.

By contrast, on the deregulation approach, the guy's orienting is good and could be a crucially beneficial moment, leading to capacity growth. His orientation is to be cheered on, not pathologized as "avoidance."

A guy mentions that he's having problems with his girlfriend but also that they went on a date recently and had fun playing mini golf. He's talking about mini golf with his girlfriend, not the problems.

Therapist assesses him as "avoiding," reflecting mainstream approach. The guy needs to confront right now things that may be uncomfortable, not avoid doing that.

By contrast, on the deregulation approach, the guy's talking about the minigolf, if pleasurable, is good and could be a crucially beneficial moment, leading to capacity growth. His pleasure is to be cheered on, not pathologized as "avoidance."

(I'm stipulating above that it's pleasure. In another case, e.g., there's an upwelling of anguish that just has to intensify and he's making it worse by trying to focus on talking about mini golf instead of feeling his unpleasant feelings, then deregulation would say to feel the unpleasant feelings.)

A guy is talking about what's wrong with his life and how everything is falling apart and there's no hope.

Therapist tries to challenge his beliefs, his thinking, and get him to recognize some positives in his life. "That girl complimented your shirt. That was a nice thing."

The therapist's doing so increases unpleasant intensity in the guy, and he doubles down on negativity. "Yes, but, whatever, it's just a stupid shirt. My face is still ugly and no woman will ever want me."

Therapist assesses the client as "resistant" and "unwilling to do the work."

The therapist reflects the mainstream approach. The guy needs to confront right now things that may be uncomfortable—e.g., challenge his beliefs, acknowledge what's positive—not avoid doing that.

By contrast, on the deregulation approach, if talking about what's wrong and how everything is falling apart and there's no hope is what feels least displeasurable, that's to be joined and supported; to support any movement in the direction of orientation, pleasure, and capacity growth.

A guy is talking about what's wrong with his life and how everything is falling apart and there's no hope, but then suddenly says, "But a girl did compliment my shirt the other day, that was kind of nice," and then after a few moments goes back to talking

about how his life is falling apart. He was able to hang with something positive for, say, 3 seconds.

Therapist intervenes, “Wait a minute, hold on there, a girl complimented your shirt and that was nice. Can we just hang there for a bit?”

The therapist increased the guy’s unpleasant intensity. “It was nothing; just a stupid shirt; my face is still ugly and no woman will want me.”

“It wasn’t nothing; it was something,” says the therapist.

The therapist’s comment increases the guy’s unpleasant intensity even further.

The therapist reflects the mainstream approach. The guy needs to confront right now things that may be uncomfortable—e.g., hang with something positive for more than 3 seconds—not avoid doing that.

By contrast, on the deregulation approach, talking about what’s wrong and then 3 seconds with something positive and then more talking about what’s wrong, all falls under pleasure (including minimizing displeasure); doubling down on trying to get the guy to hang with the positive for longer than 3 seconds increases displeasure, distancing him from capacity growth.

(I’m stipulating above that he couldn’t pleasurablely hang out with the positive thing for more than 3 seconds. If he could, then poking at him to do so could be good; but being ready to back off if it increases displeasure.)

A guy is working towards becoming a doctor. This involves a lot of stress, hardship, and struggle along the way.

He has a zillion strategies to deal with stress, e.g., breathing exercises, physical exercise, cognitive reframing, orienting, seeking social support, eating lasagna, etc.

To the extent his doing so promotes orientation and pleasure, good. For example, in a moment of stress, he eats lasagna, enjoys it as much as he can, and orients as much as he can; nice.

To the extent his doing so does not promote orientation and pleasure, bad. For example, he does two hours of exercise everyday, to not fall apart; during which time he misses moments of orientation and pleasure that could have welled up and moved him toward capacity growth; missed them because his attentional focus is on the exercise routine.

A guy is working towards becoming a doctor. This involves a lot of stress, hardship, and struggle along the way. He hates it, hates the career, has no interest in becoming a doctor. He does it to obey his family and culture (the culture they claim is normative for him). He also hates every other career in his family and culture’s list of

approved careers; he wants to be a circus clown. (Becoming a doctor is unselfish; circus clown, selfish.)

Growing capacity increases the chances he'll be able to question how he was raised, defy his family and culture, and pursue the values that will make him happy. By contrast, using effort and will power to think and challenge all this without stability in orientation and pleasure might change his conscious beliefs, but not enable his organism actually to go through with defying how he was raised. Shame and guilt melt away as orientation and pleasure deepen.

The value of orientation, pleasure, and capacity growth is profound.
Let's get into each of these three in detail.

1.1 Orientation

Two partners are fighting, angry, and about to hit each other.

There's zillions of advice for preventing this, e.g., pause, take a deep breath, go for a walk, fight in public so you're less likely to hit each other, go to separate rooms, one partner checks into a hotel, etc.

But the zillions of advice often doesn't work; people keep hitting each other.

And even if in a particular case, one partner is able to successfully implement strategy X instead of hitting the other partner, the question is what's happening in the bigger picture; what keeps repeating. Are they hitting their partner in general, even if there are specific instances when they can apply strategy X and refrain? Are they getting into fights, physical or verbal, with others? Are they unable to reduce compulsive behavior no matter how many strategies they learn? Are they incessantly suffering, anxious, depressed, ashamed, lonely, angry, etc. even with massive efforting at employing a zillion strategies? Etc.

And whatever the success ratio of trying strategies, that's a lot of effort, which is exhausting and taxing to the organism (and which is reinforced by cultural support for effort, discomfort, and "suffering is good.")

For strategies to be possible and work, some amount of stability in orientation and pleasure is necessary. The more, the better; the more, the less effort, discomfort, and tax involved; the more the strategies are less strategies in the sense of the regulation model; the more they are aspects of orientation and pleasure.

Orientation and pleasure are not just two strategies among a zillion strategies. They are the two fundamentals that enable doing more effortlessly; doing a strategy as part of orientation and pleasure is not doing a strategy in the sense of the regulation model, but rather on the deregulation model.

Furthermore, it's not like orientation is a distinct process from other strategies, e.g., go for a walk, hang out with friends, eat something, pet your dog, etc. All that involves and can support sensory connection to the environment. (Same comment for pleasure.)

Of the two of orientation and pleasure, orientation is more fundamental than pleasure for settling intensity and enabling more pleasure, in a wider range of intensities and forms, and for greater duration.

Efforting at orientation is different from effortless orientation, and the latter is technically what orientation refers to, but at the same, includes efforted orientation; with the understanding that the goal is to get to effortless orientation whenever possible and notice and lean into that as much as possible.

Here are six features of orientation.

1.1.1 Six features of orientation (SUAVEN)

Orientation is connection to the environment through the five senses: seeing what's around you, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting.

I want to present six features of the connection, for which I have the acronym SUAVEN:

- S = significant
- U = unfixed
- A = automatic
- V = vacation (from interior intensity)
- E = effortless
- N = neutral

S. Significant

Significant means the environment is significant to your attention.

The people at the party, the objects in the room, tables, chairs, trashcan in the corner, and the sky that you can see through the window are real to you, not distant or unreal or insignificant.

If you're looking at tables and chairs, but they're not really real to you, because you're preoccupied with internal experience—thoughts, feelings, images, say about your problems—that's not orientation. It's orientation if the environment is significant to your attention

A sign of significance is that your internal experience is responsive to the environment. "Oh, a table. Actually, it's a pretty cool looking table. I like it."

The senses connect to the environment, the environment is significant to the attention, and a sign of this is that internal experience is responsive to the environment. As opposed to: "I'm stuck in my internal intensity and couldn't possibly be responsive to the environment."

U. Unfixed

Unfixed means your attention is not fixed on any aspect of the environment (or your interior), meaning it can easily roam. Your attention is not fixed on, say, the best looking person in the room. Your eyes may prefer to go to that person and may stay on them for a time, but they're not fixated; you could easily let your eyes roam and see other people, the sky, the trashcan in the corner.

A. Automatic

Automatic means the connection is happening automatically, like digestion and breathing happening automatically, as opposed to volitionally, though an act of choice. If you're preoccupied with your interior experience and then suddenly you hear the music in the room or suddenly see the room around you more vividly, that's automatic. Connection to the environment through the senses happening automatically. So right now, you have a bunch of automatic connection happening.

V. Vacation (from interior intensity)

Vacation refers to orientation feeling like a welcome vacation from internal intensity, as opposed to, say, boring, irritating, restless, or a pointless waste of time. You're preoccupied with thoughts, feelings, images. Then more orientation comes on; and it's a welcome vacation from internal intensity and inward attention. That's a sign of orientation, as opposed to: "This is a waste of time, I need to get back to inward attention." That's a sign that attention can't connect to the environment.

E. Effortless

Effortless means it's effortless to connect to the environment. Automatic connection is effortless. Volitional connection, choosing to connect to the environment, is effortless when and to the degree it's effortless. If you're preoccupied with internal intensity, and it would be hard to get your attention to the environment, that's not effortless. If it would be easy, that's effortless or at least much closer to effortless. The more effortless the connection, the more it's orientation.

N. Neutral

Neutral means the connection is not intense, doesn't trigger high intensity. For example, you're looking at the best looking person in the room and you feel ugly and ashamed, or you feel intense pleasurable lust, or both, where this intensity hostages your attention. Orientation is overall a neutral experience. There's still significance, the S in SUAVEN: Your internal experience is responsive to the environment; e.g., looking at the good-looking person gives you some pleasure, looking at the trashcan in the corner gives you some displeasure. But overall, orientation is a non-intense, neutral experience; neutral awareness of the environment, while still significant.

- S: Significant. How significant is the environment to me? How responsive is my internal experience to the environment?
- U: Unfixed. How unfixed is my connection? How easily can the attention roam around?
- A: Automatic. What automatic connection is already happening? What do I already see and hear without needing to use choice to try to establish or amplify sensory connection?
- V: Vacation. How much can I enjoy orientation as a vacation from internal intensity? If I stop what I'm doing and look at a tree for 5 seconds, will the world end?
- E: Effortless. In addition to whatever automatic connection to the environment is happening, if I choose to connect, how effortless is it?
- N. Neutral. Is my overall experience, even while being significant, also neutral, non-intense, low intensity?

Orientation is SUAVEN. The more SUAVEN it is, the more it's orientation.

1.1.2 Orientation is not “being in the present”

Here my views deviate from Organic Intelligence and popular opinion.

Orientation does not mean being in the present, the present moment, the here-and-now.

Everyone is always in the present, the here-and-now, and cannot be otherwise.

Yes, I understand the spirit of the idea of “being in the present.” “You’re reacting to the new woman you’re dating as if she’s your ex. You’re still in the past. Come to the present.”

But you are in the present, in the full context. In the present, you have the internal experience you have (thoughts, feelings, images), e.g., thoughts and feelings about your ex. That’s happening in the present.

And in the present, you may be pleurably thinking about your future and imagining yourself in it, and pleurably thinking about the past and imagining yourself in it, having a ball in both cases, and maybe the cases blend together, while having sensory connection to the environment that is SUAVEN.

1.1.3 Orientation is not “appropriate responsivity”

Here my views deviate from Organic Intelligence.

Being oriented does not refer to “understanding the situation you’re in and being appropriately responsive to it.” “Your suffering is totally oriented. You just got your heart broken. Not knowing that your heart is broken and not suffering would indicate disorientation.”

No.

Orientation is connection to the environment through the senses that is SUA VEN.

“You’re at a bonfire with friends and you’re thinking about work instead of being present with your friends. You’re not oriented. Being present with your friends would be oriented.”

No.

Orientation is connection to the environment through the senses that is SUA VEN. You can have this connection while thinking about work instead of being present with your friends. And this connection may be compromised in being present with your friends; maybe being present with them triggers you in a way that compromised the connection.

“You’re not paying attention to the work meeting. You’re looking at the butterflies outside the window. You’re not oriented. Paying attention to the work meeting would be orientation.”

Both paying attention to the work meeting and looking at butterflies (and not paying attention to the work meeting) can involve orientation. Orientation is connection to the environment through the senses that is SUA VEN. And even supposing paying attention to the work meeting is “appropriate responsivity” and even if you get fired and even if not paying attention was wrong to do, you still might have been oriented.

1.1.4 Orientation can count as pleasure but still keep it distinct

Orientation can count as pleasure. You’re looking at trees and it’s pleasant.

When I refer to “orientation and pleasure,” I’m not implying orientation is distinct from pleasure.

The reason for referring to orientation—to orientation and pleasure as opposed to just pleasure—is that orientation is fundamental to capacity growth.

Also, it’s useful to understand orientation as a neutral or more neutral experience, compared to pleasure, understood as a more intense pleasure. So you could distinguish orientation and pleasure in the sense of distinguishing a more neutral experience from a more intense experience.

At the same time, pleasure includes neutral experience, which can be pleasant.

1.1.5 Orientation is fundamental to rational pursuit of happiness

The greater your capacity, the greater your ability to be rational without having to be calm. (Also the greater your ability to be rational, period, but focusing here on the “without having to be calm”; which is relevant to being able to be rational, period.)

The greater your capacity, the greater your ability to be rational while excited, charged, electric, experiencing intense emotions and sensations, feeling intensity throughout your body. E.g., you’re excitedly thinking through a business idea; the excitement helps, not dogs, your thinking; makes it more creative, faster, and improves your happiness; more pleasure.

Being rational is often associated with being calm, cool, collected, unemotional, unfeeling.

One thing that contributes to this popular association is the fact that many people can't be rational when hopped up on intensity; or it's much harder for them to do so. Person A presents a criticism of person B's political views. B's intensity jacks up, making it hard or impossible for him to objectively think about A's criticism. B would have to be calmer to increase the chances of being able to do so.

Orientation increases access to calm.

Moreover, it increases access to intensity that is pleasurable and that is a fountainhead for thinking. Thoughts, feelings, and images arise that help thinking, e.g., about your business idea, about politics, anything, everything.

Thinking is more possible, sustainable, creative, generative, faster, and more pleasurable.

And more able to promote happiness, because you have more access to pleasure, which is crucial for pointing you towards values that promote your happiness.

1.1.6 Orientation is fundamental to useful insight

"I do compulsive behavior X because of my trauma." "I stay in abusive relationships because of my core belief that I'm worthless." "I keep suspecting and accusing my partner of cheating when really I'm the one who's cheating on him all the time." "My psychoanalyst helped me realize that I sabotage relationships because of my early life experiences."

When insights don't lead to any change, advocates of somatic approaches say you need to work with the body and sensations, not just the mind.

According to Organic Intelligence, the primary focus should not be on working with the mind and gaining insight or working with the body and sensations (or both), but on orientation and pleasure, which takes care of the rest, and more efficiently because more pleurably, and grows capacity (and all three are related).

In a given instant, this may involve work with the mind and insight; in a given instant it may involve work with the body and sensation. And Organic Intelligence stresses that you are an integrated organism, including mind and body.

Orientation leads to insight that is useful. The more that intensity is not too high, more pleasurable, and more generative, the more useful insights.

By insight I mean an impulse (or hunch or felt sense) for your next step. "Hmm, it might be fun to take guitar lessons." It could be an action step, as in the prior example. It could also be more internal. The thought, "I am loved," arises along with pleasant feelings, which you fully enjoy.

By useful, I mean the insight promotes orientation and pleasure, directly and immediately, and/or you are able pleurably to follow through on the insight (in the case of its being an action idea).

At the same time, its being an action idea doesn't necessarily mean the value of the insight is actually about action. "Hmm, it might be fun to take guitar lessons" might enable orientation and pleasure in the moment, for you to fully enjoy. And then the thought disappears and you no longer have an impulse to take guitar lessons. (Maybe you'll get that impulse again, maybe not.) Or maybe the insight potentiates an insight about another action, e.g., as you hang with the thought, "Hmm, it might be fun to take guitar lessons," you think of your dad who played guitar and you have an impulse later to ask him about his guitar playing. And maybe that insight is valuable for the orientation and pleasure, and then fades; or leads to an actual impulse to talk to your dad about his guitar playing, which ends up being a bonding moment.

Insight includes what some people call and pathologize as projection. "That surfer looks so free. He must feel so free in life," you think and share with your friend. "You're projecting," your friend says, and implying that's bad. "You're the one who feels imprisoned and seeks freedom." Your friend sabotaged your orientation and pleasure. The value of the insight "That surfer looks so free. He must feel so free in life" is to be fully extracted; extract all the orientation and pleasure you can as you have it and from whatever else happens later on, e.g., an impulse to learn surfing, to set a boundary with someone, to buy a kite, to limit your interaction with your friend, to have fish tacos, etc.

The object of orientation often potentiates insights, as in the prior example of orienting to the surfer. What in the environment attracts your attention often potentiates insight. A kid enters a toy store; his attention is attracted to a specific toy. Your attention is attracted to that surfer. Or to two trees in the distance and then suddenly the trees are talking to each other. "You're blocking the light," one tree says. "It is what it is," the other tree replies. And you notice that things that used to bother you a lot now bother you less.

1.2 Pleasure

1.2.1 Pleasure includes less displeasure

Pleasure, as it is understood in deregulation, includes feeling less suffering, pain (physical, mental, and emotional), discomfort, unpleasant stress, anxiety, depression, trauma symptoms, unpleasant symptoms generally, sadness, shame, loneliness, anger, unpleasant fight-flight-freeze, etc.

Many people distinguish between, on the one hand, relief of suffering (feeling less bad), and, on the other hand, promotion of pleasure, joy, happiness, well-being, etc (actually feeling good, not just less bad). Technically, maybe they're right. You're suffering, it starts decreasing, but you feel no pleasure, just less suffering. That's different from your suffering going to zero and then feeling pleasure.

Nevertheless, deregulation includes reduction of displeasure under pleasure because reduction of displeasure is in the direction of pleasure, and if your suffering abates and then you feel joy coming on, it's conceptualizable as one thing, feeling better and better (including less worse).

You want to get to the pot of gold but there's a wall in the way that you have to climb over. Yes, someone could say part 1 is getting over the wall and part 2 is walking to the pot of gold and getting it; part 1 is suffering, part 2 is pleasure. But at the same time, it's one thing. Moving towards the gold. Moving in the direction of happiness.

So pleasure includes what is commonly understood as pleasure, viz., actual presence of pleasure, as well as all feeling better, including less worse, less displeasure, even just for a moment and only slightly. Decreasing displeasure counts as increasing pleasure. Less anxiety counts as pleasure, as increasing pleasure. Anxiety going from 10 to 9.99 for 1 second counts as pleasure.

As you grow capacity, things that may typically be unpleasant for you may start being pleasant, e.g., anger, sadness, loneliness, shame, etc. You can feel these things more pleurably.

So contrasting pleasure against anger, sadness, shame, symptoms, fight-flight-freeze, etc. is not quite accurate. Contrasting pleasure against displeasure, its contradiction, is accurate. Contrasting displeasure against any concept that strictly and essentially refers to a form of displeasure is accurate, e.g., suffering, discomfort. But many things associated with displeasure can still be experienced pleurably, e.g., anger, shame, e.g., pleasant energy in anger, pleasant spaciousness in shame. If you define shame as inherently displeurable, OK, it's displeurable by definition; but someone may be experiencing shame in a way such that there's more pleasure in their experience. They can feel the pleasant spaciousness; or pleasant feeling of gravity; or find it pleasant to feel invisible, to hide from the world, to sink into the earth, etc.

If “I get more pleasure from my suffering” means “my suffering is less; my displeasure is less,” yes, good. But strictly speaking, pleasure and displeasure are contradictory.

Displeasure can decrease in the moment, e.g., your anxiety in the moment is settling (which is still true even if 5 seconds from now it will increase).

Displeasure can decrease over time. “I’m less anxious now than a year ago.” “I used to be anxious all day; now it’s only half the day.” “And less intense.”

1.2.2 Pleasure includes minimizing displeasure

Something bad happens to you and you’re going to suffer. Suffering is going to increase. And it could be chronic, e.g., flareups of a chronic issue, (emotional and/or physical).

Pleasure includes minimizing displeasure, even when displeasure increases. Displeasure is lessened in the sense of choosing the least displeasurable path. The girl dumps you, you’re in for suffering. You do what you can to minimize the suffering as much as possible. That falls under pleasure.

It can be hard or impossible to know what exactly counts as minimizing your suffering. E.g., how long do you have to suffer from being dumped? One hour? One year? One decade? The rest of your life? And in a particular moment, would feeling your pain or would doing something to try to reduce your pain minimize displeasure? Maybe hard or impossible to know.

But still minimizing displeasure is a model to uphold even if it can be hard to implement.

In some cases, it will be clear or at least much clearer what minimizes pain. E.g., say you’re feeling your pain, crying in anguish over the breakup, and you sense the pain is starting to fade, and at the same time, you have a desire to look at a photo of your ex, which you suspect will trigger another round of anguished crying, and you feel you have a bona fide choice not to look at the photo. Minimizing displeasure consists in not looking at the photo.

1.2.3 Pleasure includes all intensity levels

Pleasure includes pleasure of all intensity levels, e.g., low, medium, high. Like when the doctor asks you to rate your pain level from 1-10, least intense to most. Here we’re focused on pleasure.

High intensity, e.g., you’re having a very intensely pleasurable time at the party.

Medium, e.g., you’re having a good time at the party, not as intensely pleasurable as in the prior case.

Low intensity, e.g., you’re feeling neutral, fine, comfortable, chill, relaxed, at ease, unperturbed.

All are good in life and important, e.g., “I’ve had enough excitement for now, time to chill out. Ah, it feels good to feel neutral, not in intense pleasure.” “OK, I feel I’ve had enough neutral for now; I’m feeling like some excitement.”

When you think of pleasure, don’t think only of high intensity. Low intensity counts as pleasure.

With orientation and pleasure practice, you gain access to pleasure in an increasing range of intensities.

For people who are unable to experience low intensity pleasure, orientation and pleasure will build their access to this; to feeling pleasantly neutral, fine, chill, at ease.

For people who are only able to experience lower intensity levels of pleasure, orientation and pleasure will build access to higher intensities.

1.2.4 Pleasure includes intensification and deintensification

Pleasure includes pleasant intensification and pleasant deintensification (or excitation and relaxation, arousal and dearousal, activation and rest or deactivation). Someone tells a joke you find funny and you laugh; pleasant intensification. At some point the laughter settles; you pleasantly or pleurably settle down. And there could be multiple cycles of pleasant intensification and deintensification after the joke, e.g., you laugh some, then settle, then laugh more, etc.

When you think of pleasure, don’t think only of pleasant intensification. Pleasant cooldown counts as pleasure.

For people who are unable to chill out (pleasurably), orientation and pleasure will build access to this. For people who are unable to intensify pleurably, orientation and pleasure will build access to this, too.

1.2.5 Pleasure includes the whole body

“I’m having a good time.”

Some people when saying this don’t feel much pleasure at all. Or maybe they feel it behind their forehead only, and nowhere else. Or maybe during sex, they feel pleasure in their genitals, but not really anywhere else. Or during socializing, they feel pleasure behind their forehead and maybe some in their torso area, but not really anywhere else.

With orientation and pleasure practice, you build access to pleasure throughout the body (your whole organism).

1.2.6 Pleasure includes sensations, emotions, thoughts, images, and orientation

Pleasure includes pleasant emotions, sensations, thoughts, images, and orientation.

Technically, maybe pleasure is only a sensation and the other four things cannot count as pleasure.

The thought, “this lasagna is delicious!”, maybe technically does not count as pleasure; the pleasure is the pleasurable feeling that is concomitant with the thought. By concomitant, I mean happening at the same time as and connected to.

The memory (image) of being in Italy as you eat the lasagna maybe technically does not count as pleasure; the pleasure is the pleasurable feeling that is concomitant with the image.

With a pleasant emotion—e.g., joy, happiness, cheer, good mood (distinguishing mood from emotion is too technical for my purposes)—maybe technically the pleasure is the pleasant sensation(s), not any thoughts or images that are part of the emotion.

With pleasant orientation—e.g., enjoyably taking in sights and sounds at the party—maybe technically orientation cannot be pleasurable per se. Pleasure is the pleasurable feeling, including pleasant neutral, that is concomitant with orientation.

Even if technically pleasure is only a sensation, it’s still rational, meaningful, and clear to call emotions, thoughts, images, and orientation pleasurable, where that may mean these things are concomitant with pleasurable sensation. Enjoying the party consists in an integrated experience of pleasant sensation, emotion, thought, image, and orientation.

Pleasant thoughts are not equivalent to “positive” thoughts. “I am loved.” If that thought makes you uncomfortable, is unpleasant, then it’s unpleasant;; regardless of whether people associate the thought with being “positive” and desire, expect, or pressure you to feel pleasure.

Unpleasant thoughts are not equivalent to “negative” thoughts. “I’m ugly.” If you feel more neutral than before, that counts as pleasure.

Pleasant vs. unpleasant is not “positive” vs. “negative.” “Positive” thoughts may bring you suffering; “negative” thoughts may bring you joy.

Same goes for images. A “positive” image of succeeding may trigger unpleasant thoughts and shame. A “negative” image of being at rock bottom may trigger pleasure, e.g., liberation, freedom, spaciousness.

For people who have limited access to feelings—sensation and emotions—building access to pleasurable feeling may involve pleasure in thoughts and images. A person is talking about some topic that interests them, that they’re curious about, and find pleasant, not so much in a feeling sense (since their access to feeling is limited), but still pleasant. These are important steps for building access to pleasurable feeling. The

person may find one day that as they talk about topic X, they feel a pleasant sensation in their face or belly or arms, etc.

1.2.7 Pleasure includes tolerance of discomfort, when tolerance is part of increasing capacity

As you grow capacity, things that used to bother or scare you bother and scare you less or not at all. If someone uses “tolerance of discomfort” to refer to this, then tolerance of discomfort counts as pleasure.

As you grow capacity, you’re able to do things that you weren’t able to do before and with less displeasure. If someone uses “tolerance of discomfort” to refer to this, then tolerance of discomfort counts as pleasure.

By contrast, someone is scared of asking a girl out, and the process of doing so distances them from orientation, pleasure, and capacity growth, but they do it anyway (on the pro-discomfort model). That’s not pleasure.

Exposing yourself to discomfort, increasing discomfort, and getting better and better at doing so, where this is not due to and part of increasing capacity for orientation and pleasure and increasing orientation and pleasure in life, does not count as pleasure.

Getting good at sacrificing your happiness does not count as pleasure.

Getting good at promoting your happiness and increasing your capacity, and tolerating discomfort as part of doing so—e.g., meeting new people even if scared, but where the impulse to meet them is directed by orientation and pleasure and where the fear is more pleasurable—counts as pleasure.

Meeting new people even if scared is not pleasure if done on a model of exposing yourself to discomfort, and not on a model of increasing capacity and paying attention to orientation and pleasure. It is pleasure if done on the model of increasing capacity, paying attention to orientation and pleasure, and noticing that meeting new people is more pleasurable.

Some people who follow the model of exposing themselves to discomfort eventually become desensitized. “I’m numb to rejections now. I asked 100 girls out, got rejected 100 times, worked my way through all that sting, and am now numb to rejection.” “Good for you!” says friend.

Desensitization is different from growing capacity for pleasure. Desensitization means less pleasure and may mean more displeasure, e.g., shame, a deep internal unhappiness, unease, vulnerability to something happening that suddenly triggers anguish.

Yes to: “I feel less displeasure when asking girls out and getting rejected because I have more capacity for orientation and pleasure.”

Imagine two digestive systems. One extracts pleasure and orientation from intake and feeds them into the organism. The second extracts discomfort and feeds it

into the organism. In the first case, the organism gets fueled by orientation and pleasure. In the second, the organism gets better at processing toxins, e.g., brain and liver changing in ways to better tolerate the heavy drinking habits of the organism, to mitigate damage.

You want to be the first organism.

1.2.8 Displeasure can be beneficial, but pleasure is preferred

You need access to displeasure, or else you might not know if you're wounded and bleeding to death, if you're touching a hot stove, etc.

Displeasure can be beneficial in being part of growth, strengthening, and wisening. "Displeasure X [e.g., cancer, getting heart broken, working the most unpleasant jobs in the most unpleasant working conditions, being held strictly accountable and punished by my military commander, learning how to survive torture conditions, etc.] was the best thing that ever happened to me. I wouldn't trade it for the world. It made me so much stronger and wiser as a person. I may not have grown in the ways I did had I not suffered X."

Granted, but you don't try to get cancer. You don't try to get your heart broken. You don't choose a more unpleasant job, other things equal. You don't try to skill up on surviving torture conditions if it's not relevant to your career or life generally. And the more orientation and pleasure you can feel and build while X-ing, the better. You try to minimize necessary displeasure.

Orientation, by the way, helps with avoiding touching hot stoves.

1.2.9 Pleasure is superior to equanimity

Equanimity is feeling OK with reality, not in grasping suffering in regard to reality, but also not hopped up on pleasure. "I accept that she doesn't have feelings for me."

Equanimity is consistent with taking action to change things. "Let's see if I can win her over."

Equanimity can be beneficial. Being equanimous in regard to being single and wanting a relationship is better than suffering. And equanimity may help you pursue a relationship; less energy drained from suffering, more rationality online, less likely to fall apart when rejected, less desperation vibes during dates.

Dating equanimously is better than dating while suffering or being unable to date due to suffering.

Dating pleasurably is better than dating equanimously.

1.2.10 Conceptualize everything under pleasure (and orientation)

Orientation and pleasure are not just two life hacks to add to a list of a zillion life hacks, e.g., CBT, DBT, breathing protocols, exercise, Feldenkrais bell hands, etc.

Conceptualize everything under the two fundamentals of orientation and pleasure. Say you're feeling bad and to address it you're doing cognitive reframing (randomly choosing this among a zillion strategies), e.g., "Maybe my friend is just busy, which is why he didn't message me back." If that helps you feel better, focus on the feeling better, the pleasure. If you have a hunch something else would help you feel better (more efficiently), e.g., time passing (so don't make any special effort), especially orientation, try that instead.

The more you deepen in orientation and pleasure, the more the optimal thing to do in the moment will occur to you organically. It could be "Maybe my friend is just busy," it could be eating lasagna, it could be a sudden career path idea. This is far better than having a repertoire of strategies you rigidly draw on. And often there's no way to predict what the optimal thing to do will be. Alternatively put, the optimal thing to do is orientation and pleasure, which will furnish in the moment the optimal thing to do more specifically, e.g., eat a tomato, keep doomscrolling, etc.

In the case of someone who's stable in orientation and pleasure, knows exactly what they want in life, and is pursuing it, they're rigid in a good sense of doing the things they want to do and not deviating, because they know what they want.

But even here, if orientation and pleasure furnish an impulse that deviates from your plan, it's worth considering the impulse. "I have a sudden impulse to see a movie in a theatre and get popcorn and a hotdog, but I never have such impulses (not to see a movie, let alone in a theater, not to eat popcorn, not to eat a hotdog), and it's 2-3 hours of my time and I have things X, Y, Z to do [which I'm supposing serve your bona fide happiness and are important things]." It's worth at least hanging with the impulse and getting as much pleasure as you can from it (even if you don't see the movie).

And worth considering more if the impulse keeps coming back across minutes, days, weeks, years, or decades.

1.3 Capacity growth

Orientation and pleasure grow your capacity to process information.

This processing is the activity of reason. It is reason. It is reasoning.

Reason involves automatic and volitional processes. When people refer to reasoning, they usually refer to the volitional processes. But automatic process is involved and is the primary emphasis in capacity growth.

1.3.1 “Reasoning” emphasizes volitional processing

Your reason is your faculty of identifying and integrating the information provided by your senses. And is your basic tool of survival. (Ayn Rand)

This information includes information about the world out there, the sights and sounds at the party, and information from internal sensing (introspection), your thoughts, feelings, images.

Technically, the sights and sounds, etc., are also in your conscious experience (your internal experience, your experience) and caused by how the world out there impinges on your senses. But there’s still a rationally justified, motivated, meaningful distinction. The taste of the food at the party, the music, the sights, information from your phone, watch, other people speaking, etc. is information from the world out there. “I’m so attracted to that girl. Should I approach her? I’m scared. My heart is pounding,” is information from within. “I’m feeling tired and ready to go home,” is information from within.

Both types of information, all information, integrates in living. The music and people’s talking are starting to grate on you. “I’m feeling tired and ready to go home. And my back pain is flaring up.” “I’m feeling excited and looking for connection.” You look around at people.

There’s a view in Dialectical Behavior Therapy that you have your reason mind, your emotion mind, and your wise mind—your reason, your feelings, your wisdom—and that wisdom is superior and is an integration of reason and emotion, each of which considered individually is insufficient. Your reason goes by “facts, logic, intellect,” and disregards feelings. Your emotion goes by feelings, and disregards reason. Your wisdom consults both reason and emotion and is the way to go.

This view is wrong.

Reason includes information from feelings (reason includes internal information). You’re feeling tired; your back pain is flaring up. These feelings are information for your faculty of identification and integration. “Can you give me just 5 more minutes? I want to ask this girl out,” your friend says (you’re the driver). That’s also information, along with the information from your feelings, that can be input into your identification and integration. “OK, five minutes.”

You're deciding whether to go on a second date with someone, or buy a home, or accept a job offer, or what to eat, or do the dishes now or later, etc. It's irrational, counter to reason, to ignore your feelings. It's rational to pay attention to your feelings, to input them into your reasoning.

Reason takes feelings as input (along with all other forms of information) and may go with what a feeling pushes for or not, "My gut wants to do the dishes later, not now. It's not urgent, so I'll do the dishes later." "My gut tells me the guy is guilty, but there's not enough evidence to support a verdict of guilt, so I will vote not guilty."

Being rational does not mean consciously processing everything, which is impossible and undesirable. Impossible: You automatically understand a lot of what people are saying, and a lot of ideas automatically come up when you ask yourself "Would he make a good father?" Undesirable: It benefits you tremendously to be able to automatically understand what people are saying and have ideas come up. The point of learning a foreign language, of consciously processing it at the beginning, is to get to automatic processing. And when you ask yourself, "Would he make a good father?", you want content to come up. If you're suffering from brain fog and nothing's coming up, it will be much harder to figure out if he would make a good father.

At the same time, volition is crucial. If the automatic content that comes up is all about how handsome he is and how good he is in bed, and has nothing to do with how he'd father, then volition is called for. "Hmm, that's not helpful. What's his character like?" Or: "Hmm, maybe I'll just enjoy these thoughts and not ponder right now how he'd father."

Reason includes and requires automatic processes, e.g., processes that keep you alive and information.

At the same time, when people refer to reasoning, they typically refer to volitional aspects of reasoning, e.g., volitionally asking yourself, "What is the solution to this engineering problem?" They typically do not refer to, e.g., an insight that popped up while you were taking a break and eating fish tacos while looking at the ocean. Volitionally asking yourself, "Do I want to go on a second date with him?" By contrast, people usually don't have in mind the experience of the first date, all the pleasure and displeasure intake (information intake), and automatic processing happening, including after the first date through to the present moment, as part of reasoning; even though it is.

There's value in understanding reason with primary emphasis on the volitional aspects; and value in understanding it in fuller context, as including automatic processes.

1.3.2 “Processing” emphasizes automatic processing

Orientation and pleasure grow your capacity to process information, your reason.

“Would he make a good father?” Orientation and pleasure grow your capacity to process information so you can well answer this.

An aspect of this growth is that you can take on more without feelings getting in the way, e.g., listening to your partner’s criticisms of you without feelings’ sabotaging this, being able to come out of the closet without traumatizing yourself.

Another aspect is that you’ll have more emotion that’s more pleasurable, not too intense, and more generative of useful insight, more information for your reason. E.g., as your partner criticizes you, you have reliable hunches about when to propose an idea (and you’ll have more and better ideas), when to stay silent and keep listening.

“Process” here is understood in a rational sense, and thus an achievement sense: Good processing as opposed to bad processing.

“The tarot cards say he’d be a great father; that’s all I need to know. Let’s make a baby!” This is processing in a technical sense; you’re processing information; but not in the rational-achievement sense. “I’ve observed him play with my nieces and nephews. He’s good with children.” Yes, your reason may come to false or unjustified beliefs, e.g., he ends up being a bad father. But reason is the right process, and so process in an achievement sense, as opposed to tarot cards. Just as aiming at the ball is the right process during tennis, even if you miss all the time; by contrast, throwing your racket at the audience, because your gut told you to, is not.

Processing is reasoning, emphasizing the automatic processes (but not excluding the volitional). You got back from the first date with the guy; you’re vegging out on your couch, by the fireplace, with your dog on your stomach, and letting go of attentional control and exertion. There’s still a lot of processing happening, e.g., hearing the fire, feeling the heat, feeling the pressure of your dog on your stomach, knowing he’s there, images, thoughts, and feelings passing by and associated with the first date and the guy, wondering whether to check your phone, wondering about your to-do list tomorrow, etc.

1.3.3 The whole organism processes

Consciousness, reasoning, processing is embodied. Your whole organism is involved in them. What you feel in various parts of your body, throughout your body, is information, available for your processing. You find yourself orienting to a bridge; you then feel a sensation in your torso; you pay attention to it; it potentiates a hunch about how to solve an engineering problem.

1.3.4 Capacity growth enables getting more done, more effortlessly, and pleausurably: Triple win

Capacity growth enables you to do life, get more done, handle more, more easily, effortlessly, automatically, comfortably, and pleausurably, e.g., work, relationships, chores, handling unpredictable crises, etc. As opposed to getting more done through effort and discomfort, increasing displeasure, tax on the organism, and increased risk of health problems and sooner, faster, and more intense deterioration.

Getting more done can include work that entails getting less done of other things, e.g., you quit your job to prioritize your mental health and give yourself time to figure out what you really want in life, emotionally heal, orient, be in pleasure. You're getting a lot less done, you're a lot less productive, in respect of your job, since you quit. But you're getting more important things done, the internal work. (Other people may not know, understand, or appreciate what you're doing and may not be supportive; the greater your capacity, the less this bothers you.)

Getting more done, and more effortlessly, and more pleausurably is a triple win.

Some content on effortless processing and then on pleasurable processing:

There are three meanings of effort here. (1) Effort as volitional action, (2) Effort as volitional action that is unpleasant, (3) Tax on the organism.

Effort as volitional action; equivalently, nonautomatic action. Contrasted against automatic action. Eating requires effort. Digesting does not. Say you're learning French. As you improve, you understand more of what French speakers are saying, automatically. Less volition action is required.

Effort as a subset of volitional action: Volitional action that is unpleasant. Contrasted against automatic action and volitional action that is pleasant. "I hate eating and having to eat, but here I go because I need to." That's effort. Contrast: "I love eating lasagna." Effortless. "I hate exercise, but here I go." Effort. "I love exercising." Effortless. "I hate learning French." Effort. "I love learning French." Effortless.

Effort as tax on the organism. Technically, this means everything happening in the organism is effort, is taxing; uses resources that need to be replenished with fuel. Digesting, sweating, shivering, fighting a virus, recovering from workouts, etc. is effort. That said, effort here is intended to emphasize the generally greater tax on the organism from volitional action, especially unpleasant volition action, than from automatic action and pleasant volitional action. "I hate my job." More tax on the organism compared to loving your job. Stress, health problems.

Pleasure can greatly tax the organism. "I don't want to just chill on my couch. I want to do a beastly workout and then sing and dance and party and use intoxicants all night and into morning." At the same time, on the whole, pleasure—understood in

context of deregulation, which emphasizes healthy, wholesome, non-addictive, not too intense, non-intoxicant pleasure—reduces taxation.

You could also say greater tax from displeasure, including from automatic and volitional proximate causes; compared to pleasure, including from automatic and volitional proximate causes.

Orientation and pleasure grows your capacity to live more effortlessly. Other words for effortlessly are efficient, easy, less friction, more conveniently, smoothly. You process more, achieve more, get more benefit, automatically. E..g., you bounce back from discomfort faster and automatically. You find ways to reduce displeasure, and associated with this is tax on your organism. Doing something less unpleasantly means less stress on the organism. Less controlling, especially unpleasant controlling, less tax on the organism. More pleasant letting go of control.

Less taxation means less energy leaking and recovery. Less need to complain about things because you're less displeased.

Pleasurable processing refers to processing that is pleasurable and with an emphasis on feeling the pleasure. This is important for enjoying life and especially valuable for those who are trying to overcome a habit of focusing on achievement at the expense of pleasure.

For example, you're practicing piano, learning a piece for an upcoming recital.

You enjoy playing piano, the piece you're learning, making progress, looking forward to the recital, and imagining being appreciated. These are all pleasures.

At the same time, say you have a habit of focusing on achievement at the expense of pleasure. You practice in a way such that you miss opportunities for pleasure, and that you increase unpleasant stress, agitation, fear, frustration, efforting, will power, discomfort.

Some of that may be necessary, but as you grow capacity, you grow capacity for pleasurable processing, paying attention to pleasure, and as a result of this, achieving more, more quickly and efficiently.

You could also refer to effortless processing, as just discussed. A distinctive value of pleasurable processing is the focus on pleasurable excitation and on enjoying life; whereas "effortless" emphasizes more achievement and pleasurable relaxation as opposed to excitation.

Pleasurable processing also helps you stay aligned with the pursuit of happiness. You change, values change, goals change, and pleasurable processing promotes more efficient changing.

You could also say "pleasure" instead of "pleasurable processing," but here the context emphasizes the importance also of processing, the doing of life activity.

Part 2. Deregulation

Deregulation is orientation and pleasure, with an emphasis on the pleasant letting go of control quality of orientation and pleasure, and movement in its direction. Hence the word “deregulation”; dropping regulations, letting go of control. You could say “Deregulation is letting go of control,” where that refers to orientation and pleasure, with an emphasis on their pleasant letting go of control quality.

Deregulation also and secondarily refers to market deregulation, to a free market, to laissez-faire capitalism, and movement in its direction (deregulating). I analogize nervous system deregulation, NSD, (deregulation in the first and primary sense, viz., orientation and pleasure) with market regulation. Each helps understanding and appreciation of the other.

Deregulation, both of the market and your nervous system, has a spirit of laissez-faire. Let go of control, let things happen freely, hands off, stop controlling things, stop trying to control people and yourself.

2.1 What deregulation is

2.1.1 Of the market

Deregulation is freedom.

“Freedom” refers to the correct, political sense of the concept: Being free from the initiation of physical force by other people against your person or property.

Freedom is a condition in which the individual’s right to live by the judgment of his own mind is recognized and protected by the government, which protects every individual’s right to live as he chooses so long as he does not initiate the use of physical force against other people or their property. Initiation of force refers to starting the use of force and is different from retaliatory force, force used in retaliation against initiation. Rape is initiation of physical force; defending oneself against one’s rapist, including killing him, is retaliatory force.

Being raped violates your freedom. A government that allows people to rape you violates your freedom.

Someone stealing your organs or phone violates your freedom. A government that allows that violates your freedom.

Some claim a distinction between “economic” and “non-economic” actions. Producing, selling, and buying goods and services, they say, are economic actions. Practicing a religion, playing games with friends, going to a party, enjoying friendship, romantic relationships, and family, having (non-commercial) sex, they say, are non-economic actions.

Deregulation protects both “economic” and “non-economic” relationships with others. Forbidding the buying and selling of apples violates freedom. Forbidding gay sex violates freedom.

“Market deregulation” calls to mind “economic” actions, but includes protection of “non-economic” actions.

Deregulation refers both to your freedom being protected (to whatever degree a government protects it) and to movement in the direction of freedom. It includes freedom fighting, e.g., defending your country which protects freedom to a substantial degree against an aggressor who seeks to enslave you, protesting laws that violate freedom, abolition of a law that violates freedom.

Regulation includes any law that violates freedom. “You may not buy and sell apples.” “You may not have gay sex.”

2.1.2 Of your biology

Deregulation is letting go of control, where this refers to orientation and pleasure, emphasizing their pleasant letting go of control quality.

The quality of pleasant letting go of control

This quality refers to the control of attention feeling less taxing, efforted, will powered, unpleasant, uncomfortable, burdensome, draining, etc., thanks to more stability in orientation and pleasure. For example, less need for self-control. You’re having a fight with someone. It takes less self-control to keep your cool, not say or do something you’ll regret. Less self-control because you’re more stable in orientation and pleasure; much easier to do whatever you want to do, e.g., stay silent, excuse yourself, go for a walk, say something firmly but politely, etc.

Say you go for a walk. Orientation is happening automatically; doesn’t require self-control; and is neutral to pleasant. Pleasure from the warm breeze and from sights and sounds happens automatically; doesn’t require self-control

It refers to less need to control attention to pursue and enjoy happiness because more orientation and pleasure is already happening automatically; it doesn’t require control of attention to secure.

Another perspective on the prior point is that you can control your attention to promote pleasure, joy, and happiness, from a place already of feeling well; so that the controlling feels less taxing, as per the point above.

Moments of orientation and pleasure, of any duration, are moments of pleasant letting go of control. They’re tastes of feeling less need to do, to control attention, to secure feeling better or a value.

“Letting go of control” is figurative

Letting go of control is figurative; the result is more control.

You want to win someone’s affections, and to do so you’re initiating a lot of contact with her and inviting her to things and following up very shortly after a date to talk, bond, and plan the next date, etc. And she’s getting more distant; and the more distant she gets, the more you’re taking the prior sorts of actions, e.g., messaging her, inviting her to things.

“Dude, back off, give her some space, give her some breathing room. Stop trying to control her or the situation. That will increase your odds of winning her over.”

You back off and after some time she messages you, asking for a date.

Backing off was the better thing to do for your rational self-interest and falls under “taking control” in a literal sense. You’re choosing to back off and leave her alone rather than initiate more contact.

It’s letting go of control in a figurative sense. You’re backing away from actions that are associated with taking control, trying to control things, etc.

Deregulation involves controlling to promote orientation and pleasure

At the same time, deregulation includes controlling—referring to taking control, managing, effort, will power, exertion, executive control, activation of attention, focus, mind, behavior, action, commitment, discipline, stick-to-it-ness, etc.—for the sake of promoting orientation and pleasure.

Deregulation is not against control, as understood above. It is for control, in the context of promoting orientation and pleasure. Likewise, market deregulation is not against using force against others. It is for force, in retaliation and to protect freedom.

Deregulating doesn’t mean you’re in orientation and pleasure; you may be uncomfortable, suffering, and have to use a lot of effort, controlling, will power, just to survive. That still counts as deregulating if and because your goal is to move towards orientation and pleasure. E.g., You want to return to your abusive ex, you know it’s not in your self-interest, it will harm you. You use a ton of effort, control, will power to resist, and as best you can occupy your time with something as pleasant or least unpleasant as possible, and as orienting as possible. To promote laissez-faire, the individual acts, which can involve effort, control, will power, and the like.

Likewise, fighting for market deregulation doesn’t mean you’re free. You may be enslaved.

If there’s orientation and pleasure you could notice and lean into, but you choose to do something that distances you from it, e.g., problem solving, exercising, that’s regulation. (If the problem solving or exercising amplifies orientation and pleasure, that’s deregulation.) Regulation is action on the model of control, as opposed to the model of orientation and pleasure (with control as necessary to protect orientation and pleasure).

Doing X, e.g., problem solving, as regulation is different from doing it as deregulation. The action itself is not even the same. The deregulator will lean into any available orientation and pleasure, whereas the regulator won't.

Likewise, shooting and killing people as part of fighting for freedom is different from shooting and killing people as part of fighting for slavery. The action itself is not even the same. "Both sides are killing each other." Sure, but fundamentally, one side is fighting for freedom and the other for slavery.

2.2 The calculation problem for regulation

2.2.1 Of the market

To help people afford healthcare., a regulator proposes price controls on healthcare services. (Random selection from a zillion possible regulations And this example itself consists of a zillion regulations..)

A fundamental problem with regulation is that you can't rationally calculate what regulations to enact, because you don't have information from (true) prices. (You can look up the calculation problem, popularized by Ludwig von Mises.)

In a free market, you have prices, which are the result of voluntary interaction. Who (if anyone) is willing to offer what goods and services and at what price (range)? Who (if anyone) is willing to pay what price (range) for what goods and services? That determines whether the price of treatment X is generally in the Y range or Z range. Prices are crucial information for calculating action. E.g., prices for treatment X are rising. That's a signal: People will pay a lot for treatment X, e.g., 5K, incentivizing entrepreneurs to offer treatment X, which lowers the price.

Suppose regulator sets a price ceiling on treatment X of 2K (or whatever). This is completely arbitrary and not a price. You'll get fewer people offering treatment X and because you don't have a price, entrepreneurs won't have information that people will pay highly for treatment X, which incentivizes people to offer treatment X, making it more available and at a lower price.

Regulation harms.

2.2.2 Of your biology

To feel better, you do CBT. (Random selection from a zillion possible regulation strategies. And this example itself consists of a zillion strategies.)

A fundamental problem with regulation is that you can't rationally calculate what regulations to enact, because you don't have information from orientation and pleasure (because your attention operates on the regulation model).

On the deregulation model, you're paying attention to orientation and pleasure. If orientation and pleasure potentiate a sudden thought, e.g., "OK, my getting fired is a

growth opportunity,” cool, good; just as if prices potentiate more people offering treatment X.

But if you’re doing a “OK, my getting fired is a growth opportunity” mantra in a way such that you’re missing information from orientation and pleasure and suppressing it (through the effort and discomfort involved in doing the regulation), that’s arbitrary; just as price controls are arbitrary.

Regulation harms.

2.3 Regulation begets regulation

2.3.1 Of the market

A fundamental problem with regulation is that it begets more regulation. Regulations harm, and regulators address this with more regulation, which causes more harm, which they address with more regulation, which causes more harm, etc.

Regulator places a price ceiling on rent.

Now there’s a housing shortage, more homelessness, and the housing that is available is less maintained, e.g., roaches everywhere.

Regulator does more regulation, e.g., tax/print money for public housing, homeless shelters, regulate housing quality.

Rich people buy fewer yachts, putting yacht businesses out of business, resulting in job loss for many poor people; businesses and residents who don’t like living near public housing move away, resulting in fewer goods and services and less pleasant environment for people in the city; regulations on housing quality worsen the shortage.

Regulator does more regulation, e.g., taxes/prints money to give to the poor and as housing subsidies.

Inflation skyrockets; people can’t afford gas.

Regulator taxes/prints money to offer gas subsidies.

And so on. Regulation begets regulation; harm begets harm.

2.3.2 Of your biology

A fundamental problem with regulation is that it begets more regulation. Regulations harm, and regulators address this with more regulation, which causes more harm, which they address with more regulation, which causes more harm, etc.

Regulator, fired from his job and depressed, wants to play video games and eat ice cream, which will make him feel better. He uses effort to resist pleasure, and instead to do CBT (with a therapist, friend, or do-it-yourself, possibly with AI help; I’ll call the help the aide).

He doesn’t want to start regulation; it’s unpleasant.

“What are your fears? What’s behind the resistance?” asks aide. (Aide addresses regulator’s not wanting to do regulation, with regulation; adding demand on regulator to answer questions.)

“Uh...,” says regulator, feeling more unpleasant. (The demand to regulate caused harm.)

“Maybe we can support your ability to answer my questions if we first start with feeling your feet on the floor and your back against the chair and feeling what you feel in your body. Let’s start with those three things,” says aide. (Aide addresses the further harm with more regulation; adding demand on regulator to do those things.)

“I feel tightness in my stomach,” says regulator, feeling more unpleasant. (More harm.)

“Tightness in your stomach. Let’s feel that; the way through is through,” says aide. (More regulation; more harm.)

“It’s really unpleasant. Now I’m having the thought that I’m worthless.” (He’s feeling more unpleasant; more harm.)

“Ah, we’ve reached a core belief. Let’s examine that belief. Is it true?” asks aide. (More regulation.)

Regulator feels more unpleasant, uncomfortable, knowing aide secretly wants an answer of “No” but feeling the answer is “Yes,” which creates even more unpleasantness. Regulator looks elsewhere.

“Where did you go? Let’s do the work. Make eye contact with me,” says aide. (More demand for regulation; more harm.)

And so on. Regulation begets regulation; harm begets harm.

2.4 Regulation perpetuates boom and bust cycle

2.4.1 Of the market

A free market sustains economic expansion; sustains an economic boom.

A feature of sustained expansion is that prices of goods cannot suddenly skyrocket due to government money printing.

By contrast, sustained expansion is sabotaged, and replaced with cycling of boom and bust, of expansion and contraction, if government prints money. Government prints money -> banks get more money -> banks lower interest rates -> entrepreneurs incentivized to take out loans to engage in long-term, complex production, employment up -> economy feels prosperous (boom, expansion). But prices of goods that businesses need for production skyrocket (printing money does not magically create steel, etc.), businesses shut down, massive lay offs (bust, contraction).

Free market = eating protein. Money printing = sugar/caffeine/drug rush and then crash.

2.4.2 Of your biology

Deregulation sustains nervous system expansion, i.e., orientation and pleasure grow capacity.

By contrast, regulating yourself to produce action perpetuates a boom and bust cycle. E.g., using effort to think positive, cognitively reframe, activate behavior, ask the girl out, work harder, etc., face, feel, and tolerate discomfort, and then crashing into shame, negative thoughts, burnout, no energy, hope, will power; and then again effort to do all those things, and then crashing again. Rinse and repeat.

Deregulation = sustained boom. Regulation = boom and bust.

2.5 Auto-organization

2.5.1 Of the market

“Auto-organization,” a term drawn from Organic Intelligence, here refers to what’s variously called in economics “spontaneous organization,” “unplanned organization,” “spontaneous order,” “unplanned order.”

Auto-organization refers to growth happening through processes that are possible because of not regulating.

E.g., the government has been regulating an area of land, mandating it be left as the desert it is. It decides to deregulate. A few years later, you find a thriving metropolis. Person A came in and built a casino. B a museum. C an Italian restaurant. D a hotel. Etc. Each of these itself came about through auto-organization process. Z got an order for steel which he supplied; which would eventually be used to build the restaurant. Etc.

2.5.2 Of your biology

Auto-organization, in Organic Intelligence, refers to your capacity growing through orientation and pleasure.

Regulation prevents auto-organization. E.g., two hours of exercise a day, five cups of coffee, two glasses of wine, one hour of Yoga, one hour of meditation, one hour of cognitive reframing, box breathing all day to manage your states, distancing you from orientation and pleasure that could have emerged, distancing you from capacity growth, keeping your capacity the same. Like mandating the desert be left as it is.

Deregulating enables auto-organization. “I’m going to pay more attention to orientation and pleasure as I do my whatever.” A year later: “So this is what it’s like to feel good without having to effort, and to have capacity to do X (work, read a novel, socialize, etc.) more effortlessly, pleurably, and while able to process more.” Desert to metropolis.

2.6 Growth is roundabout

2.6.1 Of the market

A path that is roundabout is one that is indirect. E.g., instead of walking straight to the avocado, I (for some reason) am going to zig zag about, maybe circle around the avocado several times, even walk further away and then closer and then further away and then eventually get to the avocado.

In the context of economic growth, by a roundabout path, I mean (inspired from Böhm-Bawerk), a path that is insanely more productive because of its roundaboutness.

Direct path: I walk straight to the avocado, grab it, and sell it.

Roundabout path: I create technology that enables me to farm and sell zillions of avocados.

The roundabout path is insanely more beneficial.

2.6.2 Of your biology

In the context of growing in the more personal sense, roundabout refers to the path being one of orientation and pleasure, which can differ from a path of directly going after what you want.

Direct path: You message the girl you like, asking her on a date, even though it's scary.

Roundabout path: You build capacity through orientation and pleasure and then ask her out pleasurably.

The roundabout path is insanely more beneficial because of the capacity growth.

Part 3. Selfishness

3.1 Selfishness is good

You're an ugly, dark brown Asian gay guy.

Your dream in life is to be White, hot, and young forever; forever at the top of the racial and attractiveness ladders in the gay world.

There's a procedure that will do this. You can design your appearance exactly as you want it and be that age (and health) forever (and you can reverse and change things around whenever you want).

Only you know about the procedure.

There are actually two possible procedures, the basic and the premium. The basic one does not include the option of blond hair or blue eyes (but does include other colors for each, and in caucasian style). The premium does include these options.

The premium procedure is 1,000 times as expensive as the basic, which is already extremely expensive.

You've been working 16 hour days and saving for years for your dream. You've been living in your car, eating canned tuna, to save every penny you can to become White.

You finally save enough money for the basic procedure.

You made an appointment for the procedure and head to the train station to get to the clinic.

It's the happiest day of your life.

Your train has arrived and you're about to get in, but you see on the platform a guy with a gun who has kidnapped a kid.

- (1) You could risk your life to save the kid, offer all your money in exchange for the kid's life, possibly being shot and killed by the guy
- (2) Or you could proceed into the train, get the procedure, achieve your life dream, become White, hot, and eternally young, live at the top of the racial and attractiveness ladders in the gay world, and enjoy all there is to enjoy about all that
- (3) Or you could donate all your money to save a half a zillion starving children
- (4) Or you could invest your money to build a business to save a zillion children for your financial profit, charging as much as you can get away with, to save for the premium procedure
- (5) Or you could devote your life to the gods and their commands, e.g., renounce materialism, life on earth, earthly happiness, eliminate people of a certain group, convert others
- (6) Or you could donate all your money to save a rainforest and baby-killing mosquitos

- (7) Or you could use the money to lift your loving family out of poverty and pay for their healthcare, immigration, and other needs
- (8) Or you could use the money to save your loving, ugly, brown, Asian boyfriend, who's dying of disease X, which costs your savings to treat

The morality of selfishness would say to do what's best for you. Suppose in this case that's (2), but it could be one of at least a subset of the other options, e.g., (4), (7), (8), depending on your values, on what values best promote your wellbeing. The morality of selfishness, in other formulations, says to pursue your happiness, well-being, welfare, flourishing, self-interest, advantage, gain, profit, good (what's good for you), benefit. Selfishness is the bona fide pursuit of your actual happiness.

The morality of unselfishness (or altruism, or self-sacrifice) advocates non-selfishness. It would praise, for example, (1) over (4). How much you benefit others is irrelevant to the nature of unselfishness; you're morally good to the extent you self-harm.

Selfishness is morally good. Unselfishness is morally evil.

3.2 "Everyone's always selfish"

Someone says, "Everyone's always selfish. There's no such thing as unselfishness."

To the degree this person repeatedly inserts this statement into people's genuine inquiry into how to live, they imply that "How should I live?" is an unimportant question.

"Which action do I take above?"

"Whatever you do, you're being selfish. There's no such thing as unselfishness," the person repeats.

"But I'm looking for advice on how to live."

"Whatever you do, you're being selfish. There's no such thing as unselfishness," the person repeats.

Their understanding of selfishness and unselfishness are null.

Pursuing your happiness is selfish and good. Choosing a miserable life is unselfish and bad.

3.3 "Caring for others is exactly what unselfishness is!"

Someone says, "It's not selfish to care for others. It's the exact opposite!"

It's selfish to eat peanuts when it serves your happiness, and it's good when and because it's selfish.

It's unselfish to eat peanuts when it hurts your happiness, e.g., you're allergic, and it's bad when and because it's unselfish.

It's selfish to care for others when it serves your happiness, and it's good when and because it's selfish, e.g., saving your child's life over a stranger's.

It's unselfish to care for others when it hurts your happiness, and it's bad when and because it's unselfish, e.g., risking your life to save a stranger instead of caring for your child.

Someone says, "The idea of risking your life to save a stranger instead of caring for your child is too far out, far-fetched, out there, insane, crazy, ridiculous, abhorrent, repugnant, loathsome, unspeakable, not worth considering seriously. No one would do that; no one would think that's a good thing to do."

Running with this, this indicates just how evil unselfishness really is; it's so evil that it doesn't come into serious consideration for living.

Many who are scared of publicly criticizing unselfishness endorse a whitewashed faux understanding of it—e.g., "My buying my kid school supplies instead of spending the money on liquor and gambling is unselfish"—that illicitly appeals to actual selfishness and its goodness, and the badness of actual unselfishness. And they prop up this selfishness-washed faux understanding of unselfishness and strawmanned unselfishness-washed faux understanding of selfishness with each other, helping each other rationalize that unselfishness is good and selfishness bad.

By the way, do you let your kids watch cartoons where the hero risks his life to save strangers?

3.4 "Don't call pursuing your happiness 'selfish'"

Someone says, "Pursuing your self-interest is great, but don't call it 'selfish,' because it has a negative connotation. Maybe don't even call it 'self-interest'; call it pursuing your 'well-being.'"

It's important to use the word 'selfish' to fight negative connotations around the pursuit of self-interest, or well-being (or any other word or phrase you want).

Someone says, "Pursuing your happiness instead of saving starving children or dying to save a stranger isn't selfish. It's pursuing your well-being. Buying your kids backpacks and taking them on vacation instead of using that money to save starving children isn't selfish. It's unselfish, and fortuitously aligned with your overall well-being. 'Selfishness' and 'unselfishness' aren't sharply distinct; they overlap in a gray area, with each reinforcing the other. Caring for myself helps me care for my kids; caring for my kids promotes my well-being; selfishness promotes unselfishness; unselfishness promotes selfishness. But again it shouldn't be called 'selfishness' but something else, such as well-being, self-care, self-nurturing.'"

Bullshit.

It is selfish. It's time to stop evading that. And it's good, because it's selfish.

It's time to stop enabling negative connotations around selfishness, the pursuit of well-being.

3.5 "Selfishness and unselfishness are in the heart"

Someone says, "Selfishness and unselfishness are not in the action, but in the motive, in the heart, in one's intention. If I save my baby instead of dying for a stranger, it's selfish if my motive is selfish, unselfish if my motive is unselfish. And it's morally good if my motive is unselfish, stemming from unselfish concern for my baby."

Bullshit.

So, your "unselfishness" happens to choose the action that aligns with your well-being instead of the action that sacrifices it?

Unselfishness is "love thy enemy" and cartoons that show the hero risking his life for strangers.

3.6 "Balancing selfishness and unselfishness is best"

Someone says, "There's no need to go to extremes, like dying to save a stranger or never helping others. Extreme selfishness is bad. Extreme unselfishness is bad. It's all about balance and not being extreme."

What counts as "extreme" selfishness?

Is choosing to spend your holidays the way you want to spend them instead of how others want you to spend them "extreme"?

If so, what justifies that?

And if someone says it's OK to spend your money to become White instead of helping family or saving starving children, what would be the morally superior act? The selfish one? Or an unselfish one?

If someone says neither is morally superior, they're saying pursuing your happiness is no better than sacrificing it. That's evil. Overcoming self-harming behavior is a praiseworthy achievement, not something to be indifferent to.

3.7 "Sometimes, it's wrong to be selfish"

Someone says, "Sometimes it's wrong to be selfish. For example, say it makes you happy to cheat on your partner, which is always immoral."

Running with the claim that cheating is always immoral, what's immoral is cheating, not being selfish.

Selfish cheating would be morally superior to unselfish cheating, because you actually benefited as opposed to harming yourself.

Killing a stranger, supposing that's immoral, to save your kid is morally superior to killing your kid to save the stranger.

“Sometimes it’s wrong to be selfish” is wrong because it implies there’s something wrong with being selfish when selfishness is morally good and unselfishness morally evil.

It’s always good to be selfish and always bad to be unselfish. If you bring in behavior that (we’re supposing) is immoral, its being done unselfishly makes it even worse and selfishly makes it better.

You can press a button that will destroy the world, but give you a french fry. If you like french fries, that’s far better than if you don’t even like them; and your action is far worse if pressing that button destroys your life and happiness, too.

3.8 “Suicide is selfish”

The above statement uses “selfish” to mean “wrong,” which is evil.

Suicide is good when selfish, understood correctly.

By good, I mean valid, not necessarily mandatory; I mean it’s a valid option (because it’s a selfish one).

Examples plausibly include: You’re terminally ill and don’t want to suffer and degrade. Your loved ones are about to be tortured to death, you can’t do anything about it, so you choose to end your life to avoid the anguish of seeing and hearing their anguish. You die to save your loved ones whom you don’t care to live without (contrast against dying to save strangers, letting your loved ones die). Your plan crash lands, you’re the only survivor, all your loved ones died, you don’t care to live; so you kill yourself (or just passively let yourself die). Or maybe you try for some time to go on, to survive, forage and hunt, find and build shelter, but after some time decide you don’t care to live; so you kill yourself, including here passively letting yourself die.

Suicide is bad when unselfish, e.g., you have a whole life ahead of you with significant possibility for joy, and you decide to play Russian roulette or die to save a stranger.

I don’t further address when exactly is suicide selfish and when unselfish. E.g., someone is in situation X, thinking about the details and whether to kill himself, and it’s a tough call. The material point of this section is that suicide is good when selfish (and bad when unselfish). And the examples above for each are at least plausible.

3.9 “What if helping others makes me happy?”

You run a technology company that provides goods and services that benefit many people. You’re motivated by profit and you’re happy. You’re helping others and being selfish; nice.

Someone says, “No, that doesn’t count as helping others, because you’re doing it out of self-interest, profit motive. Helping others refers to helping others unselfishly.”

If it's unselfish, contrary to your well-being, and if that's what you mean by helping others, then helping others can't possibly make you happy.

"No, it can. By helping others, I mean doing it unselfishly where that can also promote your happiness, but your happiness being promoted through financial gain is ruled out. It makes me happy to help my family and friends, which I do because it makes me happy, but not through financial gain."

It's arbitrary and unjustified to rule out the motive of financial gain. And you're still referring to selfish helping, which is good because it's selfish. You need to compare happiness-promoting helping of your family and friends to saving strangers instead of your loved ones, causing you misery.

Furthermore, in many cases, people are spending their lives helping others as part of avoiding figuring out what will really make them happy and rationalizing to themselves that that's what makes them happy. "I never pursued a career or romantic love because I have family members who need my care, but that's fine, because that's what really makes me happy," where you sense you're rationalizing. (Which is to be enjoyed as much as possible, so you can build capacity through orientation and pleasure, so you can pursue your happiness as pleasurably as possible.)

3.10 "Selfishness promotes the 'greater good'"

Many free market advocates say this.

Selfishness, in the context of market deregulation, as history shows, yields prosperity, e.g., modern tech, medicine, higher standard of living.

But these things are not the justification of the individual's being selfish. Supposing no individual's happiness lies in producing any of those goods and services, each individual should still pursue their happiness.

If no women are willing to gestate (as part of their pursuit of individual happiness) and all human beings die, that's the morally right result, because each woman (each and every individual) should pursue their happiness.

Yes, the above is unrealistic; people will have children. The point was to illustrate that selfishness is morally good, regardless of any notion like the 'greater good'.

The same comments apply to, "A selfish world would be a terrible world." Yes, the opposite is true; selfishness in the context of market deregulation leads to the opposite. But again, if no woman is willing to gestate and the world ends (meaning no more human beings), that's the morally correct result. Women (and everyone else) are not slaves or resources for anyone to use as they please.

3.11 "Are you saying I should teach my children to be selfish?!"

"Mom, why do I have to do chores around the house? Could you and dad and my brother do all the chores and can I just do whatever I want when I want, which will never

be to do chores) and which will involve messing up the house, making all of your choring more choring?”

You answer, “No, none of us is willing to do that. Each of us needs to be selfish, do what promotes our well-being, and what that looks like for us living together in this house is for each of us to do our part. Plus we’re raising you to best promote your long-term happiness, which involves learning skills and knowledge, including how to be selfish in social situations.

“Other kids at school and their parents and other people in general will use the words ‘selfish’ and ‘unselfish’ differently. They’ll say things like, ‘Wanting other people to do all the chores and doing none yourself is selfish and wrong. You have to be unselfish, at least to a degree, and do your chores. Being purely selfish is not best for your long-term happiness. The proper balance of selfishness and unselfishness is.

“If you encounter people saying that, and you’re curious to think and talk about it, I’ll be here. For now, I’ll say that if I made you skip your playtime with friends, which I know makes you very happy, and instead made you help at the local orphanage, which let’s suppose you’d hate, then your helping at the orphanage would be unselfish, and because I want what’s best for you, I would want you to play with friends instead.”

Gold star answer, mom.

3.12 “Narcissism is selfish”

No.

To the extent you’re making claims about diagnoses (physical or mental), if anything they’re unselfish, not in your self-interest. Illness is unselfish; though in an attenuated sense, because “selfish” and “unselfish” primarily refer to volitional action. Attending to your physical and mental health is selfish; not doing so is unselfish. But yes, you could call having cancer, depression, narcissism, etc. unselfish, so long as you’re not implying volition or moral judgment.

Grandiose self-view is not selfishness. Selfishness is the pursuit of happiness.

Furthermore, people also associate selfishness (mistakenly) with a self-minimizing self-view. People call depressed people “selfish,” and depressed people call themselves “selfish,” referring to something along the lines of self-absorption, self-centeredness (due to their symptoms hostaging their attention). Symptoms could relate to a grandiose self-view or a minimizing self-view.

So going with popular usages of “selfish,” a grandiose self-view is not specifically selfish in a way that the opposite is not.

But the fundamental point is that selfishness is the pursuit of happiness. Calling narcissism selfish is as wrong as calling any other illness selfish; if anything it’s unselfish.

3.13 Selfishness on a desert island

You're trying to survive on a desert island, e.g., forage, hunt, find and build shelter., avoid predators, kill predators.

That's selfish and good.

By contrast, suppose that you don't act to try to survive or even act against your survival, e.g., throw away the fish you collected in an emotional moment, walk directly towards a predator, offering your hand to be the first thing it bites off and eats. (Assume here this is not a case where suicide is selfish; that you want to survive; and that at least sometimes you have bona fide volitional control over whether you act for your survival or not.)

That's unselfish and bad.

Another guy appears on the island.

He's wearing a shirt that says, "I'm a thief, rapist, killer, and your enemy, and I will rob, rape, and kill you." And he has a knife.

He sees you and runs straight for you, readying his knife to attack you.

You kill him.

That's selfish and good.

By contrast, suppose you approach him, on the premise "love thy enemy," and offer him your last remaining fish, which he accepts and eats. And suppose you invite him to share with you the shelter you built, which he accepts. Then he rapes and kills you.

You were unselfish and bad.

Suppose he hasn't raped and killed you yet.

Another guy appears on the island.

He's wearing a shirt that says, "I'm unselfish."

As he approaches the two of you, he sees that the guy is about to rape and kill you.

"No," unselfish guy says, "kill me instead."

The guy rapes and kills the unselfish guy.

Unselfish guy was bad for being unselfish. Your benefiting from his unselfishness is irrelevant for this fact.

After the guy kills unselfish guy, he proceeds to rape and kill you, to which you submit out of unselfishness.

You were bad for being unselfish.

Another guy appears on the island. (The killer disappeared and you're alive.)
He's wearing a shirt that says, "I'm selfish."

You get pleasure from there being another human being. You invite him to be with you and share your shelter. That's selfish and good.

The two of you work out a system, e.g., you fish, he gets coconuts, and you share with each other. You're both selfish and good;.

You start fishing less while eating more coconuts. He pushes back, saying you need to provide more fish if you're to eat all the coconuts you're eating. You fish more, so you can keep getting more coconuts. You're both selfish and good.

Killer returns to the island. The two of you cooperate to kill him. You're both selfish and good.

Killer returns to the island. Now suppose both of you are unselfish. You offer killer all your fish and coconuts and then submit to being killed. You're both unselfish and bad.

Selfishness is the pursuit of your happiness and does not necessarily involve other people. Being alone on a desert island and surviving is selfish and good.

Unselfishness is non-selfishness and does not necessarily involve other people. Being alone on a desert island and acting against your survival is unselfish and bad.

The meaning of selfishness and unselfishness remain the same whether you're alone on the desert island or add people and interacting with people, e.g., giving them fish, withholding coconuts, killing them, submitting to being killed.

Cooperating with a guy for your benefit is selfish and good. Continuing to let a guy eat all your coconuts while he fishes less is unselfish and bad.

Submitting to being killed by a guy (just as to an animal predator) is unselfish and bad.

At some point, you're rescued and brought to society, where your journey continues in the next section.

3.14 Selfishness is selfishness in a pro-selfish context

The society you're brought to is anti-selfish.

It is also anti-gay and anti-brown. I'm adding these comparisons to vivify the shaming of selfishness.

In this society, using your money to buy things for your pleasure is shamed; just as being gay or brown is shamed. Giving away your money, time, and energy to the needy, and caring about them, is praised; just as being straight or white is praised.

In this society, people who do not profess to care about others, who do not donate significant money, time, and energy to charity, to helping others, and who are rich, are shamed; just as being gay or brown is shamed.

In this society, people who defend selfishness are shamed; just as people who defend being gay and brown are shamed. People who defend and preach unselfishness are praised; just as people who defend and preach being straight and white are praised.

Because this society is anti-selfish, anti-gay, and anti-brown, it becomes more selfish to hide your selfishness, not defend it, not preach it, not be proud of it, to instead defend unselfishness, to spend significant money, time, and energy to helping others, so that you are more competitive for schools, jobs, promotions, etc.; just as it is more selfish to hide your homosexuality, not defend it, and instead to pretend you're straight.

An anti-selfish society is not a proper society, just as an anti-gay society or anti-brown society is not a proper society.

Because of this, what selfishness looks like in an anti-selfish society—e.g., hiding your selfishness, etc.—is not the model, proper understanding of selfishness.

Someone says, “It’s selfish to be unselfish, go with unselfishness, not defend selfishness.”

Yes, that’s true to a greater extent in an anti-selfish society, which is an improper one; just as it may be true that it’s selfish to hide your sexuality in an anti-gay context, which is an improper one.

Someone says, “An anti-selfish society also benefits you and so in a sense is pro-selfish. If you want your children to be doctors, they must obey you out of duty [suppose in this society a form of its pro-unselfishness is that children serve their parents].”

It’s true that unselfish action can result in other people getting something they want and benefiting, e.g., in the desert island, unselfish guy sacrificed his life for you; you get pleasure from your children serving you. But these benefits and desire-fulfillments are fundamentally part of the nature and logic of unselfishness, not selfishness.

If you sacrifice your children to save strangers, yes, the strangers benefit, and you could say it’s a selfish benefit (with “selfish” being redundant), but that benefit is fundamentally part of the nature and logic of unselfishness. Such benefit is not representative of selfishness in the model, proper understanding of selfishness.

Gaining things at the expense of others is part of the nature and logic of unselfishness, not selfishness.

Mutual benefit is part of the nature and logic of selfishness in a social context.

Unselfishly helping a friend in a time of need and their unselfishly helping you in a time of need is fundamentally different from selfishly helping a friend in a time of need and their selfishly helping you in a time of need.

You cancel your vacation to tend to a sick friend. Say this is unselfish; net harm to your well-being (so, bad). Later you ask your friend for money. They cancel their vacation to loan you money. Say this is unselfish; net harm to them (so, bad).

The above situation is bad, both your being unselfish and your friend being unselfish. The idea of reciprocity or mutual benefit within a pro-unselfish view—the idea “in a relationship, each person being unselfish ultimately helps that person because the other will be unselfish”—is an improper understanding of reciprocity and mutual benefit, because it’s within a pro-unselfish view. A manifestation of this improper understanding of reciprocity and mutual benefit is the pressure people feel to help others and resentment about it and not feeling free to pursue their happiness, feeling guilty about pursuing happiness.

By contrast, say you cancel your vacation to tend to a sick friend, selfishly. And they later help you selfishly. Your helping them is mutually beneficial. Their helping you is mutually beneficial. And each act is on the premise of selfishness, which is good, and a manifestation of this is each person feeling free to pursue their happiness and no pressure to sacrifice it.

Cases where selfishness involves appealing to unselfishness are also not model, proper examples of selfishness, because you’re within an anti-selfish context. E.g., you praise someone for being unselfish or a good person (where by good you mean unselfish), to reinforce their unselfishness, so that they help you when you want them to.

3.15 Selfishness is selfishness in a context of freedom

This is an aspect of the prior section, of selfishness being selfishness in a pro-selfish context, which is required for and enables freedom.

Suppose you’re under a dictatorship that has you being part of a farming collective. The state seizes every farmer’s produce and gives them an equal wage. You’re thus incentivized—it’s selfish—to not produce more, since you’ll get the same wage. Yes, this is an example of selfishness, in a non-freedom context, which is not the model, proper context.

The proper context is freedom. You own your land, you own your product, you can (try to) sell it for prices you set and to people who are willing to buy, and you keep your profits. In a freedom context, you produce more.

Human beings are not slaves. A slave is a person who is forced, who is subject to the initiation of physical force against their person or property. When I say human beings are not slaved, I mean they have a moral right not to be enslaved and it is wrong for anyone to initiate force against them or their property. E.g., wrong to rape a woman and to steal the pepper spray in her purse. A human being may be a slave in that an entity is enslaving them, but the entity is wrong to do so.

3.16 Selfishness is selfishness in real life

Someone kidnaps you, all the people you love, and a bunch of innocent strangers.

“Kill all these strangers or I’ll kill you and all the people you love,” he says.

Yes, the selfish and right thing to do is kill the innocent strangers.

But the focus should be on what selfishness generally looks like in real life, with an eye toward a pro-selfish, pro-freedom context. And that looks like: orientation, pleasure, shower, brush teeth, eat, work, play, etc. Not killing innocent people even though yes you can come up with situations where that’s selfish and right.

It is especially wrong to disregard concern for what selfishness generally looks like in real life and to focus on situations where doing X is selfish, where you’re trying to get people to be against selfishness, e.g., presenting a case of killing innocent people and trying to get people to be against selfishness due to their negative emotional reaction.

It’s especially, especially wrong given that the unselfish version makes X even worse, e.g., killing the people you love to save strangers.

3.17 Selfishness is rational selfishness

To select, pursue, achieve and maintain values for your happiness—e.g., career, relationships—fundamentally involves reason, your basic tool of survival. (Discussed in Part 1.) Being rational is selfish and fundamentally so.

“I’m going to give it my all to overcome or at least contain my addictions, to save my marriage, family, career, which are all important to my happiness. Let me look into treatments and get in as much orientation and pleasure as possible along the way.” Very selfish, very good.

It is very wrong to describe unselfish behavior as selfish. “My selfishness destroyed my life.” No. Your **unselfishness** destroyed your life.

Part 4. How to help others deregulate

Even though helping others is always immoral¹, let's look at how to do it anyway.

Let's look at how to help others deregulate. Others include anyone, e.g., partner, family, friends, clients, acquaintances.

Helping others deregulate means promoting orientation and pleasure in them.

You can also say helping others deregulate means helping them grow capacity, which happens automatically as a result of increasing time in orientation and pleasure, just as digesting happens automatically as a result of eating. If your partner needs to eat (according to doctor's orders) but doesn't want to, and you cook their favorite foods to make eating more attractive (or less unattractive) to them, you're helping them eat. You could also say you're helping them digest and gain nourishment, which happens automatically if they eat.

You can also say helping others deregulate means helping them achieve the various things they want in seeking support (professional or otherwise), e.g., symptom reduction, healing, feeling better, figuring out what you want, taking action. All this results from orientation, pleasure, and capacity growth.

The content of this section will also help you deregulate. Content on helping others deregulate can be especially useful for this purpose through enabling useful insight from orientation (to others). (See 1.1.6)

4.1 How to talk about pain, suffering, and what's wrong

If someone wants to avoid talking about their problems, pain, and suffering, and instead to talk about positive, happy things, then avoiding and talking about positive, happy things is very good, assuming it promotes orientation and pleasure.

If it increases unpleasant intensity, due to all the effort spent on trying to avoid the pain, suffering, and content about problems, which are becoming more and more intense as the person efforts more at avoiding it, then avoiding and talking about positive, happy things is not good, because it's more displeasurable than feeling the pain you need to feel and talking about the negative things you're trying to avoid talking about.

It can be tricky to figure out whether to try to avoid talking about problems and feeling unpleasant feelings. You're having fish tacos with a friend. You feel some impulse to talk about the tough time you're going through in life, e.g., divorce, diagnosis, job loss, etc. You feel some impulse to avoid doing that and to try to focus on enjoying the fish tacos and talking about sports. Which impulse should you follow? This is a process of trial, error, and success.

¹ Joke. Dammit Kaitlyn.

As a general rule, try to get straight to orientation and pleasure, instead of feeling worse before better. If you can get straight to increasing orientation and pleasure by focusing on the fish tacos and talking about sports, do that; try that. If as you're talking about sports, you notice you're feeling worse, and the content about the divorce, etc., is becoming more intense and unavoidable, then talk about your divorce, which will involve feeling worse before feeling better. (But in this case it would feel even worse to try to avoid feeling worse; so you're still minimizing displeasure, which is the way to go.)

Now suppose you're the friend and you notice that your friend seems to be in a tug of war between trying to focus on positive, happy talk (e.g., sports, "these fish tacos are delicious") and letting the dam open and talking about his pain ("This divorce is killing me and my life is falling apart").

Showing that you can be with him either way will help him. You could show it through directly saying you're there for him whether he wants to talk about problems or not; and through your general way of being; being such that people feel comfortable both to do positive, happy talk and fall apart talk with you, and no talk (silence).

But again, if you can get or help your friend or client get straight to orientation and pleasure, do that. This contrasts against the presumption that avoiding pain and avoiding painfully talking about problems is unhealthy. No. Feeling pain and painfully talking about problems when you could be enjoying fish tacos and pleasurably talking sports is unhealthy. Orientation, pleasure, and growing capacity are healthy.

Be careful of going by what feels "authentic, real, raw, true, sincere, genuine, honest, congruent." For many, it may feel "inauthentic" to try to focus on pleasure when discomfort is trying to get your attention; what feels "authentic" is to feel your pain. No. Pleasure, including less displeasure, is good. The nurse distracts you from painful shots with conversation; anesthesia protects you from pain. Good. If feeling the pain of the shot and getting surgery without anesthesia are "authentic," then being authentic is wrong.

Being with someone in their pain, suffering, stress, trauma, problems, and what's wrong and negative, and talking with them about all these things, without increasing in the slightest any pressure on them not be in their pain, etc., can provide immense help with their suffering; which falls under pleasure (which includes less displeasure) and orientation (the less unpleasant intensity, the more orientation is possible).

Pleasure includes the slightest lessening of suffering, even for a moment and minimizing displeasure, including when it unavoidable has to increase. Promoting orientation and pleasure includes lessening and minimizing distance from orientation and pleasure, even if a person is anguished and attention is hostaged by the interior (little SUAVEN connection to the environment through the senses).

Diving into the negative and staying in it can be exactly what promotes orientation and pleasure, exactly what's indicated, and trying to get someone to be positive and happy can be contraindicated, harmful to them.

In the wider context, helping someone means helping them with their happiness (or well-being, flourishing, welfare, life, etc.). The material point here is that this can involve joining them in their unhappiness and not pressuring them in the slightest to be less unhappy.

So we don't avoid the negative.

If someone is suffering, negative, wants to talk about their problems and what's wrong, and if the slightest pressure from you on them to try to be positive or suffer less would increase displeasure, you don't pressure them to try to be positive. You join them in the negative.

Yes, it can be tricky to figure out whether an invitation to deviate from the negative would work and would be appreciated by them.

For example, a friend or client is talking about how ugly and worthless he is, and mentions in passing that a woman complimented his shirt the other day.

"Nice to get a compliment on your shirt," you say.

Maybe he responds, "Yeah, true, it was nice."

Maybe he responds, "You're not listening to me! I'm talking about how ugly and worthless I am and you're just trying to find any slight positive to shove down my throat instead of being with me in my pain!"

In the first case, he was able to acknowledge the compliment and was receptive to doing so. In the second, you caused harm, even if unintentionally and you're not to blame. (If you're a helping professional in a clinical OI context, you're more likely to be blameworthy because you're properly held to a higher standard of care and skill level, e.g., it's your responsibility to attune to your client to get a feel for whether "Nice to get a complement on your shirt" may harm your client.)

In the first case, depending on the state of the other person's organism, maybe you could try to advance further, e.g., "As you hang with the compliment that girl gave you on your shirt, do you feel pleasure anywhere in your body?" Maybe he'll notice some pleasure and be able to feel it for some number of seconds. Maybe he'll respond, "No, and it's just a stupid shirt. My face is still ugly," and you back off trying to get him to appreciate the compliment and feel pleasure around it.

In the second case, you definitely want to back off of trying to get your friend to appreciate the compliment. You do not say, "I understand your reaction. Let's hold space for it while I invite you to recall the compliment and see if there's any pleasure in your body."

4.2 How to be roundabout

Being roundabout means going in all sorts of indirect directions (see 2.6).

For example, a friend or client says he got dumped after a dinner date with someone. “Ouch, where did you have dinner?” you say, which could be exactly what promotes orientation and pleasure.

Calling OI work roundabout helps to contrast it against much mainstream approach, which would self-describe as direct. “The client got dumped; the agenda is to talk about that (and to do so directly).”

At the same time, however, according to OI and deregulation, the agenda is orientation and pleasure and capacity growth; that’s what to direct at; what to get into directly. If “Ouch, where did you have dinner?” promotes orientation and pleasure, that’s direct. Maybe from there, the client will not even talk about getting dumped, but move onto something else, e.g., his love for his dog. Or, maybe he will talk about getting dumped, but in a way that’s less displeasurable than if he had not first talked about where he went for dinner. Note here that talking about where he went for dinner was not, as much mainstream approach would say, “preparation for the ‘real work,’ which was to talk about being dumped.” Rather, the orientation and pleasure from talking about dinner is the real work; and any orientation and pleasure (including less displeasure) happening while talking about being dumped is the real work. The real work is orientation and pleasure; and we directly do the real work.

That said, the value of calling OI work roundabout is that it helps contrast it against how mainstream approach operates.

If there’s a pressing problem to solve, that fact supports focusing on the problem. E.g., a friend has an important event or to do that’s timely—e.g., important exam, recital, meeting—and his ability to succeed is being dogged by his state, e.g., fear, stress, paralysis. In such cases, focusing on the problem—the thing to do and the blocks to it—and on solving it is more indicated.

A friend or client, say, has an upcoming deadline for a project and is stressed and paralyzed about how he’s going to meet the deadline, get his team members to collaborate productively, and reduce various friction on the team. That’s worth focusing on.

But even in cases of pressing problems, roundabout process may still be indicated and superior, and maybe should be assumed superior as a rule of thumb. Your friend or client is talking about a lunch meeting he had with his team to discuss friction on the team, and you spontaneously interrupt with “Oh, where’d you go for lunch?”

Something in you wanted to interrupt (and you were stable in orientation and pleasure and paying attention to your friend) and you decided to go with your impulse; you opened your mouth and spoke; and you didn’t even know what was going to come out of your mouth until you finished saying it and heard yourself. “Oh, where’d you go for lunch?”

Maybe your intervention flops. Your friend quickly answers, looks irritated by your question and interrupting, and moves on with talking about what happened at the team meeting. And you resume listening.

Maybe your friend happily answers where they want to lunch and then finds that he starts free associating from that point. “They have really good burritos there, almost as good as the ones I had when I was in Mexico.” And he continues free associating from that point. “Mexico was way too hot for me, but I found creative ways to stay cool.” And so on.

Mainstream approaches might nudge the friend or client back toward the topic of the team meeting.

Roundabout process, by contrast, prioritizes orientation, pleasure, and capacity growth. Orientation and pleasure may increase in your friend as he pleasantly free associates about burritos, Mexico, and unpredictable pathways from there; growing his capacity as well as enabling useful insights (see 1.1.6). For example, his free associating about how he creatively stayed cool in Mexico potentiated various thoughts and hunches over the next few days and weeks that helped him get his team together and meet the deadline.

Non-roundabout process (direct process as exemplified in the mainstream) often works against actual problem solving, by keeping unpleasant intensity jacked up, increasing chances of burnout, inaction, recycling of ideas and actions that keep not working, and reducing creativity. More creativity is unlocked in states of orientation and pleasure.

Many problems are not pressing, even though they may feel that way, e.g., not having a girlfriend. What’s actually pressing in such cases is the displeasure—e.g., loneliness, displeasure from not having what you want, unpleasant sadness—as opposed to the problem of not having a girlfriend. Thus orientation and pleasure; which grows capacity; which increases chances of finding a girlfriend pleurably, enjoying her, and minimizing displeasure and still being able to enjoy life if things don’t work out.

To repeat, even in the case of pressing problems, roundabout process can still be indicated and superior.

4.3 How to work with your inklings

Paying attention to your inklings helps you help others deregulate. “I feel like this person would appreciate a hug.” “I feel like he’d want advice right now.” “I feel like he wouldn’t want advice right now.” “I feel like he’d appreciate more eye contact right now.” “I feel like eye contact would cause him displeasure right now.” Etc.

An inkling is any aspect of your conscious experience, including thoughts, images, sensations, emotions, and orientation. (Thank you to Dr. Lee Pierson for getting me interested in this word. He uses it to refer to feelings about thoughts, e.g.,

“Something rubs me the wrong way about this person’s sales pitch,” I’m using inkling to include any aspect of conscious experience.)

Inklings must be subject to reason, your faculty that identifies and integrates the material provided by your senses. E.g., “I feel like grabbing her breasts. Hmm, let me not just act on any inkling (or feeling, gut feeling, intuition, what my heart says, what the gods say, my bodily resonance with the cosmos, etc.). What could happen if I grab her breasts? Should I ask for her consent first?” Etc.

This does not imply you always should or even can pause to think before acting on inklings. In the flow of conversation, or playing piano, or playing tennis, you’re following inklings instantaneously and it’s good to do so. Some inklings merit pausing to consider, e.g., you have a sudden impulse to throw your racket at the audience, or tell a racist joke at a job interview. But often, you automatically know they pass a basic reason-check and can continue with the flow of following inklings.

Your own orientation and pleasure practice and stabilizing in orientation and pleasure will enable you to have more inklings and better ones; more inklings that point you in ways that will help others deregulate.

If, for example, you have limited access to bodily feeling and sensations, you will not have access to a swath of inklings.. A friend is going through a tough time and reaches out to you for support. You try to help by being very analytical, asking a lot of questions, and probing, which, say, is harming them. As you deepen in orientation and pleasure and as your capacity to have and process information and intensity grows, you’ll get more access to bodily feeling and sensations that will provide helpful inklings. For example, as you orient to the other person, you have bodily feelings that potentiate a thought, “Maybe what I’m doing is not helping.”

If, for example, you have a lot of bodily feeling and sensations, but they’re chaotic, due to limited orientation and pleasure, your harmful interventions above may come from these bodily feelings and sensations. As you deepen in orientation and pleasure and grow capacity, you’ll get more reliable inklings.

Orientation and pleasure are important both for enabling helpful inklings and follow through. “Do you think I’m ugly?” a friend or client asks you, and suppose you do think they’re ugly. You have an inkling they want honesty and directness, and that you should be honest and direct, and that they will lose trust in you if you dodge, but you’re too uncomfortable being honest and direct, and you operate from the agenda of relieving your own discomfort, e.g., “Why do you ask? Where’s this coming from? Why does it matter what I think? I think the real issue here is what messages we internalize from others. No, of course not. What’s ugly, anyway? And it’s such a strong word. Even if someone is not conventionally attractive, they may be attractive to some,” Etc.

The more stable you are in orientation and pleasure, the more you’ll have inklings that support the other person and will be able to follow through with them.

4.4 How to support someone's "blues"

"At least my dog loves me. So, I guess I'm loved," says a friend or client.

"Yeah, nice," you say, without making eye contact with your friend and as you eat another french fry.

Your behavior above was spontaneous, part of your non-self-conscious living of life moment to moment, and you weren't specifically trying to support your friend.

Your behavior could have been exactly the perfect support; nothing else would have been as good; it might even harm.

"You are loved!" someone else says. "You have family and friends who love you." That causes harm; displeasure to your friend, who feels off put and invaded on.

"Yeah, your dog loves you. It's nice to be loved, isn't it?" someone else says. This causes harm. Your friend feels invaded on; like the person is coming in too close.

"'I'm loved,' you said. As you have that in mind, do you feel pleasure anywhere in your body? Can we take a moment to really feel that 'I'm loved'?" someone else says. This causes harm. Your friend feels invaded on.

"Oh, I have a dog, too. His name is Jake. What's your dog's name?" someone else says. This actually does increase pleasure in your friend, is not harmful; but (I'm supposing) is not as good as what you did. Your "Yeah, nice," and not making eye contact with your friend, say, gave him space to feel whatever pleasure there was in his own statement and your small punctuation of "Yeah, nice." By contrast, "Oh, I have a dog, too. His name is Jake. What's your dog's name?" added more cognitive demand on your friend and pressure to reply, which came at the opportunity cost of feeling the pleasure from his own statement and your "Yeah, nice."

A "blue" is any aspect of your experience that is orientation and/or pleasurable, and/or potent for orientation and pleasure; potent meaning that attending to the aspect may unlock orientation and/or pleasure.

The above is how I'm defining and using "blue" here. The word "blue" is from Organic Intelligence, and it's used in OI in various ways, which I won't cover here. You can look up my YouTube and Substack content for "red" and "blue". Here I'm using "blue" as I defined it above, not making any claims about how it relates to the various ways "blue" is used in OI; while at the same time crediting OI for the word and influencing my definition and use of it here.

"At least my dog loves me. So, I guess I'm loved," says a friend or client.

Here there may be various blues in your friend's experience. His dog, for example. And maybe talking about his dog may give him pleasure. The thought, "I'm loved," for example. That might give pleasure for some number of seconds and maybe attending to it further may unlock more pleasure (or maybe displeasure, in which case backing off is indicated).

There may be blues in your friend's experience that you're not aware of. Not just may be; this is the norm. For example, as your friend talks about his dog, he has an image (memory) of taking his dog on a walk once and running into a girl with whom he chatted pleasurably. The girl is a blue in his experience right now, which you don't know about because he's not talking about her.

There are zillions of blues streaming in people's experience that you won't know about, and that they may barely be aware of themselves. The image of the girl may be very faint in your friend's attention; he barely notices it, or maybe it's just outside his awareness. Maybe it would come into awareness if you keep eating french fries and not making eye contact with him; maybe it would not if you ask what his dog's name is.

You may be very effectively supporting your friend's blues by just eating french fries and sort of paying attention to him and sort of not.

How much to try to get others to attend to their blues is an art. Say your friend mentions the memory of chatting with that girl and from your orientation you pick up that there is or may be both pleasure and displeasure there (blue and not blue); could be a minefield. You ask what your friend and the girl talked about; he starts to answer, pleasurably, but then suddenly has a memory of being heart broken and is in displeasure. Maybe you back off asking about the girl, and that helps reduce displeasure. Or maybe asking about the girl again will actually reduce displeasure.

Trial, error, and success. And to repeat, you often can't calculate the best intervention. E.g., the "Yeah, nice" while not making eye contact and while grabbing another french fry had to come from non-self-conscious, non-calculated, living of life.

OI has a lot to say about what blues there are and the significance of various blues and how to work with them. For examples, blues having to do with family, or nature, or the universe; blues in images, e.g., an image becoming smoother and circular tending to indicate an organizing direction; blues in sensation, significant in respect of being closest to the physiology; blues in physical positions and movements, including subtle, barely noticeable ones. I mention these just to mention some examples. I do not further cover OI's catalogue of blues, their significance, and how to work with them (much of which is more relevant in clinical practice than normal living of life).

For purposes of this book, a "blue" to repeat is any aspect of your experience that is orientation and/or pleasurable, and/or potent for orientation and pleasure; potent meaning that attending to the aspect may unlock orientation and/or pleasure.

Enjoying your fish tacos is a blue.

The thought, "What if I quit my job?" is a blue if it's a blue, i.e., promotes orientation and pleasure. If it promotes a panic attack, not a blue; if that thought always triggers a panic attack, and you notice the current attack is not as bad as the prior ones, that is a blue (less displeasure than before).

If the thought is totally neutral, that could count as major blue if it used to come with panic attacks.

It could also count as neither blue nor red, but rather non-valenced; and if you hang with the thought, blue might come, or red, or a mixture. If blue, enjoy; if red (unpleasant) but less red than before, that counts a blue and is good to notice. And enjoying fish tacos and looking out the window can help you feel better, both when you're feeling displeasure and when you're not.

You can drop the word "blue" if you like; and just stick with orientation and pleasure. If it helps to have one word that can refer to both orientation and pleasure, and specifically to aspects of experience that involve either or both and/or are potent for either/or both, keeping "blue" in mind may be beneficial.

"Deregulation" too is one word that refers to orientation and pleasure, and emphasizes their pleasant letting go of control quality.

Ain't nothing more blue than deregulation.

Deregulation is the big blue.

The big blue is deregulation.

Friends don't let friends regulate.

Part 5. Deregulating cognitive behavior approaches

Cognitive behavior approaches, DIY and/or with someone's help, aims to help you feel better and live your life by thinking and acting. They often put it as changing your thoughts and behaviors, or behavioral activation.

CBT at its best is deregulation: Incubating thinking and acting and living in orientation and pleasure as much as possible. If you're doing CBT, and orientation and/or pleasure comes up in the client (which could be yourself, if DIY), that takes priority as a rule of thumb. Say you're doing thinking, e.g., about the belief "I'll never find anyone." Or planning action, e.g., what steps you can take towards dating. And say you suddenly hear the background music at the cafe more. It'd been playing all this time before you noticed it more, and the volume did not increase now. Orientation increased. You want to lean into this instead of continuing with the CBT you were doing.

Here I explicate the idea that CBT at its best is deregulation. Deregulating cognitive behavior approaches refers to this claim and its explication.

5.1 Don't cause displeasure

The goal is to cause pleasure (to cause happiness). As part of pursuing this goal, it can be valuable to have the goal, "don't cause displeasure." "How do I recover from my sports injuries?" "Don't do anything that makes it worse." Someone may also have positive tips—e.g., do such-and-such exercises/stretches/movements, drink this, eat this, take these supplements, get sunlight, etc.—but the prior advice can be very valuable, too; and in some cases, will basically take you all the way to the goal; your organism automatically heals and (re)grows so long as you don't interfere and make things worse.

Both your volitional and automatic processes can cause your client displeasure. E.g., they're going on about their problems and mention something positive. Your eyes suddenly involuntarily sparkle at their mention of the positive thing; that causes them displeasure.

Being silent, motionless, and giving no feedback can cause displeasure. "I'm going to err to the side of caution' and stick with listening, being silent and motionless." That can cause displeasure.

Losing orientation and having your attention hostaged by the fact that you caused your client displeasure, can cause displeasure. Because you're less oriented, for example, you miss spotting orientation and pleasure that arises in your client, and instead ask him about what it is about your presentation or intervention that caused him displeasure, and this causes him displeasure.

Paying attention to when your client is displeased will hopefully over time change your automatic processes so as to reduce how much displeasure they cause.

“I’m not the fundamental cause of my client’s displeasure. The fundamental cause is X,” therapist says. “X is their ‘core belief’ that they are unlovable, and maybe other beliefs that we’ll unearth and process,” CBT guy says. “X is their past, which we’ll process,” psychodynamic guy and trauma therapist guy say. “X is what’s pent up in their body, which we’ll release,” somatic guy says. “X is their focus on the negative instead of the positive,” positive psychology guy says. “X is all that,” integrative guy says.

Whether you’re the fundamental cause—and whatever you mean by “fundamental cause”—if you’re causing displeasure to your client, that’s the wrong direction. (Exceptions won’t be discussed here.) The focus should be on orientation and pleasure (and highlighting here not causing displeasure).

5.2 Pleasure and displeasure don’t need to “make sense”

It may not make sense to you why your friend is displeased, but the fact is that he is and that’s the material fact.

Likewise, pleasure does not need to make sense. Say you’re doing CBT with a friend or client. “If Chad rejects me, my life is over,” he says. And you’re doing various CBT things to try to help him feel better and think more rationally.

Say your friend has a sudden image of macaroni and cheese and finds it pleasant. Following that is indicated.

Your coming at him from a mainstream approach may sabotage this opportunity. If your attention is hostaged by wanting to make sense of his pleasure and he picks up on your attention being so hostaged, that can sabotage his pleasure.

Monitoring for “incongruence” and amplifying the displeasure and not supporting the pleasure can cause displeasure. Client says his friend said, “Man you’re getting fat, when’s the last time you hit the gym?” and your client feels pleasure and smiles cheerfully. You think that’s incongruent; you believe the “true” feeling is one of hurt and sadness, and you manifest a presentation to try to invite that and not support the smile and cheer in your client’s presentation. That can cause displeasure.

All pleasure and displeasure makes sense; everything that exists and happens makes sense (regardless of your knowledge of causes). Reality makes sense; and if you’re feeling pleasure and/or displeasure, that’s reality. Saying pleasure and displeasure don’t make sense is like saying the moon’s existing, having the properties it has, and being where it is doesn’t make sense. That doesn’t make sense.

5.3 Make sense of pleasure and displeasure if pleasurable

“Were you put off by my comment? If so, could you tell me why?” you ask.

This is contraindicated if that will sustain or increase your client’s displeasure.

“Why is the mac and cheese image giving you such pleasure?” is contraindicated if that sabotages your client’s pleasure.

5.4 How to spot pleasure and displeasure

You can spot pleasure and displeasure by observing people and by having your inklings. The more stable in orientation and pleasure you are, the more reliable your inklings.

“My friend keeps getting on my case about how fat I am and how I need to hit the gym,” a friend says cheerfully.

You’re oriented, so you spot his cheer. And part of your being oriented means that your attention is not hostaged by, for example, “I feel sad. If someone said that to me, I’d be sad. You must be feeling sad. Your cheer is just a performance. I can tell you’re sad because that’s my gut feeling. Oh, you’re suddenly silent now. That must mean your sadness is catching up to you. That’s what my gut tells me and my gut is always right. So if you show cheer again, that must be performance.”

The more disoriented you are and jacked up on unpleasant intensity, the less reliable your inklings.

It can be hard to notice displeasure; and it can be hard to remember the harmfulness of causing it (because of the pro-discomfort culture). Awareness of this can improve your ability to spot pleasure and displeasure and keep in mind that causing the latter is harmful.

People can hide their displeasure. For example, you say “Do you really know for sure that Chad will reject you if you ask him out?” That causes your friend displeasure, which he hides. His face is flat, unreadable, or hard to read. He hides it so as not to draw attention. If he displayed it, you might probe that, which would cause more displeasure, so he minimizes his displeasure by hiding his displeasure.

People can want and appreciate displeasure, making you more liable to think you’re benefiting them when you cause it. For example, in response to your “Do you really know for sure that Chad will reject you if you ask him out?” your friend says “Wow, thank you for that incisive question. It makes me uncomfortable and I don’t want to think about it or answer it. I want to avoid it, but that must mean your question was really spot on and the thing to say. My discomfort means you must be helping me, so thank you. You’re good at making me uncomfortable; which shows how good of a friend/therapist/coach/mentor you are. I appreciate you so much.”

People may not know they’re in displeasure. They may associate their unpleasant intensity, agitation, frenetic quality, and preoccupation with feeling normal, fine, and comfortable, often because that’s their baseline state, which they regard as normal and comfortable, and would regard only a significant unpleasant deviation from their baseline displeasure as actual displeasure. The displeasure you cause from asking “Do you really know for sure that Chad will reject you if you ask him out?” feels to them like part of the glob of displeasure they characteristically feel in life, and which they regard as normal-fine-comfortable. (Which is why it’s so important to know what orientation and pleasure really feel like; so you’re clear on what displeasure feels like.)

People may feel pleasure that's too much to process comfortably; a sign of this is presence of displeasure in the mix, which may be harder to spot. In response to your "Do you really know for sure that Chad will reject you if you ask him out?" your friend may feel displeasure such as characterized above, and also, e.g., "Hmm, no I don't know for sure, what if he actually said, 'Yes'? I'd be over the moon!", with concomitant pleasant feeling. This pleasure, however, is part of the intensity that's too much to process comfortably (a sign of this being displeasure in the mix) which may potentiate displeasure surge, e.g., friend suddenly becomes unpleasantly dark and negative. "No, he's not going to say 'yes,'" etc.

Your orientation, to repeat for emphasis, may be compromised, making it harder to spot pleasure and displeasure in your friend. E.g., "I want my friend to grasp that he can't be sure Chad will reject him" hostages your attention, driving the "Do you really know for sure that Chad will reject you if you ask him out?" and so you have less attentional bandwidth to spot displeasure. And also to spot and prioritize orientation and pleasure, e.g., friend looks out the window, beginning to feel some relief from the displeasure you caused, which you miss or actively sabotage, e.g., "Where did you go? We were talking about Chad and your belief that you're sure he'll reject you."

Working on your own orientation and pleasure will help you spot and prioritize them in your client and increase the chances they'll be more open with you about when you're causing them displeasure (because they'll observe that you have capacity to process that information comfortably). Helping them with orientation and pleasure will increase their ability to spot pleasure and displeasure in themselves and lean toward the former.

5.5 When is thinking the best use of your time, energy, and attention?

Hour 1: You think hard about an engineering problem until your brain is mush.
Hour 2: You take a break, e.g., exercise, play with your dog, orient, hang out with people, eat lasagna, veg out, watch a show. During this time, the solution to the problem comes to you.

CBT draws a sharp distinction between thinking and acting. Hour 1 was thinking; 2 was acting (action includes R&R, veg out). Thinking includes both volitional thinking and automatic thoughts. E.g., "Could idea X work?" say is a volitional mental action; you volitionally asked yourself thought; and then in the next seconds, a bunch of automatic thoughts surface.

Distinguishing thinking and acting has a lot of value, e.g., "My thinking is getting nowhere; time for a break and maybe some physical movement." "I've been taking a bunch of random actions, trusting that would improve my life, but I'm getting nowhere. Let me pause and think some."

There's also a lot of value in understanding thinking more widely as involving action. During hour 1, there were moments of orientation, and of your throwing a ball for your dog, and these may have aided thinking and been part of your processing. During hour 2, while vegging out, processing was happening that enabled the solution to come to mind.

Thinking, in Ayn Rand's definition (of the at least highly related term "reason") is identifying and integrating the material provided by your senses.

While doing the engineering problem, you suddenly had a feeling. You paid attention to the feeling, which potentiated a thought, "Crap, I forgot I'm supposed to be somewhere right now!" That falls under thinking.

As you get mentally tired and your brain turns into mush, your thinking about the engineering problem gets worse and worse—e.g., you're blank, or your ideas are just bad or don't even make sense—so you take a break. Many would say you're taking a break from thinking (and wisely because you could tell your thinking was getting worse and worse). There's value in understanding and using "thinking" this way.

At the same time, during your break there still may be processing happening that leads to the solution; and that's thinking; just as the automatic ideas that come up during hour 1 are part of thinking. Furthermore, noticing that your thinking is getting worse and deciding to take a break is thinking.

Now let's consider thinking in the narrower sense, the sense most people have in mind (where hour 1 is thinking, 2 is not).

5.5.1 If your life is getting better, keep doing what you're doing

If your life is getting better, more orientation, pleasure, pleasant letting go of control quality, that counts in favor of keeping on doing whatever you're doing, including the thinking (and acting) you're doing.

5.5.2 Your thinking may be part of a larger growth process unfolding

In many cases, your thinking is part of a larger, positive, organic process happening in your organism and life, and in these cases, it's often better to lean into any pleasure and pleasant letting go of control quality in the thinking as opposed to efforting more at thinking.

For example, you may be in a larger process of readying yourself to date, or switch careers, or propose to someone, or have children, or move. This process can involve zillions of streaming thoughts. "Am I attractive enough?" "No woman will want me." "What if the marriage doesn't work out?" "I can't move to that location. I'm scared of bridges and there are bridges everywhere."

Deregulation around these thoughts is often better than fixing on them for cognitive work. With the latter you may miss opportunities for orientation, pleasure, and pleasant letting go of control, which help the positive process.

In many cases, you may not know what larger positive processes are happening. There may be inklings and impulses to act, e.g., you feel like losing weight and so changing your diet. Next month, you feel like buying new clothes. Next week, you get on a dating app. Following orientation and pleasure, and not letting thinking interfere, enables you to promote positive processes, including ones you know or suspect are happening and ones you don't.

5.5.3 Negative thinking can promote pleasure

"I'm ugly, I'll never find anyone." etc.

Using effort to do cognitive work may cause displeasure. "Is it true that I'll never find anyone? How do I know that?" etc. may cause displeasure.

Following inertia—e.g., whatever quantity and intensity of negative thoughts you regularly have throughout the morning, day, and night—may be what minimizes displeasure, which is required for capacity growth.

A positive thought or action that emerges from orientation and pleasure is generally far better than one that is efforted.

Part 6. Deregulating relationships

Deregulating relationships means doing relationships as part of the life of orientation, pleasure, pleasant letting go of control, and capacity growth.

Your boyfriend is in the bedroom, feeling down, and wants and would greatly appreciate your attention, and suffers more without it.

You know all this.

You're in the living room, playing video games.

You want to avoid your boyfriend, not tend to him, be left alone, and keep playing video games.

Suppose this is a rationally selfish option. Great, do that.

Now say in a variation or another night, you have an impulse to stand up. You follow the impulse and once standing, you keep following your impulses, which leads you to walk to the bedroom door, quietly, such that your boyfriend doesn't know you're approaching, stand in front of the closed door, and place your hand flat against the middle of the door. You stand still there, keeping your hand on the door, and you feel frozen, and it's unpleasant.

Then suddenly automatic orientation increases; you're looking at fine-grained details of the door; paying more attention to that than to your displeasure. Nice.

Contrast this against doing something other than following orientation and pleasure:

For example, an imaginary somatic therapist in your head says, "You're in freeze. You want to tell yourself that there's no threat, to unfreeze." And/or a bunch of other regulation strategies, e.g., orient (here meaning effort at it, as opposed to going with the automatic orientation above), wiggle your toes, breathing exercises, remind yourself of the value of freeze, ask yourself whether you're actually in danger, etc.

Or say as you stand in front of the door you're angry and want to smash something. "You're in fight," therapist says. "Do some wall pushing, shake it out, do muscle relaxation, exhale more, remind yourself of the value of fight and anger."

Or say you want to run out of the house. "You're in flight," therapists says. "Feel your feet on the floor, exhale more, tell yourself you're safe."

Or say you want to open the door, go to your boyfriend, and apologize for every time you haven't shown up for him. "You're fawning," therapist says. "Tell yourself you're not responsible for managing others' emotions, place one hand on your chest and one on your belly to shift attention back to your body."

Or say as you stand in front of the door, you're cycling between all four situations above; and imaginary therapist is giving regulation strategies for every state shift.

Or say the therapist says, "Progress! Last Wednesday, you placed your hand on the wall beside the door, which suggests you felt there's a wall between your boyfriend and you. But now your hand is on the door, which suggests you feel there's a door you

can open to connect to your boyfriend. Is my insight landing with you? Can we find a way to land it more?"

Or say the therapist says, "Open the door and go to your boyfriend, man. I know it's uncomfortable, but you have to get out of your comfort zone. You're not advancing your relationship by just standing there and being all quiet, hiding your presence from your boyfriend when you're clearly trying to get closer to him."

Or says, "You're dissociating [meant negatively]. You're looking at the door as a way of avoiding interior intensity; you need to reconnect with the interior." Or says: "OK, looking at the door is fine as long as you don't feel foggy or detached from your environment. If you do, then effort more at orienting so that objects become more real to you [even if the foggy detachment is enjoyable and you can feel pleasure, including reduced displeasure, in what he's calling dissociation]."

Or says: "This is a good moment to work on your avoidant attachment style, since you've walked closer to your boyfriend and your hand is on the door. Where do you feel avoidance in your body? Let's feel that. And remind yourself that it's possible to have relationships while maintaining your own life."

All of the above, assuming it involves effort and comes at the cost of following available and automatic orientation and pleasure, is less optimal, or even harmful, because it increases displeasure.

You open the door.

Say what happens is a repeat of many prior happenings, e.g., an hour of displeasure for both of you, scene ends with your boyfriend in tears, feeling worse, more alone, your feeling angry and returning to your video games, closing the door behind you.

Regulation strategies and life skills and hacks can be part of the repeating disasters. E.g., you both effort at using "I" statements, which jacks up unpleasant intensity in both of you, he slips and uses more "You" statements than you do, you effort at tolerating this and not trying to get or want him to match your ability to use "I" statements, this jacks up unpleasant intensity in you, he knows you're efforting at tolerating his "You" statements and resents feeling internal pressure to appreciate that fact, jacking up his unpleasant intensity even further, increasing his "You statements, you backlash with "You" statements, he says he'd appreciate it if you'd use "I" statements, knowing he's the one who's whoring out on "You" statements and getting more displeased with his own hypocrisy, he says, "avocado" (the timeout word to request a 20 minute pause) and suggests that when the two of you resume talking after 20 minutes, maybe the two of you can do it while walking around the neighborhood; as walking and orienting will "help us regulate our nervous systems so that we can be more productive while talking."

Your anger doubles. You privately think, “You know I’m on my feet all fucking day at work and the last thing I want to do is be on my feet. You sit on your ass all day so of course walking would feel good to you. You have no empathy, think only about what’s most pleasing to you, you’re selfish—.” That thought gets clipped as your anger increases even more, at a philosopher who schooled you on proper and improper uses of the word “selfish” and you’re pissed because you don’t feel as free to use the words you want to use (even privately in your mind).

You consider efforting at an “I” statement: “I would prefer to talk while sitting.” But you sense it would be too hard to do without adding edge: “I would prefer to talk while sitting; as you know I’m on my feet all day, not sitting all day.”

It’s too much; you don’t want to continue after 20 minutes. You’re considering saying, “Maybe I’ll want to resume talking after 20 minutes, maybe not. I’ll let you know,” but that’s too much, too.

“I’ve had enough for now. I don’t want to resume talking after 20 minutes. Good night.” You return to your video games. He cries.

Thus the importance of orientation and pleasure.

You’re playing video games. (Whether after that argument or you never opened the door or you never even went to the door in the first place.)

You find it’s not pleasurable to play, but you wouldn’t know what else to do, so you keep playing. It’s the least uncomfortable thing to do right now. Nice.

As you’re playing, there are moments where you look out the window or around the room. Nice.

As you’re playing, there are moments where you kill another player and feel good. Nice.

As you’re playing, there are moments where you save another player and feel good. Nice.

Your boyfriend is still in the bedroom, his crying naturally faded, and now he’s on his phone on Grindr. He doesn’t find it pleasurable, but he doesn’t know what else to do, so he keeps on it. It’s the least uncomfortable thing to do right now. Nice.

Part 7. Deregulating compassion

Let's look at how compassion fits into deregulation; into living by orientation, pleasure, pleasant letting go of control, capacity growth, market deregulation (appreciation and advocacy), and (rational) selfishness.

Compassion is desiring and/or acting to reduce someone's suffering (including your own, and including non-humans, e.g., your pet). E.g., you feel (desire) compassion for someone; you're thinking about them and want their suffering to lessen. E.g., you act to reduce someone's suffering. Or both.

A rich guy buying a bespoke gigayacht and hosting a party on it and hiring strippers is compassion: He increases his own pleasure, the pleasure of his guests, the pleasure of the strippers (money, which they can use for food, shelter, etc.), the pleasure of people involved in building the gigayacht, in catering, in party planning, etc.

"That's not compassion. That's selfishness."

If unselfishness is a feature of compassion, then compassion is evil because unselfishness is evil, and selfishness is good. (See Part 3.) Furthermore, what he's doing is selfish only if it's selfish. The selfish thing to do may be something else, e.g., he gets more pleasure from playing piano alone in his room, in which case that's what he should do (depriving all the people above of that pleasure).

"That's not compassion. Compassion is desire for someone's suffering to lessen. For example, someone alone in a forest cave, meditating and wishing the relief of suffering of the strippers. That's compassion. Your hiring them to strip for you is not compassion."

Then compassion does no good whatsoever. Whereas what I'm doing is doing good, for the strippers and myself (assuming I'm being selfish; again, piano.)

"Desiring someone's suffering to lessen does do good because it empowers one's acting to reduce someone's suffering."

Your example of compassion was not such an example. The meditator is not acting to relieve any suffering. If you suppose that through wishing for others' relief he'll at some point come to act to relieve suffering, e.g., go to the strippers and pay for a strip, OK, but I will have done more good because during all that time he spent in a forest cave, I was paying for many strips, doing way more good than the meditator. It's the actual relief of suffering that has value to the sufferer; not your wishing for their suffering to lessen.

"But in many cases, your desire for someone's suffering to lessen is part of your actually lessening their suffering. Helping someone in need while desiring their suffering to lessen, lessens their suffering more than helping them coldly, resentfully, or with contempt."

Sure, and the value to them of your desiring their suffering to lessen is in their actual lessening of suffering. Also, you're dodging confronting that I'm doing more good by paying for more strips than the meditator.

"Your buying the gigayacht and hosting a party and hiring all those people is not necessarily compassion because none of those people may be suffering to begin with."

Yes, and compassion should be replaced with the idea of promoting pleasure, which includes reducing displeasure. If my playing piano reduces my suffering, great. If I'm already feeling great, and I play piano pleasurable, great. If my piano playing reduces the suffering of someone, and assuming it's selfish for me to play, great. If my piano playing pleasures someone who was already feeling great, and assuming it's selfish for me to play, great.

"But reducing suffering is a priority over promoting pleasure. There are people all over the world who are suffering. That takes priority over you buying a gigayacht."

So you're saying selfishness is wrong and unselfishness is superior?

"No, I'm just saying reducing suffering is a priority over promoting pleasure. There are people all over the world who are suffering. That takes priority over you buying a gigayacht."

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So you're saying selfishness is wrong and unselfishness is superior?

"No, I'm just saying reducing suffering is a priority over promoting pleasure. There are people all over the world who are suffering. That takes priority over you buying a gigayacht."

If you want people to suffer less, advocate market deregulation and rational selfishness.

"No."

"Look, I just feel so much compassion for the poor of the world, those in dire need of food, healthcare, etc. And then I see rich businessmen with their gigayachts, private jets, and spaceships, and I ask where's the justice? And my compassion for the poor doubles."

What's more important to you? That those in dire need get food, healthcare, etc. or that businessmen be shamed, feel ashamed, suffer, sacrifice, apologize for and give up their selfishness and prosperity?

"What! You're out of line. Where do you get the idea that I want anyone to suffer? That I want businessmen to suffer or feel ashamed about being selfish or prosperous? I just feel such compassion for the needy! I do not hate the successful! I feel compassion

for the needy! I do not hate the successful! I feel compassion for the needy! I DO NOT HATE THE SUCCESSFUL. I FEEL COMPASSION FOR THE NEEDY!"

"Listen, I have a friend who does hate the successful and the rich, especially businessmen. I don't, but my friend does. What would you advise?"

I only ever have two things to say: Orientation and pleasure.

Say she's at a cafe one day and sees across the street a homeless person and then sees a rich guy walk by without paying any attention to the homeless person.

Say a bunch of interior experience gets triggered, e.g., hatred against the rich guy; an image of the homeless person suddenly standing up and assaulting and stealing from the rich guy, and feeling pleasure with this image; memories of debating online with free market people whom she hates and confronting their arguments, such as that homelessness is increased by regulations on housing, building, zoning, and prices; hating their arguments, wanting to avoid thinking about their merits; guilt, concomitant with thoughts about how she avoids critically thinking about their arguments; guilt, concomitant with thoughts about how she's not crossing the street to help the homeless person while at the same time hating on the rich guy for not helping the homeless person; guilt and anger, concomitant with thoughts about whether the homeless person might be able to help himself and at the same time about how she feels its taboo even to consider such a thought; etc., a zillion other interior experience.

What to do with all this?

Given that she's in displeasure and orientation is compromised (attention hostaged by all the above), I'd say: Try to enjoy your coffee and croissant and maybe look at the beach instead of the homeless guy or following the rich guy with your eyes. Priority is orientation and pleasure.

If your eyes just have to follow the rich guy until he disappears around the corner, OK, flow with it, and try to notice other aspects of the environment if you can, e.g., the fire hydrant he just passed by.

If you can enjoy your coffee and croissant and the breeze and the background music at the cafe and the sky and the sea, great.

If you feel interested in wading into some of the content that came up above, OK, and let orientation and pleasure be your compass as much as possible.

For example, say, you feel shame, concomitant with say thoughts about how you bash on the free market even though you actually don't know what it is, have never studied it, and just go along with what your anti-capitalist friends say about it. If there's any pleasant quality in the shame, you could try feeling it. Otherwise, attend to another aspect of your experience, one that is pleasant or less unpleasant, if possible. For example, say you feel a little curious about housing regulations and what effect they may have on homelessness, and the curiosity is neutral to pleasant. You could hang

with that; say the idea emerges of grabbing your phone and looking into it, but the idea is concomitant with rising displeasure; so you hang just with the neutral to pleasant experience of being curious, without actually pursuing the curiosity.

Then say, after a few seconds, you feel your mood darkening and that you're going to go back to hating the rich; and suppose as you feel the onset, you also can look out at the beach some; which offers some relief of intensity and you feel like it's a consolidation after hanging for a few moments with the curiosity about housing regulations. Nice.

Then say your mood darkens and you have no more attentional energy to try anymore shifts out of your norm, and you go back to your status quo. OK, cool, enjoy what there is to enjoy about that. You did get some moments of neutral to pleasant curiosity and consolidation with orientation; banked. And continuing to enjoy whatever there is to enjoy about your status quo; banked.

Get as much pleasure from compassion as you can; and orientation throughout this process:

When someone expresses that they desire that you suffer less or be happier, enjoy that as much as you can; and notice any orientation.

When someone does something that reduces your suffering or increases your pleasure, same.

When you feel compassion for someone, a desire for their well-being, enjoy that feeling as much as you can.

When you help someone (hopefully selfishly), enjoy it as much as you can. If enjoying increases the risk of you helping unselfishly in the future, just as if enjoying a harmful drug increases the risk of taking more of that harmful drug, this is something to keep in mind. (Addiction will be discussed more later.) If when you help others, you can enjoy it as much as possible, as part of selfish living, that would be great.

Feeling compassion for others and helping others can be especially helpful for people who have a hard time feeling compassion for themselves and caring for themselves. If it's easier for the time being to feel for and care for others, enjoy it as much as possible, to grow your capacity, including your capacity to feel concern for yourself and care for yourself, more easily and pleurably. If when you feel compassion for others or help others, you can cultivate in that experience feeling compassion for yourself, or the desire to feel it, or the possibility of feeling it, and cultivate desire to help yourself, that would be great.

When you feel compassion for yourself, enjoy that as much as you can. If you feel some displeasure, such as shame, such as concomitant with images of people making fun of you for saying, thinking, and/or feeling "poor me," to yourself, if you can focus on what pleasure there is in the compassion, that would be great.

When you enjoy lasagna, if you can conceptualize it as pleasure, not or not only as compassion (in those cases where you're suffering), that would be great; integrating compassion under pleasure.

Part 8. Deregulating shame

“Some people deserve to feel shame. Some people should feel shame, even if they don’t. Some people deserve to be shamed and should be shamed by others. For example, if you’re fighting to abolish private property, you should and deserve to be shamed by others, and you deserve to feel and should feel shame, even if you feel good about yourself and everyone is praising you (and more importantly you should think through your views, as should others, and people should present intellectual arguments about why your views are wrong, evil, and massively harmful; not just shame you).”

This section does not address when you should or should not feel shame. I agree with the above claims; it’s just not the purpose of this section to address this topic, with two exceptions: First, people should not feel shame about being selfish. Second, people should not feel shame about using their mind, reasoning, thinking, thinking independently (“independently” is redundant for emphasis). These two things are morally good. (And incubate them in orientation and pleasure; that’s the essence of deregulation, viz., (rational) selfishness running on orientation and pleasure (allow me different metaphors).)

The “should” refers to an ideal worth trying to get to, not implying any volitional control over how you feel in any given moment. If you feel shame about being selfish or gay, that’s what you feel; no need to feel extra shame about feeling it, unless that’s also what you feel; then no need to feel even extra shame about that, unless that’s also what you feel, etc. Point is it’s a worthy ideal not to feel shame about being selfish or gay or using your mind; that’s what I mean by “you shouldn’t feel shame about being selfish or gay or using your mind.”

But if you do, you do, and enjoy your shame as much as you can (plus orientation, always); which is the topic here. Compare to a section on how to fish; the section does not imply you should always be fishing, e.g., that you should be fishing instead of attending to an urgent matter.

To whatever extent you can feel shame (or guilt) pleurably, great, e.g., feeling pleasure in hiding, feeling invisible, nonexistent, small, not there, spaciousness, heavy gravity, crushed, sinking, disappearing into the earth, shrinking, frozen, still, paralyzed, motionless, shallow breath, numb, unfeeling. All that can be pleasurable, including less displeasurable.

If you feel unpleasant shame about things you can’t change—e.g., you’re old and ugly (synbio is hopefully the future, but let’s assume here you can’t change)—then orientation and pleasure. (I know I repeat this ad infinitum and I’m serious every time.)

If you feel unpleasant shame about being selfish or gay, it may be selfish at times to do things you don’t want to do and to refrain from gay sex. Someone asks or expects you to do something, e.g., attend an event. You don’t want to, it doesn’t serve your

happiness, you'll be miserable; but you'll feel enormous guilt if you don't go, so maybe going is selfish (to lessen guilt). You want to have (gay) sex but you suspect you'd feel enormous guilt; maybe refraining is selfish. "Being gay is fine; go have gay sex and enjoy tit. Being selfish is great; say 'no' to the event," is pointless or harmful advice until orientation and pleasure are sufficiently stable.

If you feel shame about not being good enough—e.g., successful enough, good-looking, smart, rich, Ivy educated, having property, status, having things to offer in relationships—it may be selfish at times to pursue the things you associate with being good enough, to avoid unpleasant shame. E.g., you're a respected doctor, but you really want to be a street performer, but the thought of making that career change fills you with shame; it could be that at least for the time being, it's selfish to continue being a doctor even though you're miserable.

If orientation and pleasure can grow enough over time in your biology, you might be able to make the change. One evening, you're at a party, a woman chats you up, asks what you do, you have an impulse to say you're a street performer (even though you're still a doctor), you say it, you see her excuse herself, and you feel pleasure and notice you're oriented; whereas a few months ago, say, you would have felt unpleasant shame. That would be a sign of increasing orientation and pleasure, and specifically around the issue of whether to quit being a doctor and instead become a street performer.

If you feel unpleasant shame and it's not clearly about anything—e.g., being old, ugly, selfish, gay, not good enough, wanting career X—but rather a more generalized shame, then orientation and pleasure.

Part 9. Deregulating addiction

"I'm on my 137th attempt to quit smoking. The 136 attempts across the years all failed. Crap, I just smoked another cigarette. There goes attempt 137."

Did you enjoy the cigarette?

"You're missing the point. The point is that I want to quit smoking."

Yes, pursue what you want to pursue, e.g., keep trying to quit. And try to do it with as much orientation and pleasure as possible, which will increase the chances of not smoking and maximize pleasure when smoking). If you do find yourself smoking, enjoying it is better than not.

"But if I enjoy smoking, I'll do it more."

You could try it and see what happens. See what happens when you resist pleasure while smoking and what happens when you lean into pleasure while smoking.

If you find that you smoke more when you enjoy it, and, assuming you're fixed on the goal of smoking less, then go back to resisting pleasure while smoking; while trying to expand into pleasure (and always orientation) as much as possible in other areas of life, which will increase the chances you'll be more stable in orientation and pleasure and thus able to refrain from smoking.

If we don't assume your goal of smoking less is fixed, and if you come to value smoking more because it's pleasurable, that's selfish. (Or could be, if it's a context where it's rational to value the pleasure, and maybe other benefits from smoking, and accept and/or find other ways to mitigate cons.)

Back to assuming the fixed goal of smoking less:

If you find that you don't smoke more when you enjoy it, then it's more beneficial to enjoy it.

If you find that you smoke less when you enjoy it, then it's even more beneficial. (Smoking less would be due to getting more pleasure from smoking, which reduces intensity (displeasure is more intense than pleasure) which gets you closer to orientation, which stabilizes intensity and promotes pleasure, which increases chances of choosing not to smoke, assuming that's what you want.)

The more pleasure you get while in the pool, the better, and the less time you may need in the pool because you're sated sooner; while at the same time maybe you want to stay in the pool longer, for more pleasure.

The more pleasure you get while eating ice cream, the better, and the less of it you may need to eat because you're sated sooner; while at the same time maybe you want to eat more ice cream for more pleasure.

The less shame you have about being in the pool or eating ice cream, the better, because less displeasure, more pleasure, and the less of it you may need, while at the same time maybe you want more for more pleasure.

The more pleasure and less displeasure, the more orientation; the more orientation, the more and easier choice, such as to be in the pool or not, eat ice cream or not.

The more pleasures in general in life—e.g., from work, hobbies, purposes, relationships, things to do, watch, listen to, learn, and from immediate access to pleasure, comfort, feeling well in the body—the more beneficial options for your more and easier choice.

The more orientation and pleasure, the more discovery of sources of pleasure.

Part 10. Deregulating trauma

"I'm scared of meeting someone for coffee tomorrow. I'm scared of dating. I'm scared of getting hurt. So many people have hurt me."

Someone says, "Trauma is haunt from the past. A goal is having automatic reactions and volitional responses that are appropriate to the present. not haunted by the past, That's a goal of trauma therapy and therapy and healing generally. The person you're meeting for coffee tomorrow is a new person. Try to be in the present with them and objective about them, not feel and behave as though you're with your ex."

You meet the girl for coffee. At one point, she laughs and suddenly you're having unpleasant memories of your ex laughing and teasing you about not knowing how to change a flat tire, and instead calling for service. "My three brothers were changing flat tires for people when they were five years old! Earning money to buy lumber for the log cabin they were also building!" she said, laughing (this is in your experience right now).

Let's say the new girl was also teasing you, and her laughter was part of that. "You're a handsome guy, but I'm not sure about pairing a brown jacket with a sky blue shirt," she said, laughing, staring at your shirt and jacket, and laughing more. Her teasing displeases you, and triggers the unpleasant memories above.

What to do? I don't know concretely. Orientation and pleasure can play out in many ways moment to moment.

Maybe orientation and pleasure enables you to focus on her saying you're handsome and feeling the pleasure of that, and effortlessly ignore your displeasure. It's in the background and hopefully will fade on its own as seconds go by, and fade faster if you ignore it.

Maybe you can't ignore the displeasure effortlessly and it's rising in intensity. A bunch of pathways here. Maybe it rises in intensity, you effort at inhibiting any display of displeasure, and then the intensity reaches a threshold and then fades. Maybe you effort at lowering the intensity, e.g., tell yourself "let it go, it was a benevolent tease; try to focus on her calling me handsome" or efforted orientation. Maybe you're using the intensity as fuel and considering saying to her, e.g., "I didn't appreciate being teased about what I'm wearing."

With the last, maybe you're also wondering how much of what's going on is past haunt, e.g., your ex teasing you about not knowing how to change a flat tire. Or is this content (also) helpful to your processing now? The content potentiates thoughts, "Beware of abuse," and a suspicion that there was malevolence in the current girl's teasing, which may help you spot evidence of ill will going forward. And maybe you're considering saying, "Hey, that teasing about what I'm wearing rubbed me the wrong way," and seeing how she responds.

Maybe orientation and pleasure leads your attention to your ex's three brothers who were building log cabins at age five (your images of the three brothers, whom you

never met and you don't know what they look like) and the images are particularly salient to you and suddenly you're feeling sensations that are energizing and you feel stronger. This could be happening in tandem with some of the above processing (depending on your capacity).

“That’s the end of this section?! I was expecting and hoping for more than just more repetition of orientation and pleasure! I’m not interested in more orientation and pleasure! I’m interested in trauma!”

Part 11. Deregulating delayed gratification

You want things that take time to get, e.g., build a career, find a partner and raise a family. These are multi-year or decade processes.

The best way to get what you want is through immediate gratification, i.e., immediate orientation and pleasure. The more orientation and pleasure you get throughout your process, and the faster (more immediately) you can get them (orientation and pleasure now is better than after a one second delay), the better:

Orientation and pleasure grow your capacity to handle more, more easily and pleasurable, and bounce back from setbacks more quickly, and setbacks will be less unpleasant. And more capacity enables you to enjoy your wins, e.g., a job offer, a date, more.

You also develop less tolerance for displeasure, which is a very good thing. Less tolerance here means less willingness to put up with displeasure when you can avoid it, and more interest and creativity in finding pleasure and ways to pursue and achieve things more pleasurable. When displeasure is necessary, you'll be able to tolerate it more because you have more stability in orientation and pleasure and skill at it. This tolerance of displeasure is superior to tolerance of displeasure in the sense of bearing displeasure not in a way that minimizes it. Tolerance of displeasure, in the latter sense, is inferior because it's more displeasurable and trends you away from capacity growth.

Delayed gratification is bad because delay is bad. "We apologize for the delay." (Market deregulation reduces delays, among providing a zillion other enormous and unimaginable benefits to you.)

The greater your skill at orientation and pleasure and the more they're automatically part of your baseline position from which you do life, the less of this bad thing (delayed gratification) is necessary.

Minimize displeasure before pleasure (as much as possible). (This principle falls under "minimize displeasure," which falls under "maximize orientation and pleasure.")

"I hate working out, but I'll reward myself with lasagna afterward."

You find a way to workout more pleasurable (including less displeasurable). Nice.

You don't workout and you enjoy the lasagna now. Nice.

"But I won't have earned the pleasure."

Did you steal the lasagna or the money you used to buy it? If you did, and the piping hot, delicious lasagna is before you, enjoy it as much as you can; and then afterward attend to restitution and your moral character; which doesn't have to be immediately; maybe the thing to do next is shower and go to bed; and the more pleasurable and while oriented you can attend to restitution and your moral character, the better; and if you feel like attending to restitution and your moral character right now, as you enjoy the lasagna or instead of enjoying it, go ahead.

"No, I didn't steal the lasagna. What I mean is that I need to earn the pleasure of the lasagna by working out first. And stop going on tangents. Your book is too sprawling and all over the place as it is."

What do you mean by 'earning pleasure'? And, no, I won't comply with your demand that I not go on tangents.

"I mean that it's not right for me to enjoy the lasagna until after I work out."

Why?

"Because I need to be productive first; then I can consume."

Why?

"That's just how it is for me."

OK.

"OK?"

Yeah, OK.

"That's it? You have nothing more to say?"

Correct. If that's just how it is for you, if you just need to workout before you enjoy lasagna, then that's just how it is for you. What more is there to say or think about here?

"If I don't work out, I won't be able to enjoy the lasagna as much. I'll feel guilty about not working out and about eating the lasagna. Plus working out makes the lasagna more pleasurable anyway."

Sounds good. If you're interested in lessening the guilt, orientation and pleasure will help.

"That's all you ever have to say? Orientation and pleasure, over and over again?"

Yes.

Part 12. Deregulating your needs

12.1 Deregulation helps whether you know what you need or not

Sometimes, you know exactly what you need.

“I need to leave the room right now,” you say to your boyfriend.

Or that thought comes up privately and/or you feel energy and sensations in your legs and the rest of your body, mobilizing and attracting you towards leaving the room immediately. In the case of “or,” were you to notice this mobilization more, maybe that thought would emerge.

You leave the living room and go to the bedroom, close the door, and get on Grindr.

Sometimes, you have no idea what you need.

Your work day was suddenly canceled. You’re an entertainer and were scheduled for a gig on a gigayacht, but the event was canceled (but you still got paid). You’re alarmed, not knowing what you’re going to do for the next ten hours (until evening when you have your routine). “What am I going to do for the next ten hours?! I need something to do! I have no idea what!” Images of being in an insane asylum come to your mind. “I’m going to lose it.”

You messaged a friend for emotional support. She replied, “Oh, I’m sorry, is the princess’s lobster too buttery? Poor you for not being able to party on a yacht today, getting paid for doing nothing, and having ten hours of free time. I’m so fortunate to need to clean four homes today with a three hour total commute. Solve your problems yourself, bitch. I’m not your trashcan.”

In that moment, you knew what you needed. “I need to not reply to her right now. Whatever is going on with her mood and life, I need to step away.”

And then back to not knowing what you need. “What am I going to do for the next nine hours and fifty seven minutes?!”

In all moments, whether you know what you need or have no idea, orientation and pleasure help, e.g., more likely to be able to keep discussing the relationship with boyfriend instead of needing to leave the room, faster rebound if you do leave the room, less alarm from facing ten hours with no plan, less sting from friend’s backlash and less or no feeling of urgent need to resolve or repair immediately.

12.2 All your needs are survival needs

“I need to eat something right now.”

A need is an aspect of your survival, grasped with the perspective that your survival (or that aspect of your survival) can be promoted, i.e., the need can be met (whether realistically possible or not, e.g, maybe there’s no food around).

Your survival is your organism or life, including your consciousness, heart, lungs, legs, arms, etc.; including both physical and psychological survival.

Your survival is not merely being alive as opposed to dead. Your survival is not the minimal subset of your organism that is sufficient for remaining alive. And problems confront this false view: To remain alive for how long? One second? And only in your current situation? What if you need a second arm and wings to survive a raptor attack, to live past the next thirty seconds? Would you say thirty seconds falls under something more than surviving? Why? What's the rational ground for the claim? (There is none; it's false.)

Your survival is your whole organism and includes all benefits to your organism. You lose an arm in an accident; it regrows (say with help of synbio tech). That counts as a promotion of your survival. If you grow wings (thanks to synbio advances), that counts as a promotion of your survival.

A need is a survival need.

All your needs are survival needs. All benefits to you are benefits to your survival.

There is no such thing as your having a need that's not a survival need.

Scratching the slightest itch is meeting a (survival) need, i.e., promotion of your survival.

Reducing the slightest discomfort for a moment is meeting a (survival) need.

Feeling joy is meeting a survival need.

Luxury and abundance—e.g., sustained joy, gigayachts, strippers, champagne pools, mansions in every country, synbio enabling you to morph in various ways, e.g., grow wings and gills and experience that (assuming these things please you)—meets a survival need. Your assets, organism and its abilities, and memory bank of pleasures may please you at a given moment and may make the difference between life and death in a future situation; and promote your survival even if you're not in threat of death (remember survival is not merely being alive; it is the life process).

A benefit meets a need.

A benefit can meet a need that you feel and have conceptualized, e.g., "I have illness X, I need medicine Y," "I'm feeling down, I need a friend."

A benefit also meets a need even if you felt no need and had no need conceptualized; no need was in mind. Someone smiles at you; you get fifteen seconds of pleasure. That pleasure is a benefit and meets a need, even if you didn't feel any need for someone to smile at you; it wasn't on your mind.

What was the need that was met? The only (and sufficient) answer to this may be that your organism was such that that person smiling at you would benefit it. A need, to repeat, is an aspect of your survival or organism, grasped with the perspective that your survival (or that aspect of your survival) can be promoted, i.e., the need can be met (whether realistically possible or not).

In the common usage of “need,” referring to feeling a need for something, even if you don’t need anything (e.g., someone smiling at you), the smiling benefited you, i.e., there was a need and it was met.

Aristotle needed an iPhone.

12.3 There’s no fundamental distinction between surviving and flourishing

You have two vision boards, one you label “survival” and the second “flourishing.” Your goals in your “survival” board include getting a job, being able to afford an apartment (so you don’t have to live in your car), and healing from symptoms. Your goals in your “flourishing” board include pursuing your dream career, a beachfront home, getting married and having children, learning piano and buying a grand piano.

“My priority right now is survival; then I’ll work on flourishing.”

Nice, and yes distinguishing between survival and flourishing (or thriving or maximizing well-being and happiness, or full, rich, meaningful life, etc.) can have a lot of value, such as above; like beginner, intermediate, and advanced piano, karate, etc.

At the same time, both what you associate with “survival” and “flourishing” are beneficial because they promote your survival (understood exactly; see prior). Another formulation: Promoting your survival, i.e., surviving, is the fundamental, underlying process that makes the things you associate with “survival” and “flourishing” beneficial.

12.4 All your needs are determined by your individual nature

“I need water. This is due to my animate nature, to my being a living thing.

“I need sleep. This is due to my animal nature, to my being an animal.

“I need to think and to use my thumbs in certain ways. These are due to my human nature, to my being a human being (or rational animal).

“I need feminine care products. This is due to my female nature, to my being a woman.

“I need to care for my hair in certain ways and live with increased risk of type 2 diabetes. This is due to my Black nature, to my being Black.

“I need to date men. This is due to my heterosexual nature, to my being heterosexual.

“I need to pursue career X, hobby Y, avoid peanuts, and date men who open doors for women. These are due to my individual nature.

“Some of my needs are due to my being a living thing, some to being an animal, some to being human, some to being female, some to being Black, some to my being heterosexual, and some to my individual nature.”

No.

For a technical dive on this, you can look up my dissertation online and free (“A Defense of Egoism”).

For present purposes: All your needs are determined by your individual nature, i.e., your organism. (The environment matters too but I’m setting this aside here.) You need water, sleep, etc. because of the nature of your organism. This is true independently of whether you can observe and study living things, form concepts (e.g., “living thing,” “animal,” etc.), and make (correct) generalizations.

Equivalently, all your needs are determined by your organism; “individual” in “individual nature” (you could also say “individual organism”) is redundant to emphasize that your needs are not determined at all by any of those other candidates.

You’re a veterinarian. You learn that your next patient, Fido, is a dog. “Ah, he may need vaccine X,” you think, whereas you wouldn’t have thought this if your next patient was a chicken. “He may need vaccine X because he’s a dog, because of his dog nature.”

Fine in ordinary speech, and fine as an epistemological process. “Ah, a dog is coming. Dogs generally need vaccine X. So maybe Fido does; I’ll check.” But Fido’s needs are determined metaphysically wholly by his individual nature; that a certain vaccine will protect him from such-and-such harms is determined by his individual nature, not by any concept(s) (e.g., “dog”) or content associated with any concept(s). Concepts and knowledge condensed in them aid epistemologically determining, i.e., learning about, the nature of a thing (e.g., Fido), but Fido’s nature is his organism which metaphysically determined his needs.

Your needs are not determined by any concrete conception of normal or healthy functioning, e.g., two arms, two legs, one heart, two lungs, etc., and further specs on all prior. You develop synbio tech that enables you to grow wings. That benefits you, independently of any such concrete conceptions; of whether any such conceptions include wings.

12.5 A benefit is an occurrent effect in your organism

Someone speaks to you at the party but you can’t hear them. They’re too far away and they’re not speaking loudly enough.

You have not benefited.

They come closer, retry, and now you hear them and you get pleasure. You benefited.

A benefit is an effect in your organism; your organism has to be affected. More specifically, a benefit is a positive effect on your organism, as opposed to a negative effect, e.g., if you got displeasure, you were harmed. But here I’m emphasizing that benefit is an effect.

The effect doesn't need to be felt. Zillions of life-sustaining processes are happening in your organism right now—a lot of benefit is happening to you right now—without you feeling it.

“In a sense you do feel it because what you feel is influenced by what's happening in your physical organism, e.g., if you feel under the weather or in a better mood, you're in a sense feeling your organism's processes; you're feeling their effects.”

I see what you're saying, but I don't feel like thinking more about it right now, and I'm sticking with “benefits don't need to be felt.” Also: When you're asleep, you're still benefiting. Also, silent killers.

“Occurent” is redundant for emphasis; emphasizing that effects happen when and while they happen. Pleasure for example happens when and while it happens; when and while it's happening, i.e., when it's occurrent, you're benefiting.

“X benefits me.” “X is a benefit to me,” you say, where by X you refer to any number of things, e.g., spouse, family member, friend, your career, money, assets, home, piano, the sun, the beach, the fish taco you're eating, the art you're looking at, etc.

Yes, and precisely, X benefits you when, while, and to the extent you're benefited; when, while, and to the extent there are occurrent positive effects in your organism; and the benefit consists in these effects.

You're eating.

“The food is a benefit to me. Eating benefits me,” you say.

Yes, totally fine to say in ordinary speech.

Precisely, the food on your plate is not a benefit to you yet. It's closer to being a benefit to you when you take the next bite, chew, and swallow. Even then, when the food is inside your stomach, it's still not technically a benefit to you yet. It's closer to benefiting you when your organism breaks down the food into nutrients that your organism absorbs to do stuff with. Even then, when the nutrients get into your blood, it's still not technically a benefit to you yet. It's closer to benefiting you when a nutrient gets into a mitochondrion which uses it to make ATP, which is closer to benefiting you, but not quite yet. Benefit consists in actual promotion of your survival or life or organism; for example, cell growth and repair, (enabled by ATP);. “Actual” here is for technical emphasis. Eating, digesting, a mitochondrion making ATP all promote your survival in the sense of promoting actual promotion of survival, i.e., eating, etc. all benefit you in the sense of promoting actual benefit. Actual benefit is occurrent (positive) effect in your organism, i.e., occurrent (positive) effect to part(s) of your organism.

Precisely, your blood is not part of your organism. It's inside your organism, yes (at least the blood that is inside your organism is inside; you may be bleeding and some of the blood dripped onto the ground). It's inside your organism just as food that is inside your organism is inside your organism, and just as your pacemaker is inside your

organism. And, yes, all these things—blood, food, pacemaker—can be beneficial in the sense of promoting actual benefit.

You're starving and need food. You're hunting an animal, hoping to kill it and eat it. Hunting the animal is beneficial in the sense that it (hopefully) leads to actual benefit; the hunting itself may be harmful in the sense of taxing your organism. The actual benefit is getting food; not hunting (unless you enjoy it, in which case the pleasure is a benefit; but I'm leaving this aside here to focus on precise understanding of benefit in the sense of physical survival). If you successfully kill the animal, cook it, and start eating, then you're finally benefiting (precisely, when your survival is actually promoted).

Cell growth and repair is actual benefit; and also promotes actual benefit, e.g., make ATP, power more digestion.

Avoiding harm is a benefit in a secondary sense. You successfully evade a predator. Technically, maybe you didn't benefit (though benefit is still happening if you're alive; life-sustaining process still happening); maybe you just avoided harm.

Avoiding harm is a benefit in the sense of promoting actual benefit. You avoided harm; now you can continue using your unharmed organism to hunt the other animal you need to survive; whereas, had the predator damaged your legs and arms, you'd be less able to promote actual benefit.

When I refer to benefit, I include both actual benefit and things that promote actual benefit.

12.6 You can identify benefits and needs in different ways

You just got home from a party.

How many benefits happened to you during the party? And what were they?

It may not benefit you to think about this question; it may benefit you instead to take a shower and go to bed, but suppose we go with the question.

There are many possible correct answers, depending on context, including how you think and process stuff, and what gives you pleasure to think about and identify, including:

"It was one benefit. The whole three hour party constitutes one benefit to me. The benefit was pleasure."

"There were many benefits; I don't know how many. The three hours of pleasure were a benefit; plus whatever life-sustaining processes were happening in me during the three hours, a subset of which might have been enabled or made more efficient by the pleasure. How many processes there were, how to individuate them, I don't know; could be zillions."

"There were 10,800 benefits; each second counts as a benefit (assuming all seconds were pleasurable)."

"There were six benefits. I had enjoyable conversations with six people; each conversation counts as a benefit."

“There were 13 benefits. The six conversations; plus seven appetizers that I ate. Each appetizer counted as one benefit.”

How many needs did you have during the party? And what were they and which were met and unmet?

There are also many possible correct answers, depending on context, including how you think and process stuff, and what gives you pleasure to think about and identify.

Each benefit you identify implies a (met) need. For example, you could say you had one need; “I needed that party.” Or zillions of needs, or 10,800 needs, etc.

You can also identify feeling a need as a need. At one point at the party, you were standing alone, feeling awkward; “I feel so uncomfortable; I need relief from this discomfort.” Maybe there were eight such points; eight needs.

Maybe some of them you met, e.g., you walked over to get an appetizer, you approached someone and greeted them.

If you conceptualize your need as, “I need relief from discomfort, right now,” and it didn’t happen right now—maybe it was 15 seconds later that you had the idea of getting an appetizer—you could identify that as an unmet need.

If you conceptualize your need as, “I need relief from discomfort,” without specifying a timeframe, you could count that need as met (by the appetizer).

If you conceptualize your need as, “I need relief from discomfort. I need someone to talk to right now; so I don’t feel awkward standing alone,” and you decide to get an appetizer and feel relief, you could count that as meeting the need. Or maybe the need was really to talk to someone, and so the need was unmet even though your discomfort was relieved. Maybe you conceptualize the above as two needs; discomfort relief and to talk to someone; and you met the first with the eating; and the second went unmet. And maybe fifteen seconds later, it was met, when someone approached you or you approached someone.

There are many ways to identify your benefits and needs (and your needs being met and unmet); many correct ways, depending on context, including how you think and process stuff, and what gives you pleasure to think about and identify.

You can speak of particular benefits—e.g., one of your mitochondrion creates a molecule of ATP which floats out and powers the cell’s ability to do X, which benefits you; enjoying the brie; enjoying the joke—and of benefit as such or in general, benefit happening in your organism. As you eat brie and listen to the guy’s jokes, benefit is happening; and you can parse out this benefit in many ways, e.g., pleasure, mitochondrial action.

12.7 Wants are needs (and benefits; same thing)

Wants are needs in the sense that they point (hopefully) to pleasure. Alternatively and equally, wants are benefits (in the sense that they point (hopefully) to pleasure).

Wanting can be more of a feeling and not conceptualized or articulated. “I’m feeling like I want something, e.g., to do something, to feel something, to experience something, some shift in my experience; but no idea what.”

It can be clear and articulated. “I want lasagna.”

Wanting something that’s bad for you and/or hard or impossible to get (in a certain timeframe or at all) is still a need in the sense that it points (hopefully) to pleasure. “I want a gigayacht filled with drugs.”

The more stable in and skilled at orientation and pleasure you are, the more you can get pleasure even if you can’t get the particular want. “I’ll settle for and enjoy lasagna.”

It can also be that the particular want (the content concomitant with the wanting) is part of a pleasure process that is best just to feel. You’re feeling pleasure. “I want a gigayacht filled with drugs” and associated thoughts, images, and feelings are part of the pleasure. You feel the pleasure all the way through. Then, say, “I want lasagna.”

Thinking of want as need emphasizes thinking of it as pointing to an aspect of your survival, grasped with the perspective that your survival (or that aspect of your survival) can be promoted, i.e., the need can be met (whether realistically possible or not).

Thinking of want as benefit emphasizes thinking of it as pointing to benefit, i.e., meeting a need (whether realistically possible or not).

Just as hunting the animal for food is a need and a benefit (benefit in the sense of promoting (hopefully) actual benefit), so wanting is a need and a benefit.

12.8 Values are wants, needs, and benefits (same thing)

“X is a value to me. X is valuable to me. X is one of my values. I value X,” you say. X could be any number of things, e.g., your career, marriage, children, family, home, the next french fry you’re going to grab from the plate.

Values, as I’m understanding them here, are things you pursue or want to pursue or want to want to pursue or want to be able to pursue. “Getting a girlfriend” is a value, including in cases in which you’re actively dating and cases in which you want to date, but are held back by whatever, e.g., fear, shame, depression, you’re finishing a prison term.

Some use “value” only to refer to things you’re actively pursuing. “A girlfriend is a value only if you’re actively going after one, not if you’re on your couch all day, gaming. Wanting a girlfriend doesn’t make one a value yet.” There is rationale for using “value” this way and I do endorse it in many contexts.

A reason I understand values to include wanting without acting—at least acting as popularly understood—is the crucial boost to value pursuit and achievement from auto-organization; from orientation, pleasure, pleasant letting go of control, and capacity growth, which can happen and often happens during activity that would be popularly considered unproductive and not counting as value pursuit.

Your values (hopefully) are benefits (and needs; same thing). Orientation, pleasure, and selfishness help with this.

Your values hopefully align with your wanting (orientation, pleasure, and selfishness help with this). “I want to stay in bed forever but I need to get to work or my children will starve,” etc. become less frequent, intense, long, and unpleasant.

Part 13. Deregulating productivity

Being productive means doing things that benefit you. Being productive means being selfish.

Working a job you enjoy, gain skill at, that may open doors, and/or that provides for you and people you value = productive. Less enjoyment, skill up, potential for door openings, and/or pay = less productive.

Enjoying a great relationship = productive. Staying in an abusive relationship = less productive.

Saving up to buy something you really want = productive. Donating that money to charity, when you don't want to, hate doing so, and suffering and grieving tremendously afterward = anti-productive.

Pursuing your happiness = productive. Sacrificing your happiness = anti-productive.

Being productive, as I use it here, includes being productive in any aspect of life, including a job and producing goods and services, but not limited to these. It includes being productive in regard to relationships, health, decorating your place, enjoying life generally, etc; and includes rest and things associated with inaction.

In some cases, there's a clearcut most productive thing to do, e.g., medical emergency for you or someone you care about.

In many cases, it's dubious whether there's such a thing as the most productive thing to do. There are a bunch of options and none is most productive. "I could rest a bit, or do the dishes, or do my taxes, or do some writing, or go for a walk," etc.

If you know what you want in life, have values and know what they are, have direction and purpose (I intend all the prior things to be more or less synonymous; repeating with different words for different emphases and resonance with different people), that helps guide action.

If you don't know what you want, keeping at orientation and pleasure will help want/value/direction/purpose discovery.

Orientation and pleasure will also help you pursue what you want and notice and productively respond to shifts in what you want as time passes. E.g., "I'm starting to get less pleasure from X [e.g., job, relationship, hobby]. How do I increase pleasure? And will it involve changing jobs, relationships, hobbies or keeping at them, with changes in how I do them?"

Taking steps toward long-term goals—e.g., become a doctor, build a business, build a relationship with someone, save for a home—is productive if your goal is productive, i.e., selfish, i.e., will bring you enough pleasure to be worth any displeasure.

It can be hard to know or predict if your goal is productive; even with best judgment with available information. "I thought X would make me happy, but it didn't."

The more pleasurable the step taking, the better; especially if there's significant risk of not achieving the goal or it won't make you happy.

You can be productive while feeling unproductive. "I can't stand resting and doing nothing. I feel so unproductive"; when it's actually very productive, e.g., healing, recharge, capacity growth, getting your bearings, seeing what productive insights come up during rest that would not have come up during action.

You can be unproductive while feeling productive. "I'm confronting my fears and pain, feeling them, and doing intense cognitive work on them, staying out of my comfort zone, doing what scares me. I feel very productive and everyone is telling me I'm being very productive which makes me feel even more productive." "I'm taking a lot of action; setting goals, e.g., setting and following a gym schedule, a schedule for reaching out to women. I feel very productive and everyone is telling me I'm being very productive which makes me feel even more productive." Where all the prior are continuations of patterns that haven't gotten you anywhere and are keeping intensity uncomfortably high, preventing capacity growth.

If you need to feel productive, and so you do things—e.g., cleaning—to feel productive, great. Pleasure involved in feeling productive is productive; pleasure from seeing your place clean and knowing it's clean is productive.

The more you do orientation and pleasure, the less limited you'll be to pleasure that's connected to needing to feel productive. "I need to feel productive; I need to clean (or something else); but maybe I could try to orient and find pleasure from something that's not connected to needing to feel productive (e.g., other than cleaning)." Say you succeed; you watch a show and do some orienting, it's pleasurable. You skilled up at being able to get pleasure that's not connected to needing to feel productive.

If you want to be more productive, but have low motivation or energy, notice and do as much orientation and pleasure as you can, especially noticing any motivation or energy, including curiosity and interest. E.g., an image popped up of you surfing; it's neutral-to-pleasant; hang with it and if any pleasure in the body pops up, feel the pleasure.

If on the whole you don't want to make something of yourself in life, if you don't want purpose, direction, values, but you do have some inklings toward making something of your life, notice and do as much orientation and pleasure as you can, especially around these inklings. E.g., you're watching a movie; the protagonist has purpose and fights for it; you notice positive, pleasurable response in your body; feel the pleasure.

If you're super successful, high functioning, ambitious, and want to maximize your productivity, innovation, creativity, competitive edge in a cutthroat, dynamic, unpredictable field, same two words.

I will bet (nothing actually but I still mean it) that orientation and pleasure will out compete the most sophisticated productivity advice, systems, hacks, tips and tricks,

regulation strategies out there; more precisely, incubation of your activity, including tips and tricks, within orientation and pleasure will out compete the non-incubated version. (Within the context of reason being your basic tool of survival; and orientation and pleasure boost reasoning capacity (revisit Part 1.3).) (And with the proviso that orientation and pleasure may result in the insight, “I don’t want to be a CEO anymore. I want to be a Jewish rapper.” “OK, your homework is to check out Rucka Rucka Ali.” (Thank you, you-know-who-you-are.).)

Part 14. Deregulating your identity

“I am or identify as (a(n)) [CEO, rapper, homeless, victim, non-victim, man, woman, masculine, feminine, gamer, birdwatcher, gay, straight, mom, grandmother, brother, working class, rich, White, Black, Mexican, Christian, Muslim, leftist, rightist, socialist, free market advocate, etc.; and including being an advocate of not having a rigid identity (à la Buddhism)].”

What's your identity and how should you relate to it?

Answer: Your identity is your survival, which you should pursue.

14.1 Your identity is your survival

If you're having an existential crisis—e.g., “Who am I? I don't know who I am! I need to know who I am!”, where there's a lot of unpleasant intensity around this—and you can get straight to orientation and pleasure—e.g., fish tacos, look at the beach—do that. (When this questioning is pleasurable, keep going with it because it's pleasurable.)

As you're eating fish tacos, you notice you like the mango salsa. Nice. You've learned something about yourself, i.e., your identity, your organism, your survival or life, your survival or life process, your properties, the identity or properties of your organism, of you, of yourself, your survival or life, your survival or life process (all synonymous) viz., you like mango salsa (at least on fish tacos; and this could get more complex, such as that sometimes you're in the mood for mango salsa and sometimes not, but simplifying here, you like mango salsa).

And if you learn overtime more details about how you like your mango salsa, e.g., a certain level of tart, or sweet, even better.

As you look at the beach and the surfers you get another insight. “I like big white cock.” You've learned two things about your identity. You like mango salsa with your fish tacos and you like big white cock.

Learning what gives you pleasure is a fundamentally important part of learning about your identity, because the point is happiness.

Learning what increases (chances of) orientation is also a fundamentally important part of learning about your identity, because orientation is fundamental to unlocking pleasure. “I'm more likely to orient at the beach.”

14.2 You discover your identity through reason

You learn about your identity through observation and reasoning based on observation. “I see that I have two arms and two legs.” Nice; more knowledge of your identity.

“Sometimes, I'm in a good mood and sometimes I'm in a bad mood. Why is that?” you wonder and happen to say aloud.

“That’s just how life is, don’t over analyze it, sometimes you’re in a good mood, sometimes not, just go with it,” says a friend, who’s not a fan of reasoning.

You don’t obey your friend. You continue reasoning. “Ah, I notice that when I get eight hours of sleep, I tend to be in a better mood; when I get fewer than six hours, I tend to be in a bad mood.” Nice, you’ve learned more about your identity.

Learning about your identity involves observing and reasoning about reality (out there). The discovery, “I like mango salsa,” involves perceiving reality out there, e.g., tasting the mango salsa, and a lot of knowledge of reality, e.g., knowing about mangos, onion, lime, cilantro, jalapenos, etc.

Your identity is what it is independently of your wishes. “I wish I didn’t like mango salsa or big white cock.” OK, cool, and these wishes are part of your identity (your desires are part of your identity); as are liking mango salsa and big white cock.

Your identity is affected by your choices, e.g., you choose to (try to) become a chef or musician or both.

What gives you pleasure may change. “I used to hate olives; now I love them.” “I used to like mangos; now not so much.”

Your identity is changing all the time. You’re feeling good; one second later, you’re feeling even better. That’s a change in one of your properties, your identity. You suddenly notice the sky; that’s a change in one of your properties. One of your cells just divided; that’s a change in one of your properties, your identity.

In a given moment and context, much change in your identity is not practically relevant. Zillions of changes in your identity during, say, a work meeting, are irrelevant to what to do next. Some changes are relevant, e.g., a question comes to mind, and you ask it.

I could see someone arguing that all changes in some sense are relevant or potentially relevant because everything affects everything; who knows what all in your organism and environment was relevant to the production of question X in your mind. I think this is a plausible lead; at the same time, in a less technical and more practical and ordinary sense, much change in identity is practically irrelevant (in a given context).

14.3 You have one and only one identity

Your identity is your survival, i.e., life, i.e., organism. That’s your one and only identity, metaphysically. Metaphysically here refers to pertaining to the nature of existence, independent of (any) consciousness. For a deeper dive here, you can read my dissertation (free and online; “A Defense of Egoism”).

Your identity can have many aspects, e.g., your left arm, your right arm, a zillion cells, a thousand opinions, chef, musician, birdwatcher, father, son, traveler, Yoga doer, meditator, etc. And you can refer to aspects of your identity as identities, e.g., “One of my identities is chef. Another is musician.”

All these are aspects of one, fundamental phenomenon: You, i.e., your organism, survival, life process. You're not a bag of separate things, e.g., two arms, a zillion cells, chef, mother, etc. You're your organism and all these things are aspects of your organism.

14.4 Who you are should benefit you

Being a chef should benefit you, i.e., be selfish.

(Benefit to you can involve providing for people you care about, at cost to you, e.g., stress; though of course the less harm to you, the better. Contrast this against providing for strangers or enemies over people you care about.)

Who you are, e.g., a chef, should benefit you. Equivalently, what you do should benefit you, e.g., your chef activity. Equivalently, what you are should benefit you; where I mean "what you are" and "who you are" synonymously." Who/what you are, i.e., your identity, includes having two legs, two arms, a brain, being a chef, doing chef activities.

Who you are, all your properties, aspects, identities (synonymous) should benefit you, i.e., be selfish. Should in the sense of being the right aim of action; how possible it is, is a separate question, e.g., maybe you have an illness and your organs are deteriorating and your efforts to find a treatment have not (yet) succeeded.

"I'm a businesswoman, a wife, mother, daughter, sister, and meditator."

You're sitting down to meditate. You debate whether to keep your phone on or not; you decide to keep it on.

You get five messages simultaneously, and identical. "Can you talk? He broke up with me. I'm in pieces." Your business partner's, husband's, mother's, daughter's, and sister's boyfriend broke up with them; plus each learned he was the boyfriend of each of the other four.

Maybe not keeping your phone on was the selfish thing to do.

Upon seeing the messages, maybe turning off your phone is the selfish thing to do. Or maybe talking to one of them is selfish.

If you meditate in a way that compromises orientation and pleasure, maybe not meditating is selfish. Pizza and video games instead.

Part 15. Deregulating multicultural approaches

“Would you like to have coffee sometime?” a guy messages you.

You’re not interested.

You consider not responding, or responding with, “Thanks, I’ll think about it,” or, “Thanks, I’ll let you know if I’m up for it,” or, “Thanks, things are busy right now.”

You eventually decide not to respond (or took so much time not deciding that that ended up being the decision).

Seven days later he messages you again. “Just wanted to circle back. If you’re ever interested in having coffee, let me know. I’d love to.”

Twenty four hours later, you “like” his message and reply, “Thanks, I’ll keep it in mind. Right now, the plate is full.”

After a few minutes, he “likes” your message and replies with a smile.

You don’t reply.

He leaves you alone.

You learn that he vented to a mutual friend about being angry with you, resentful, and hurt.

You twisted your mutual friend’s arm to get the messages the guy sent about you.

“Another female who communicates indirectly, ghosts, lies, lags, plays games, thinks ‘diplomacy’ is harmless, and wastes people’s time.”

That night, you’re in bed, reflecting.

“Just another guy who can’t handle rejection and has to lash out against women,” you think.

“Everyone ghosts, lies, and communicates indirectly,” you think, angry. “You probably ghost and lie all the time, too. You and billions of other guys. And human beings.”

You pause.

“I’m trying to justify my behavior on the grounds that everyone else does it, too. Is that a good ground?

“I’m trying to justify my behavior on the grounds that I can get away with it socially. I can get away with it because there are enough other people who do it too and we’re all enabling each other. Is all this good?

“I have my way of communicating. Shouldn’t you respect that?

“Plus Asian culture. I’m Asian and was raised in an Asian way and we don’t communicate directly like Scandinavians do.

“Plus female culture. We girls tend to be more indirect.

“Plus Mormon culture. You know I’m Mormon and that Mormon culture forbids coffee.

“You really need to respect the various cultures I belong to and identify with.

"But then should I respect the cultures you belong to and identify with?

"The guy I dated last month said proudly that in his country and culture, they throw homosexuals off buildings. I expressed disapproval. Was I wrong to disapprove of his Islamic culture?

"I didn't tell my leftist friends about what happened. Criticizing Islam is not permitted in leftist culture. Yet leftist culture supports shaming Western men, especially American ones, when they abuse, beat, rape, murder women, and yet when this Islamic group does it, it's called fighting against oppression?

"Is this what thinking is like?

"I hate it.

"It's scary.

"I don't want to do it.

"And I can get away with not doing it, because no one else does it either.

"Thank goodness independent thinking is not prized by my culture(s).

"And if it starts being prized, I'll just not identify with that aspect of the culture and/or hop culture(s).

"And I'll call this policy 'non-extremism,' not being an extreme individualist and also not being an extreme submissive to any collective or culture, but rather the healthy in-between, a healthy, lush, complex intersectionality of myriad cultures and aspects of my individuality. And as I hang with this thought, that I'm a healthy, lush, complex intersectionality of myriad cultures and aspects of my individuality, I get such warm and fuzzy feelings throughout my body, and profound insights, such as that 'I can be 100% me, you can be 100% you, and at the same time we are both 100% one, all of us, 100% individual and different, 100% together as one, on this big boat.'

"But I can no longer pretend to myself that I'm making sense.

"All dodging aside, I need other people to tell me what to think, value, and do.

"But I can no longer pretend to myself that that's correct.

"Maybe I should think for myself.

"And maybe I don't have to hate it or be scared of it.

"Maybe it could be pleasurable.

"With enough deregulation."

Part 16. Deregulating “avoidance”

“I don’t want to know if I’m gay. I’m going to direct my attention away from anything in that direction or neighborhood,” you say.

“I don’t want to know if my partner actually loves me or just wants my money (or the ratio of the two). I’m going to [etc.].”

“I don’t want to know if I have cancer. [Etc.]”

“I don’t want to know why my business is failing. [Etc.]”

“I don’t want to be uncomfortable. [Etc.]”

“You need to stop avoiding,” says your friend, Pill. “You need to stop escaping, resisting, defending, bypassing, justifying, rationalizing.

“You need to stop being dishonest, refusing to seek and know truth and reality.

“You need to stop being non-objective, refusing to [etc.].

“You need to stop being irrational [etc.].

“You need to stop evading [etc.].

“You need to stop placing feeling and fantasy above fact, being an emotionalist [etc.].”

“You’re right, Pill,” says your friend, Sugarcoat. “And it helps to deliver your medicine skilfully, with empathy, compassion, warmth, concern, positive regard, attunement, so as to increase the chances it will benefit our friend and minimize unnecessary harm, discomfort, friction, and risk of trauma to him.”

“Sure, OK,” says Pill, “if he can’t just straight up take truth. If he’s that weak.”

“Perhaps you’re the one who’s weak, because you can’t comfortably take the truth about the identity and needs of different organisms,” says Sugarcoat.

Pill was stunned, not expecting that reply. He was about to say, “Whatever,” dismissively, but sensed that would be evasive, and so he efforted to not backlash.

Another person, who’s standing right by all three of you, is screaming.

“The medicine itself is orientation and pleasure, and capacity growth and pleasant letting go of control, and needs no sugarcoat!”

None of the three of you see or hear him. None of your (visual or aural) orientation registers him or his screams.

You have feelings for a girl and want to tell her but you’re scared.

You plan to tell her tonight at 7pm.

.

It's 7pm and you're scared to tell her; you avoid doing so.

"I should tell her right now. I shouldn't avoid it," you think.

Is it true that you should tell her right now? Is it true that you shouldn't avoid telling her right now? If so, why? Why isn't avoiding equally valid as not avoiding?

"The longer you avoid, the more happiness you risk missing out on," someone says. "She may meet someone and start dating them; and even if she doesn't and says 'yes' to you, if you wait another year before you tell her your feelings, that's a year of happiness with her you miss out on."

Yes, that's plausible, but in many situations, it is or sails close to arbitrary speculation. It's hard or impossible even to make an educated guess about what pathways are possible to you, how much you'll grow and experience happiness in each, and which pathways will promote more growth and happiness than which pathways. E.g., you continue avoiding telling her and instead focus on your career; you continue avoiding telling her, and one day at a cafe another girl says "hello" to you, and etc.; you continue avoiding telling her and focus on backpacking through Europe.

An exception to the claim, "It's hard or impossible...", is that orientation and pleasure (in the context of sane, rational living) is the best bet.

Another exception is knowing what you want, the more you know what you want, the less true the claim. However, if you're pursuing what you want on the model of regulation, the claim holds in regard to more concrete pathways within your pursuit. "I want a man who wants to have children and to be a present father. Here I go, pursuing what I want." Yes, and within this, there are a zillion concrete pathways, and orientation and pleasure is the best guide.

If, when you move in the direction of orientation and pleasure, you criticize it as avoidance, meaning here avoiding something you (purportedly) shouldn't, you trend away from the benefits of orientation and pleasure, which as a rule of thumb will outweigh the benefits of attending to that something. Capacity growth outweighs a lot.

The orientation and pleasure someone is inclined to regard as avoiding doing something is often more relevant to and promotive of doing that thing than directly doing that thing. E.g., instead of directly trying to repair with someone, you avoid them, dive deep into orientation, pleasure, capacity growth, pleasant letting go of control, emerge a thousand times stronger, feel an impulse to reconnect with that person and it's easy, pleasurable, and the bond is deeper and more pleasurable than it could have been had you directly tried to repair with them.

"Direct" should be in quotes because the "direct" path is not actually a direct path to the latter relationship, or even a path at all. Rather, the "indirect" path *is* the direct path to that relationship.

Furthermore, the pleasure during that path is important not primarily because it enabled that repair. Rather, pleasure itself is beneficial; the point of life; as is the

relationship, if pleasurable. “Good for you. You took time to care for yourself, which enabled you to repair with your father. Repairing with your father is growth.”

No.

I mean, yes, but it’s wrong to regard repair with father as (the focal) growth, as if the pleasure along the way was less so. Furthermore, not repairing with father could be growth; if that’s what promotes pleasure.

Part 17. One-on-one session work

17.1 Sessions are hangouts that build orientation and pleasure

Sessions are hang out time; like you're hanging out with a friend.

Hanging out means spending time with no agenda.

We're hanging out, walking on the beach, eating ice cream.

Sessions are hang out time in which I'm supporting orientation and pleasure in my friend, often in subtle ways without his needing to do anything or be aware of it.

We're hanging out, walking on the beach, eating ice cream, and unbeknownst to you, demons are coming at you from behind to terrorize you, and I'm slaying them, and quickly burying them under the sand and/or throwing them out to sea, before you even know they're there to begin with.

What you experience is hang out time, walking on the beach, eating ice cream; not demons' coming at you to bother you.

"But if you keep battling demons for me, I won't learn how to battle them myself," you say to me.

"You've been battling demons all your life and more just keep coming at you, which is why you're trying something new, like hanging out, walking on the beach, and eating ice cream. Plus, you wouldn't say, 'If my accountant keeps doing my taxes for me, I won't learn how to do them myself.' Thank accountants you don't need to taxationistheftsayswhat and that they can do it for you."

"But who will build the roads?!"

"Yes, good one. You got me. I have no answer to that and you've shown me my views are wrong and I'm going to change them immediately."

"OK. But some demons are real and I have to battle them. For example, I have a direct report who's a high performer and very difficult to replace but treats me disrespectfully. That's a real present day problem I need to solve and/or learn to accept."

"Yes, and it's unlikely I will have any advice different from or better than any advice you already know about or could learn from prompting, forums, colleagues, mentors, your network, blocked out private thinking time, etc. What we're here to do is grow your capacity, which increases the chances of implementing more efficiently any advice you want to try following; plus furnishes unpredictable, actionable ideas in the moment, ideas tailored to your idiosyncratic identity, that no one could have come up with, even the two of us together in a prior moment."

"OK, I'm just still not sold on how hanging out, walking on the beach, and eating ice cream will help solve my problems."

"Yeah, because the idea is so counter to everything. Like the ideas of selfishness and a free market. Hence why I'm so unbearably repetitive with orientation and

pleasure. I'm playing the lotto. Alternatively, I'm trying to wear you down. Maybe the next time I repeat 'orientation and pleasure,' conditions will be just right in your biology that you absorb it in a way you haven't before."

"So that's why you keep repeating yourself!"

"Yes."

"But there's a lot to orientation and pleasure; a lot that you explicate. People won't get or remember much or any of that when you repeat 'orientation and pleasure.'"

"When they want to (re)learn about them, they can revisit Part 1."

"OK, we're going on tangents, though. The agenda is to talk about one-on-one sessions."

"Which are hang outs with no agenda."

"Isn't the agenda to build orientation and pleasure?"

"OK, yes; no agenda in any familiar sense."

"OK, what are these hang outs like and how do you support orientation and pleasure? Say I say, 'My life is falling apart. My wife wants a divorce, my kids won't talk to me, and I'm avoiding it all by burying myself in work.' Would you just tell me to orient and talk about something that's more pleasant?"

"No, I don't know what I'd do, but it wouldn't be that, because being told to orient or be in pleasure when you're suffering increases displeasure. Even if you're not suffering, being told to orient or be in pleasure can be annoying."

"The support for orientation and pleasure would happen more under the surface. Here are some possibilities of how hang out unfolds."

"You talk about how your life is falling apart and I'm listening caringly. That helps you feel better."

"Or we talk about the benefit you're getting from burying yourself in work; the pleasure and avoiding of displeasure that brings."

"Or you talk about how your life is falling apart and we're brainstorming solutions. Maybe that's what's in the cards that moment. 'In the cards' meaning your organism is genuinely interested in doing it."

"Or you start talking about the weather or sports, while we both know there's 'my life is falling apart' content circulating in your experience, where talking about the weather or sports is a major sign of progress because before your attention was all consumed by the other content. Many mainstream people would say you're 'avoiding,' but what's in fact happening is signs of more orientation and pleasure."

"Furthermore, the way you talk about weather or sports and how you feel and what your body does as you do it may be related to the 'my life is falling apart' content and helping process that content with less unpleasant intensity. Many mainstream interventions would sabotage this process. 'Enough weather chit chat, enough avoiding. Face your hell.'"

“Or there’s silence, while a bunch of things circulate in your experience and you’re not rushing to express whatever bit is most salient to the attention in the moment; rather, you’re in a noticing-observing-searching-fishing-waiting mode which may eventually dish up some bit that you feel like expressing. And as you notice [etc.], you may experience things and your body may do things that help process the content; the noticing [etc.] is part of the productive processing.

“So those are five possibilities: talk about your hell, talk about benefit from burying yourself in work, brainstorm solutions, talk about the weather, etc. while hell circulates, and silence; and we may weave back and forth between all five as we hang out. And all give can serve productive processing and capacity growth.”

“That actually makes a lot of sense and I’m not just saying this because you’re the author and can make me say whatever you want me to say.”

“Thank you!”

“But I know there’s more than that. There’s stuff you do with movements and physical postures.”

“Yeah, I’ll pass on talking about that for now.”

“OK, what about orientation? What if I’m talking about my hell and I suddenly start orienting?”

“Oh that goes without saying. Yes, keep doing that. Any time there’s orientation or pleasure, including feeling better, and you are able and want to flow with that, yes.”

“So, say we’re talking for twenty minutes and then I suddenly orient, to the flowers outside my window, and I want to keep doing that for a long time, maybe even the rest of the time.”

“Hell, yes.”

“And if I suddenly orient to the flowers, and it lasts two seconds, and then I want to resume talking about my hell, do that?”

“Yes.”

“Yes, but not ‘hell, yes’?”

“Hell, yes.”

“But you didn’t say ‘hell, yes,’ at first. So you’re saying it’s better if I can orient to the flowers for longer?”

“In general, yes, and as a goal, yes, but in a particular situation, if orienting to the flowers for two seconds and then talking about your hell feels better, do that.”

17.2 Take the scenic route

Guy 1 takes the fastest route to a nightclub. Guy 2 takes a more scenic route, which takes longer.

A scenic route to a destination is a route that has more pleasing scenery, is prettier, more pleasant and leisurely, and may be longer, more indirect or roundabout, and take longer; compared to an uglier route.

A scenic route, in the context of living, including more targeted healing and growth process, including both do-it-yourself process and work with someone, and including whatever approach(es), e.g., CBT, psychodynamic, EMDR, medicine journeys (four examples of countless (and an example can include many examples itself, e.g., medicine)), etc., is one that prioritizes orientation, pleasure, comfort, leisure, easy does it, taking things casually and lightly, allowing and encouraging a lot of breathing room for all the prior.

The scenic route is orientation and pleasure. "Scenic route" may help some people quickly get onto orientation and pleasure.

You may discover that taking the scenic route is fastest and the destination.

"Oh, cool to learn about orientation and pleasure; two new things to add to my toolkit of 56 strategies; now I have 58.

"Oh, shit, orientation and pleasure actually work.

"Oh, shit, they work better than everything else.

"Oh, shit, have I been doing unnecessary harm to myself and my clients?

"Oh, shit, do I really need to keep talking to my clients about [taking IFS as example] parts, exiles, managers, firefighters and their core self as much as I have and keeping their attention ping ponging in their interior, away from orientation?

"Oh, shit, the client without effort or focused attention had thought X, and noticed pattern Y, and felt pleasure in his chest, when he was in orientation and pleasure. Am I still doing CBT and psychodynamic therapy and somatic therapy? Am I doing these three things with adjunct support from orientation and pleasure? Am I doing them within a container of orientation and pleasure? But all of what's happening seems to be part of orientation and pleasure, so am I really just doing orientation and pleasure? Is the scenic route the destination?

"Oh, shit, is the common denominator of the scenic route and the nightclub that they're pleasurable (assuming they are)?"

"Oh, shit, could going to a nightclub be more healing and growing than whatever I've been subjecting myself and others to?"

"I have a direct report who's a high performer and very difficult to replace but treats me disrespectfully. That's a real present day problem I need to solve and/or learn to accept."

"Daaaang, that suuuucks," I say.

And I stop there, and stare blankly at my friend. Nothing else comes to my mind to say. So, I'm just sitting there, looking at him, silently.

Or perhaps a lot of things come to my mind to say. "What does AI say?" "Tell me more." "Have you tried talking to him?" "How does he treat you disrespectfully?" "What I'm hearing is that you have a direct report who's a high performer and very difficult to

replace but treats you disrespectfully, and that this is a real present day problem you need to solve and/or learn to accept.” “What do you feel in your body?” “Any solutions come to mind?” “Maybe it’s not either-or, but both-end; maybe we can both problem solve and learn to accept.” “What does HR say?” “Do you have a contingency plan?” “Want to go surfing? Maybe some time in the big blue will give one or both of us an insight?” And twelve other things, say, come to my mind. But none of these things felt right to say; and instead, spontaneously, I just opened my mouth and blurted out, ““Daaaang, that suuuucks.”

Maybe this will put off my friend, cause him displeasure. E.g., “That’s all you have to say? I’m paying you gobs of money and all you have is, ‘Daaaang, that suuuucks’?! How does that help me?” I’ll get to this scenario in a moment.

First let’s say he laughs, feels pleasure, and chills out pleasurably, and even increases in orientation; he suddenly visually notices and takes in more of the environment. He has a wider view; whereas before he was focusing intensely on me, on my face and eyes, when he was saying, “I have a direct report [etc.],” barely aware of the rest of the environment.

That’s scenic route; orientation and pleasure, which is the whole point because that’s what grows capacity (Part 1.3), enables useful insight (Part 1.1.6), and pleasure is good.

Yes, the following things may be true here: The “Daaaang, that suuuucks” and his positive reception of it settles intensity, which makes continuing the conversation more likely more productive; being jacked up on unpleasant intensity makes it harder to think (alone or with someone) productively. It constitutes validation, which is important, both for its own sake and for enabling more productive continuing. It’s part of a humanistic orientation, e.g., empathy, congruence, build relational vehicle.

From a deregulation perspective, the value of the above—calming, being validated, warmth from humanistic process—is pleasure, and orientation, which is more likely when intensity is lower, which is more likely when displeasure goes down.

Now let’s consider the case where “Daaaang, that suuuucks” puts off my friend.

17.3 Do no harm

Harm is displeasure. (Harm also includes physical harm, but in this context, harm is primarily displeasure; you’re not massaging or doing surgery on someone. Yes, consciousness and body are integrated and displeasure is concomitant with effects in the physical organism, but I’ll leave this thought here without pursuing further.)

If my “Daaaang, that suuuucks” put off my friend, I harmed him.

In some sense, maybe we’re all harming each other all the time (benign exaggeration), because our actions (including inactions and presentation) can causally contribute to displeasure, including the briefest and tiniest displeasure. If your face displeases someone, you’re harming them (perhaps through no fault of your own). So,

in some sense, the fact that you're harming people all the time and other people are harming you all the time is not that practically important, significant or noteworthy.

At the same time, try to maximize your pleasure; and part of this is, as a rule of thumb, minimizing displeasure you cause others, especially people who matter to your happiness, to promote benefit to you from relationships and general, harmonious coexistence with people; but of course if you have to break up with someone or even kill them in self-defense, you gotta do what you gotta do.

Organic Intelligence, and deregulation, following OI here, place a lot of weight on not doing harm and this is one of its most distinctive and greatest strengths.

If my "Daaaang, that suuuucks" puts off my friend, that's good information for me to know, to help me improve in doing less harm going forward.

It can be hard to know if you're causing displeasure (see 5.4) and what all causally contributes to the displeasure; it may be impossible to know many of the causal contributors.

Maybe my "Daaaang, that suuuucks" didn't cause displeasure. Maybe it was that I stopped there, that I didn't say anything more than that, and that's what put off my friend. Maybe he wanted more empathy, and/or empathy expressed differently and/or for us to get into problem solving.

Maybe it was how drawn out my "aaaa" and "uuuu" were. Maybe in another situation, it would please him.

The more oriented I am, and oriented to my friend (as opposed to looking out the window), the more I'll pick up on clues of displeasure, and the more reliable my inklings that I may be causing displeasure.

When should you harm your client?

When they need to feel worse before better, resist doing so, and you can help them do it, while at the same time help them not feel worse than necessary.

17.4 When do you need to feel worse before feeling better?

17.4.1 When you immediately need to know reality

"I asked her out. She said she'd think about it," your friend says, feeling giddy.

"That's a 'no.' She's not interested," you say.

"What?! Why do you say that?"

"I know these things. Trust me. She's a girl and she's Taiwanese; 'I'll think about it' is 'no.' I'm Taiwanese, too, so I know; plus I'm a very old woman and I've seen everything there is to see. You're young, naive, and still think people mean what they say. She's not interested. Sorry, sweetheart. I'm telling you because I care about you."

He's displeased.

“I needed to tell him about reality even if it caused him displeasure,” you think. “I can do things to try to mitigate his displeasure, e.g., call him “sweetheart” and tell him I care about him and am coming from a good place, but I need to tell him about reality.”

In general, yes; in a particular case, maybe not.

“Also, you’re gay,” you say. “You may think you’re attracted to girls, but you’re not.”

“What?! I’m not gay!”

“You don’t know it yet. Trust me sweetheart. I’m an old woman [etc.].”

He’s more displeased.

Telling someone about reality is one case where you may need to displease them.

In judging whether and when to tell someone something, their displeasure counts against telling them; especially because of the enormous value of capacity growth.

If your friend is in pleasure as he says, “I asked her out. She said she’d think about it,” there’s benefit to him in feeling the pleasure as long as it lasts. There’s benefit to him if he can do things that extend the duration, intensity, and richness of the pleasure. Richness includes how much pleasure there is throughout his body and pleasant thoughts, sensations, emotions, and images. There’s benefit to him if you can support this elaboration of pleasure.

Feeling the pleasure through, according to Organic Intelligence, may result in his reaching an organic intensity threshold (see Part 1, beginning) and growing capacity.

If later you tell him you think the girl said ‘no’ and he asks why you didn’t tell him immediately, the answer is that pleasure is good, especially because of capacity growth. If he says, “Going forward, please just say what’s on your mind immediately,” maybe agree to do that or try to sell him on the importance of pleasure and capacity growth.

17.4.2 When you immediately need to deal with reality

If a friend is scared of flying but needs to get on a flight tomorrow for an important thing that you both know clearly outweighs any displeasure from flying, then you just have to do everything you can to make sure he gets on the flight. Promote as much orientation and pleasure as you can in him, of course; but he needs to get on the flight.

There are also zillions of much more ordinary examples, e.g., your friend needs to keep working an unpleasant job for the time being, etc. If he wants to quit but you both know that’s not selfish, do what you can to help him not quit.

The more you can do it through building orientation and pleasure, the less you need to do it through helping him feel worse before better. Suffering less at work and then feeling better after work is over for the day is better than getting better at suffering (not less) at work and then feeling better after.

17.4.3 When unpleasant intensity needs to increase before decreasing

Getting straight to feeling better and orientation is always preferred. If your presence and whatever you're doing with your friend helps him feel better without feeling worse first, nice and keep doing whatever's working.

There can be waves of feeling worse, then better, worse, better, etc. E.g., a wave of unpleasant crying, then more pleasant (including less unpleasant) settling, then another wave of unpleasant crying, then pleasant settling, etc. If your presence and whatever you're doing with him helps make the displeasure less intense and/or shorter and/or extends the duration of pleasant settling, nice, and keep doing whatever's working.

Someone may try to stop displeasure from intensifying when it needs to in order for him to feel better. An unpleasant feeling of crying is coming on; he pushes it down, which keeps making it worse. If you can help him let the crying happen, nice.

Over time, as orientation and pleasure get more stable in him, there will be fewer situations that require feeling worse before better and there will be less displeasure.

Helping someone feel worse when necessary, in the context of deregulation, is fundamentally different from mainstream advice of feeling your feelings. "Necessary" in the context of deregulation means necessary to feel better as soon as possible and in a particular instance; and always choosing orientation and pleasure whenever you can. By contrast, when mainstream says you need to feel to heal (necessary to feel to heal), they mean it's necessary to choose displeasure when you can instead choose pleasure, and to choose displeasure frequently, and a lot of it, intensely, possibly for an indefinite number of years, decades, or your whole life, so that you can, maybe, heal, and if not nevertheless make the most you can of life.

"No, get thee to orientation and pleasure," says deregulation.

By the way and furthermore, when mainstream says "feel your (unpleasant) feelings," often they mean "talk about your feelings," which can often be even more displeasurable and prolong and intensify displeasure more than feeling your feelings (which is more displeasurable than getting straight to orientation and pleasure to the extent possible), because you're adding intensity by maintaining mental intensity, bodily activation, and effort involved in talking and interacting with the person you're talking about your feelings to; eye contact can keep intensity up, too.

"Stop staying in thought and talk about your unpleasant feelings. Feel them," says guy 1.

"Stop staying in unpleasant feeling. Rationally examine your unpleasant feelings and let's talk about them," says guy 2.

"OK, we're offering different perspectives," say guy 1 and guy 2 in unison, "but their important common denominator is that the way through is through."

You know what I'm going to say.

You'd better know.

17.5 Increasing and decreasing eye contact

Tell your friend to make and avoid eye contact as he pleases.

Many people are displeased by eye contact. If you sense your friend is displeased by eye contact, make less of it yourself; that may help him feel more comfortable not making eye contact.

Many people are displeased at being stared at or looked at. If you sense your friend is displeased from this, look at them less.

Some people are habituated to maintaining eye contact even if it's displeasurable and aren't aware it's displeasurable until they feel comfortable not making eye contact and feel what a relief that is.

Some people are displeased without eye contact. They may feel you're not paying attention to them and find this unpleasant and/or not respecting them and/or feel insufficient closeness, intimacy, bond. In these cases, make more eye contact.

17.6 Increasing and decreasing talking

Many people are displeased by silence, slowing of pace, and want to keep talking and/or for you to keep talking. In these cases, talk and support their talking.

When you sense someone would be pleased by more silence, slowing of pace, talking less themselves and/or your talking less, talk less and support their talking less.

Your talking less can help lower your friend's unpleasant intensity. He may feel more comfortable while unpleasantly activated and more comfortable talking, lessening his unpleasant intensity.

Your talking more can help lower your friend's unpleasant intensity. Your friend starts talking with rising fear about something that happened at the nightclub. You interrupt with stuff, e.g., "Which club?" "Oh, the one by the donut place?" And you continue talking about the donut place, how you like that place, what donuts you buy there, your ranking of favorite to least favorite, how you're trying to lose weight so you sometimes consider buying a banana instead of a donut but to date have never bought a banana, etc. If your friend is unpleasantly activated, this prolongs his attention being on something other than the displeasure, supporting lessening of unpleasant intensity.

Furthermore, in the preceding particular example, his attention is more oriented, viz., looking at and hearing you, as opposed to say someone asking him if any part of his body feels less unpleasant, keeping his attention in the interior (both in having to think about the question just imposed on him and sense the body, including both in service of answering the question and in staying with it, as per instruction by the therapist).

More orientation (for a millionth time) is especially good.

17.7 Don't direct the hangout

My friend talks about whatever he wants; and can also not talk. I'm not directing him to talk about anything specific, e.g., how was your week, what would you like to work on, what are your values, how would you like to spend this time, etc.

Even asking, "What would you like to talk about?" is directing and generally contraindicated. It adds demand and pressure on my friend to answer a question and assumes there is something he wants to talk about and that he knows it, and pressures him to have something he wants to talk about.

Even communicating through my presentation that I want my friend to start talking and have something he wants to talk about can add demand and pressure, displeasing my friend.

In some sense, yes, I'm directing the conversation to a degree. My friend pleasurablely talks about spending time with her grandchildren and I'm talking about that with her. "Wow, he ate a whole lobster." "Where did you go fishing?" What I do, e.g., saying those two things, does direct my friend; anything I do that influences my friend in a sense directs her.

Sometimes, I'm overtly directing, e.g., "Where did you go fishing?" I'm directing my friend to answer that question.

Sometimes, the influence is more subtle, e.g., I smile (voluntarily, involuntarily, or a mixture) when my friend mentions fishing with her grandson, my friend spots the smile (consciously, subconsciously, or a mixture) which influences her, and she elaborates on fishing with her grandson; whereas had I not smiled, maybe she wouldn't have elaborated or as much.

So, yes, in a sense I'm directing. At the same time, hangout is undirected in that overall there's no rigid agenda of what to talk about (or whether to talk) and I'm trying to enable my friend to feel comfortable not going in a direction that I may be directing her to go. "No, I don't want to talk about that. I don't want to go there." "None of your business where I went fishing." "I'm getting uncomfortable. I don't like what you're doing." I back off.

Exceptions to not directing my friend include when she immediately needs to know or deal with reality—e.g., "No, don't message him. Remember all the past times? This one's clearcut. Tell me you won't message him tonight." (Assuming here I think she can comply)--or stop inhibiting unpleasant intensity that needs to increase right now for her to feel better, e.g., she's controlling her breath to prevent unpleasant intensity from increasing and crying when in this case unpleasant intensity needs to rise and crying needs to happen. (And I might direct if she wants to do something that unnecessarily prolongs her displeasure. "No, don't grab your phone and look at pictures of him. You'll just cry for five more minutes and you don't need to.")

If someone wants direction, then the direction is: We're hanging out with no rigid agenda and trying to build orientation and pleasure along the way.

17.8 Free association, to the extent possible

Organic Intelligence sessions are free association conversations, meaning that your friend says whatever comes to mind and follows automatic associations without inhibition. This can result in not making sense in any ordinary sense, e.g., friend starts talking about what he had for lunch and then clowns come to mind and he starts talking about clowns and then sentences, fragments, words, and sounds come out that aren't clearly about any topic(s).

One reason I describe sessions as hangouts (that build orientation and pleasure) rather than as free association conversations is that hanging out includes hanging out while not talking.

A second is that free association may be impossible to a large extent because your friend may not feel comfortable doing it with you.

"Fucking socialists and Christian nationalists out to destroy what freedom is left in America and brainwash the youth in the universities and churches into thinking theirs is the noble fight, Will we ever be rid of them? [perhaps followed by words and fragments that make no sense]" for example, is not something I'd feel comfortable saying to most people, including therapists, healers, etc..

That said, to the degree your friend can pleasurably free associate, great, and encourage that and try to make him feel comfortable doing that, because free association is a fountainhead of orientation and pleasure.

Many people will feel more comfortable free associating with someone who thinks and is honest.

17.9 Deregulating intensity

Your friend is coming in hot; unpleasantly activated; is going through unpleasant intensity. Being hot includes latently hot, e.g., friend is chill right this moment but his attention is inclined to go in a direction that will unpleasantly heat him up, e.g., start talking and as he starts talking he'll gravitate towards topics that unpleasantly heat him up.

Why is he hot? Maybe something happened just a few minutes ago or yesterday or recently and/or maybe he's going through something that's current and may persist for a time and/or maybe that's his norm (maybe due to a bunch of non-recent causes). Or whatever.

"No need to do anything. Time will heal," says guy 1. "A shaken up soda bottle will settle over time on its own. Then you can open it fizz-free."

"Talk it out and feel it out without holding back. Cathart," says guy 2. "Open up the soda bottle and let it erupt. After the eruption, you'll have calm."

"Talk it out and feel it out in doses. Titrate," says guy 3. "Open the cap just a bit for just a bit, then close, and repeat, and after enough repetitions, no more fizz."

All three guys may be right, but taking a walk may be better than any of the three.

You had a bad day. Guy 1 may be right that time will heal; your unpleasant intensity will fade over time without your doing anything. But if taking a walk would reduce displeasure sooner, take the walk.

Guy 2 may be right that catharting will be followed by calm. But that may be more displeasurable than doing nothing (which may be more displeasurable than going for a walk).

Guy 3 may be right that titrating will be followed by calm, and titrating may be less displeasurable than catharting. But doing nothing or taking a walk may be less displeasurable than titrating.

Furthermore, according to deregulation, the goal is not to defizz and become flat, but to increase the size of the bottle, the volume of liquid, and the ability to create and enjoy fizz, as during a celebration, and sustainably create and enjoy more fizz as you please going into the future. The goal is to grow capacity for pleasant intensity.

Yes, a goal is to lower unpleasant intensity but distinctively through orientation, pleasure, and pleasant letting go of control (to build capacity) whenever possible, over directing them to effort, i.e., through deregulation not regulation. E.g., if they're looking out the window and getting some relief, don't sabotage that with, "Feel your feet on the floor. Take a deep breath."

Operating on the model of deregulation can involve directing my friend to do things that would be associated with regulation, e.g., telling him to orient for a bit, but what makes it part of deregulation is that I'm trying to minimize his efforting towards orientation and pleasure and minimize any displeasure (stress, demand; on his attention) I'm causing him in directing him.

17.10 Interrupting people

In general, don't interrupt people because it displeases them.

Exceptions include when someone's hot, especially dangerously hot or in danger of being dangerously hot; especially especially if they may do something they'll regret, e.g., send someone a message they'll regret sending. By dangerously hot, I mean the intensity is very high and there's almost no orientation. (I don't mean danger to others; if there's danger to others, that's reason for interrupting and directing; but this isn't my context here.) Interrupting is a way to help someone defizz.

Friend is pissed off about something and ranting about it.

Listening without interrupting may keep him unnecessarily hot and away from orientation and pleasure; interrupting can lower intensity. "Mhm." "Dang." "That sucks." "She did what?!" "Yeah, true." "I hate it when that happens."

Technically, you're adding intensity; adding input or demand on his organism to process. E.g., his organism is confronted with hearing "I hate it when that happens" and processes it (however it processes it).

But his attention on your interruption may lower his overall intensity. E.g., you say “I hate it when that happens.” His orientation increases a bit, e.g., hears you, maybe looks at you more, maybe sees the environment around you more. His interior response (thoughts, feelings, images) to your statement are more pleasant than what his attention was on the moment prior. And your interruption was minimally disruptive; it was related to his content and acceptable to his organism. Maybe it’s even aligned with the natural flow of what he’s doing. Whereas had you interrupted with, “What does ranting about the state of the world do for you?”, that say would have (much more) disrupted him and displeased him, increasing his unpleasant intensity.

Orienting to him will help you spot whether interrupting or not interrupting lowers unpleasant intensity; and whether a particular interruption did so; and help you improve. Observing effects on your friend is more reliable than going by “If it were me, I’d want X; so he must want X,” or “X works 80% of the time, so I’ll do X.” And those thoughts (inklings) will be more reliable when you’re oriented and orienting to your friend.

Annoying someone sometimes counts as raising unpleasant intensity and is to be avoided; and sometimes counts as defizzing. Say your friend is getting annoyed by your mhm’s. The mhm’s may be helpful because they’re lowering unpleasant intensity; his annoyance with you is less intense than other parts of his experience that pull his attention; and your mhm’s increase his orientation; hearing you, seeing you, even though you’re annoying him.

If you’re scared of interrupting people, your own orientation and pleasure work will help make interrupting easier and more pleasant.

Physical motion can be helpful interruption, e.g., cringing and moving your body as you say “I hate it when that happens,” increasing his orientation (seeing your movement) and pleasure (say he gets pleasure from your expressing that you hate it when such-and-such happens, too, and seeing the effects in your body).

Being still, silent, and expressionless can be helpful interruption. You’re very still and expressionless as your friend rants; he picks up on this, starts altering his course, e.g., “Maybe ranting about the world isn’t doing me much good,” and then your face suddenly shows interest, which motivates him to hang out with this statement longer, which lowers unpleasant intensity. If being still and expressionless raises his unpleasant intensity, including his resentment about being manipulated, e.g., “I fucking hate being manipulated. Don’t do your behavioral psychology-reinforcement-cold-warm shit with me,” then being still and expressionless is contraindicated.

I gave the example of interrupting someone who’s pissed off; interrupting can also help someone in fear. “I went clubbing last night and at one point I started walking to the restroom and I noticed this guy following me and . . .” friend says and you pick up on rising fear. “Where is this? What club did you go to? Who with?” you interrupt, increasing their orientation and lowering their unpleasant intensity a bit; defizzing along the way.

Interrupting can also help someone who's stuck in mental intensity. Incessant words coming from them all the time and not productively; more hamster wheel. Interrupting their unhinged mental intensity lowers it, hopefully over time, and increases chances for orientation and pleasure. "Mhm." "Yeah." "I see." "Oh, that happened to me once. I was bike riding, and [etc.]."

Interrupting can also help someone who's silently hot. They're silent; so you're not interrupting their speech; but you are interrupting their unpleasant intensity. E.g., someone's attention is absorbed in their unpleasant interior experience. "Well, would you look at that," you say, looking out the window. "Some flowers are starting to bloom; spring is coming."

Being still, silent, and expressionless can count as interrupting in interrupting the natural flow of someone's experience and is contraindicated when you're interrupting their pleasure. E.g., they're talking about something pleasurable exciting to them; you're still, silent, and expressionless; that throws them into shame and fear.

Yes, "What exactly is the difference between interrupting and not interrupting someone?" Passing on this and instead: You want to be and do what promotes your friend's orientation and pleasure, whether you'd regard your being and doing as interrupting or not. That said, it can help to have interrupting and not interrupting as two things you can do, where each is associated with popular, commonly accepted examples, and without having a rigorous answer to "What exactly is the difference?"

To repeat, in general, don't interrupt people because it displeases them.

It may be harder for you not to interrupt people if your mind is fast, you're intense, you easily get annoyed or bored, you don't like being quiet, you like talking, and/or you want to rush people along when you know or predict what they're going to say, where they're going, what the main point(s) of what they're saying is. Your own orientation and pleasure work will help make not interrupting easier and more pleasant.

Predicting and knowing what someone is saying and going to say before they finish speaking can cost your orientation, depending on how hostaged your attention is, which can cost your ability to spot things that would help you help your friend deregulate. "Oh, he's going on a rant about politics again. He's going to say X; then Y; then Z, like clockwork, like the prior twenty times." In this particular instance, your friend is more oriented (while saying exactly what you predicted he'd say). His eyes are less fixed, narrowed, and are taking in more of the environment. Joining in the conversation in a way that elaborates his orientation would be A+; you may not so join or have any inkling of so joining if your attention is hostaged by "Oh, I know what this is and how I'm going to respond."

17.11 Asking more and fewer questions

Someone asking you questions can support your orientation and pleasure, especially when the person (1) is oriented, (2) is empathetic, (3) is interested in

understanding what you're going through and thinking and feeling, (4) desires your well-being, and (5) operates on the model of deregulation.

"He broke up with me," your hot friend says, in tears. [What does Bach mean by hot? Unpleasantly activated? Or good-looking?]

If (1) is not true of you, e.g., your attention is hostaged by discomfort from your friend's suffering, you're more likely to ask a question that harms them. E.g., "Is there anything you can do to improve your situation?" (Where this question is harmful.)

If (2) is not true of you, you're more likely to ask a question that harms them. E.g., "Is there anything you can do to improve your situation?"

If (3) is not true of you, you're more likely to ask a question that harms them. E.g., "Is there anything you can do to improve your situation?"

If (4) is not true of you, you're more likely to ask a question that harms them. E.g., "Is there anything you can do to improve your situation?"

If (5) is not true of you, you're more likely to ask a question that harms them. E.g., "Is there anything you can do to improve your situation?"

Asking fewer questions can support someone's orientation and pleasure by lessening demand on them. In general, questions demand more from people than statements. "How are you?" demands more from someone than "Nice day today." The first is a demand on them to answer. The second demands little to nothing. Context is important for the two prior claims. If you say, "How are you?" in a way that communicates that they don't need to answer, that's less demand on them. If you make intense eye contact with them as you say "Nice day today," that adds demand on them.

Yes, "Nice day today, isn't it?" is less demanding than "You're a piece of shit."

But in general, questions are more demanding than statements.

17.12 Asking questions and making statements at the right distance

Your friend starts talking with rising fear about going to a nightclub last night and how a guy followed him to the restroom. You asked what club. He answers and then mentions the donut place next door and continues talking about the donut place and donuts in a manner of grasping onto a more pleasant topic.

A bunch of stuff is going through your mind. "Did something happen at the nightclub? Were you sexually assaulted? Are you OK? If you were assaulted, let's tell the cops; we need to talk about this right now. It doesn't feel right to be talking about donuts. Why am I following this dumbass 'orientation and pleasure is the way' bullshit? It's just avoidance! I need to ask him about what happened at the nightclub, not talk about his favorite donuts."

Whether, how much, and how to direct him to talk explicitly about what happened at the nightclub depends on how much orientation and pleasure is available in that direction. I say “explicitly” because it could be that his talking about donuts is implicitly talking about what happened at the nightclub; what’s happening in his organism as he talks about donuts may be the successful processing of whatever his organism needs to process in connection with the nightclub; and more easily, pleasurably, and with more orientation; which, again, promotes the fundamental value of capacity growth, not merely defizzing.

Say a bunch of questions and statements come to mind. “What was the last donut you got there?” “Can we return to the nightclub?” “Did something happen at the nightclub?” “Were you raped?” “You must see a lot of cops at the donut place.” “That probably makes some people feel safe, you know, especially with all the things that can happen at night.” “Oh, bearclaw, nice. Wouldn’t that be a fun way to protect yourself in this world, by having bear claws.”

What to say or ask in any moment often has to be spontaneous; too complex to consciously calculate what exactly to say (or whether to not talk).

That said, a guiding principle to keep in mind when consciously calculating and also to try to automatize is to approach at the right distance or the right level of intensity. This is the same thing as and a repetition of “promote orientation and pleasure.” “Approach at the right distance” may particularly resonate with you and so is worth presenting to you.

“Did something happen at the nightclub?” is probably less intense than “Were you raped?” It’s also probably less intense than “What happened at the nightclub?” “What was the last donut you got?” could be more intense than “Did something happen at the nightclub?” if your friend’s attention is gravitating towards the nightclub while at the same time he trusts and wants to follow your lead while at the same time it’s getting harder to keep attention on donuts. “What was the last donut you got?” would be less intense if he wants to talk about donuts. “Were you raped?” could be less intense with a person who’s more comfortable with people who are direct, blunt, and don’t walk on eggshells.

Someone says, “Recent experiences can and should be approached differently from non-recent experiences; same for acute vs. chronic (including developmental). With recent or acute, you want to be a first responder or surgeon. With chronic, including developmental, you want to be an architect.”

Whatever you’re doing, the more orientation and pleasure, the better.

Part 18. Orienting to reality

“I’m moving to the other side of the world, to a country with a very different culture and system, to start both at a new university and a new job in a field that’s new to me; and all this requires that I learn a new language. It may take me some time to get oriented to all this.

“Uh-oh, I see that ‘Orientation Day’ at my new job is tomorrow, Friday. I thought it was the following Monday. Tomorrow I was planning to visit ‘Orientation Week’ at my new university. Maybe I could go today. But I signed up for an in-person orientation course (on the laws and culture of this new country), happening today. Maybe I can reschedule the course. The only open spot within the next two months is this Saturday, but I’m supposed to meet my girlfriend’s family for the first time this Saturday. Could I reschedule meeting her family? No, she’ll give me hell. Wait, do I even need to take the orientation course? I could just learn how things work here from my girlfriend and her family. No, better to be able to do it on my own; especially as I don’t know how I’ll fit into the family.

“Oh, crap, this isn’t the local downtown district. I must have gotten off at the wrong stop. Did I miss it earlier? Maybe I was too focused on my phone, trying to reschedule the orientation course, and didn’t hear the announcement or notice the train stop and doors open. Where am I? How best to get to downtown? Oh, crap, my phone just died. What should I do? Find a charger? Look for concierge and ask how best to get to downtown? Ask a local for this information? Maybe I could just explore where I am right now. I’m anxious. There’s a cafe. Maybe I could sit there, get coffee and a pastry, settle a bit, get my bearings. Or should I just prioritize getting to the downtown district, as it was today’s agenda to get oriented to it? I can find a cafe once I’m there.

“Wait, I have a charger in my backpack. I grabbed it from the basket in the kitchen this morning. Woah, this isn’t a charger. It’s a vape. I must have grabbed it from the wrong basket. Ahh, that’s right, the layout of the kitchen here is different from back home. I’m not used to the new layout yet. Wait a minute, I don’t vape. This is my girlfriend’s? But she doesn’t vape. Has she been hiding it? But why would she hide it in plain sight? Who am I living with? Who am I in a relationship with?

“No! Pickpocket! That’s my vape! I mean that’s my girlfriend’s vape! I mean that’s the vape of someone I thought I knew but maybe I don’t!”

“Yeah, lot of pickpockets around here, friend,” says a friendly stranger. “You want to be aware of your environment.”

Orientation, in deregulation, is SUAVEN perception; or SUAVEN for short.

The word “orientation” (and “orienting,” “getting oriented,” “being oriented”) is also used to mean getting oriented to reality, such as illustrated in the above scenario. Other terms for getting oriented include getting settled in, situated in, sensitive to, adapted to,

used to, familiar with, mastering, e.g., mastering the layout of an environment or laws of a country, enabling you to navigate more efficiently and not get fined or jailed. Reality, following Ayn Rand here, includes anything and everything that exists, all existents (an existent is something that exists), e.g., the new country, your new school, job, the laws and culture in the new country, the language you're learning, which side of the road to drive on, what day is trash day, whether tipping is customary, etc.

SUAVEN is crucial to orienting in this broader sense of orienting to reality. The more SUAVEN you are, the better, and more easily and pleasurably you can orient to reality.

Let's look at orienting to reality.

18.1 SUAVEN and pleasure

Orienting to reality involves at least some degree of SUAVEN and pleasure.

At the train station area, when you look around you, if all you see is pickpockets, "everyone's out to get me," and all you feel as you see all this is fear, that is not orientation to reality and makes it harder to orient to reality.

Paying attention to what feels better is important for getting oriented. "Should I stop at a cafe now, get something to eat and drink, settle down, get my bearings, and then find my way downtown or home, or find my way downtown now, or should I just go home now?" Paying attention to your feelings, what feels better as you consider various things and as you act in various directions and with the option of changing direction, helps you orient to reality.

18.2 Grasping reality

Being oriented to reality involves having some minimal grasp of reality; being disoriented from reality involves having insufficient grasp.

"I'm a bird! I can fly!" And the person leaps off a cliff, thinking they'll fly, and falls to their death. (Whatever are the contributing causes of their disorientation, e.g., substances, mental illness, brainwashed by villain.)

18.3 Being mentally clear and focused

Being oriented to reality involves having some minimal level of mental clarity and focus; being disoriented from reality involves having insufficient level.

You're hung over. Your car spins out of control (say due to ice and rain). You just got off a rollercoaster. You're on some substance. Sensory overload at an event. You're very sleepy. Villain puts you in a room where everything is swirling. Aliens suddenly transport you to their wildly different planet in a wildly different galaxy. Villain frequently and drastically changes your environment.

You feel disoriented, e.g., confused, discombobulated, out of sorts, vertigo, dizzy, foggy, lightheaded. “What’s happening?” “Where am I?” “What’s going on?” “I’m out of sorts.”

18.4 Being rational

Being oriented to reality involves having some minimal level of rationality online.

Villain drugs you and puts you in a giant maze, with almost no light anywhere, where every wall and corner looks almost exactly the same, with loud scary noises, and scary looking things popping out at you unpredictably. The drugs make you feel disoriented (such as with the symptoms above, e.g., confused, etc.), and you’re terrified and “fight-flight-freezy.”

You’re trying your best to be rational; you’re trying to be as rational as you can, e.g., find your way out of the maze, observing what you can in the dark, remembering which turns you took and in what order, trying to notice any distinctive aspects of walls and corners to try to map what you can of the maze, trying to remain calm and not be distracted by the noises and things popping out at you, trying to keep your emotions in check, while at the same time trying to pay attention to some of your emotions for inklings that might help you get out of the maze, trying to focus despite confusion, fog, vertigo, dizziness, etc.

Being oriented is associated with being able to some degree to do at least some of those things; with your trying to do those things actually succeeding to some degree and with at least some of those things. By contrast, if you’re trying your best, but lying on the ground in a fetal position, frozen and terrified, that’s associated with not being oriented. (Which implies no moral judgment; actually, which implies positive moral judgment, since you’re trying your best to be rational (unfortunately, your capacity does not permit anything other than being frozen and terrified in fetal position)).

If trying to be rational is being rational, then being oriented involves being rational where there’s at least some minimal efficacy in regard to surviving in reality, e.g., you can walk and observe and make decisions about which way to turn.

If trying to be rational is insufficient for being rational, i.e., if being rational involves at least some minimal efficacy in regard to surviving in reality, then being oriented involves being rational. And being rational here involves some minimal grasp of reality and level of mental clarity and focus.

18.5 Finding your way

Orienting or getting oriented is associated with way finding. You’re getting oriented to your new school, where your classes are, where the cafeteria is, where the bus stops are, which bus to take to get to place X.

Being oriented involves achieving some minimal level of knowledge of how to find your way, by a standard determined by your needs, e.g., maybe there are parts of the school you don't need to know how to find your way through in.

18.6 Knowing where you are, where things are, and placing things in the world

Being oriented to reality involves knowing where you are, where things are, and placing yourself, things, and events in the world..

I'm in my room. I'm in city X, country Y. I'm at work. I'm at home. I'm in prison. I'm on an airplane. The nearest exit is there. The nearest restroom is there. I'm at Disneyland. The churros are over there. Downtown is over there. My son is to my left. My daughter is to my right. My phone is in my backpack. My ex is in jail, where he belongs. My left hand has a churro. My right hand has another churro. When was the last time I had a churro? Oh, yeah, I was at restaurant X. It was right next to a skating rink. I should start skating again. Oh, they're opening up a new rink just two miles south of me.

Being disoriented involves not knowing where you are, where things are, or being able to place yourself, things, and events in the world. "I feel so disoriented. My life right now is just hotel rooms and touring with this band. I often don't know or have only a foggy sense of what city and country I'm in, what hotel I'm in, what's nearby, etc."

18.7 Knowing time and placing things in time

Being oriented to reality involves having a sense of time, knowing what time it is, when things happened, are happening, will happen, their duration, placing things in time.

It's noon. Time for lunch. It's morning, afternoon, evening, late night, wee hours of the morning. It's Wednesday. It's the weekend. It's August. Fall is almost here. It's 2026. My son's recital is tomorrow. I got the vaccine last week; oh, wait, no, two weeks ago. My daughter graduates next June. The deadline for project X is coming up soon. I'd better leave now, or I'll be late. Task Y won't take long; I'll be ready by the time you arrive. No, you broke up with me after you learned I was pregnant, not before. What does it matter? It was twenty years ago. And I'm dying; I have about three months left; not going to waste any more time arguing with you.

Being disoriented involves not having a sense of time. What day is it? Everything is blending together. Touring musician. Gamer not leaving his room for a month. Little sense of how much time is passing, what time of day it is, what day it is.

18.8 Knowing your place in the world in a broad sense

Being oriented involves knowing your place in the world in a broad sense and functioning successfully; with your head being on straight in regard to your place in the world and functioning in it. Knowing your place here has a literal meaning; no connotation of minimizing yourself is implied.

I'm a mid-level manager. Such-and-such is what I do. These are my direct reports. These are the people I report to. I'm also a son, husband, and father and I do such-and-such things in connection with each of these roles. (Your place in the world here is assumed to be a result of your rational selfishness and continuing as things are, as opposed to making significant changes is assumed to be rationally selfish.)

Being disoriented involves being disoriented from your place in the world and functioning successfully. You meet a seductress on a business trip and continue an emotional affair; your attention is lost in the affair as you try to go about your place in the world; things are starting to fall apart in various parts of life, e.g., your job, relationships, your mental and emotional stability. (Again, assuming what is going on is not a rationally selfish process of discovering what you want or changing values.)

18.9 Adapting to reality

Adapting to reality here includes both adjusting to reality and changing reality; e.g., both getting used (adjusting) to long flights and creating flight technology that enables you to fly faster; with emphasis on the first, including the first as enabling more SUAVEN and pleasure, which enables you more efficiently to do the second.

Orienting to reality, for example, involves all the things you're trying to do in the opening scenario; and maybe you'll try to change the laws in your country.

Adapting to reality involves more access to SUAVEN and pleasure in adjusting to reality, changing reality, trying to adjust to reality, and trying to change reality.

Adapting to reality includes adapting to the present, the future, the novel, and the same; e.g., dealing with your present situation at the train station, saving for the future, adapting to the new country, culture, laws, etc., and adapting to grinding.

Adapting to reality involves being rational in adjusting, changing, trying to adjust, trying to change; which involves having all these as options to consider (in general); and involves experimentation, trial, error, and success.

What exactly is the difference between adjusting to reality and changing reality? Is decorating your place the first or the second? Reality includes your organism, which includes your consciousness. Is having more access to SUAVEN and pleasure—e.g., before, during, and/or after decorating—due to changes in your organism (what OI calls auto-organization) compared to your access to SUAVEN and pleasure without these changes, adjusting or changing?

Passing on those questions. Material point:. Adapting to reality involves SUAVEN and pleasure; SUAVEN and pleasure are signs of successful adapting.

Adapting to reality as I understand it may mean the same thing as orienting to reality. “Adaptation” may help some get onto orienting to reality. Advantages of “orientation” include keeping in mind SUAVEN and other things associated with “orientation,” e.g., having some grasp of reality, mental clarity, focus, rationality, orientation to place, time, place in the world, broadly; all of which are involved in adaptation.

18.10 Being practical

Being practical means doing what works for your happiness, and may be another way of referring to orienting to reality (like adaptation).

“I’m way overspending. I need to cut back.” “I never spend on anything fun. I save everything. Maybe I should start budgeting for pleasure.” “I can’t have that discussion right now. How about tomorrow at 7pm?” “I really like him, but he doesn’t want kids, and I do.” “No, that’s just a get rich quick scheme. Not worth my time to consider. Time to get back to studying.” “Why am I studying? Why do I want to become a doctor? Will it make me happy? These are important questions.” “Maybe I should just make a decision and buy the condo. All my friends have property; it just seems the natural thing to do to get property. Well, let me think about it further, not rush a decision.” These are examples of very practical thinking. You’re thinking rationally, aiming to act rationally, for your happiness.

Many people refer to being “grounded” to refer to being practical. “Practical” has the advantages of focusing on living (in the world) as opposed to focusing primarily on characterizing one’s interior state, of not connoting grounding regulation strategies, e.g., feel your feet on the floor, scan your body, which are less practical than SUAVEN and pleasure (more precisely, less practical than operating on the model of SUAVEN and pleasure, which can include doing strategies); of being more fundamental, orienting you philosophically towards living successfully in the world; and of connoting the enormous positives of capitalism, material prosperity, technology, production, consumption.

18.11 Living in reality is primary, not “internal coherence”

If you think you’re a bird and can fly and you jump off your roof and fall to the ground and break a leg, you need to grasp reality; grasp that you are not a bird and can’t fly; so that you can live, i.e., survive, in reality, i.e., so that you can live; living is living in reality.

Grasping and living in reality is more important than making your internal experience “coherent.” “Why wasn’t I able to fly successfully? Why did I fall to the ground? It must be because I need more practice. When I look at myself in the mirror,

why don't I see a bird with wings? This mirror must be defective. I'm scared of leaping off the roof again. I'll tell myself I'm a bird and can fly and I'm safe. Ah, I feel better, no longer scared. I'm a bird and can fly and feel safe, comfortable, settled, and great about this."

Grasping and living in reality is more important than resolving clashes between your thoughts and feelings, i.e., making your thoughts and feelings more "coherent" with each other, or "resonant" with each other, or "integrated" with each other, or "harmonious" with each other, or "appropriately responsive" to each other, or "attuned" to each other, or "congruent" with each other, or "aligned" with each other, or "consistent" with each other, or "tracking" each other.

"What does it mean for thoughts and feelings to clash?" is an important question, but for now, I'll run with how clashes are frequently and popularly understood.

If you think you're a bird and can fly, but you feel scared, doubtful, unsure, the priority is not to feel great (to feel what some would say is more "coherent" with believing you're a bird and can fly than feeling scared, etc.) but to grasp that you're not a bird.

Grasping reality may involve feeling great, i.e., SUAVEN and pleasure, which enables you to better observe reality and think objectively. But the point of feeling great here is to enable grasping reality, not to promote more internal "coherence" between believing you're a bird and can fly, and how you feel (supposing here that feeling great is more "coherent" with that belief than being scared). (Feeling great, i.e., pleasure, is also good for its own sake; but in this case since you're in danger of seriously harming yourself, grasping reality is priority.)

"I know it's safe to drive across that bridge and thousands of people do it daily, but I'm scared."

"Let's work on your internal coherence," says Coherence Chick. "Let's work on getting your feelings to be coherent with your knowing that the bridge is safe. Let's work on getting you to feel comfortable crossing that bridge."

If you never need to cross a bridge in your normal course of life, it's not selfish (in your rational self-interest) to address the fear. (If you could eliminate your fear of bridges by pressing a button that's available and right beside you at all times, sure; but in a realistic scenario, such as one in which trying to reduce the fear involves one or more of time, energy, effort, displeasure, money, it's not selfish.)

Depending on the wider context of your pursuit of happiness in the world, it may not be selfish to (try to) resolve a clash between your thoughts and feelings; especially if the clash never or almost never gets triggered, e.g., there are no bridges where you live, or clowns, etc.

Furthermore, the problem is displeasure, not lack of coherence between thoughts and feelings. The problem is not that your thought "the bridge is safe" and your fear are

“incoherent” with each other. The problem is that crossing bridges and the idea of crossing bridges is displeasurable to you.

And, again, how much of a problem it is, whether it rises to the level of being called a problem, depends on the wider context of your pursuit of happiness in the world. I prefer that my home be completely sparkling clean at all times; but it’s not a problem that it’s not. Whatever displeasure I may feel from my home not being completely sparkling clean is so tiny, and the pleasure I get from doing things other than looking around my home, e.g., playing piano, is so much greater than the pleasure of seeing a cleaner home (not even factoring in displeasure from cleaning), that my home’s not being sparkling clean doesn’t rise to the level of a problem.

Resolving clashes between your thoughts and feelings should serve your happiness. And the wider context of your pursuit of happiness in the world is relevant to whether to spend time and energy trying to resolve a certain clash and how much time and energy to spend and whether to do something else in a given moment.

Grasping and living in reality is more important than resolving clashes between thoughts and feelings.

Resolving clashes is beneficial within the broader context of prioritizing grasping reality. Is it safe to take vaccine X? Priority is to grasp the truth, within which yes better if you also feel comfortable, not scared; and again I suggested that the problem is displeasure, not that feeling scared clashes with “the vaccine is safe.”

18.12 What does it mean for your internal experience to be “congruent” with reality?

You’re meeting a guy for a coffee date this afternoon, in a couple hours.

You have a lot of intense internal experience right now, including fear, hatred, images, e.g., memories of men who hurt you in the past, and thoughts, e.g., “I hate men. Men are the worst. Men are evil. All men are rapists. The guy I’m about to meet is probably an abuser and cheater, like all men.”

A friend says, “Your internal experience—your thoughts, images, and feelings—isn’t congruent with reality. [Congruent, or coherent, or consistent, etc.; any of the words from the prior subsection.] You haven’t even met this guy yet and know nothing about him.”

A second friend says, “Your internal experience isn’t congruent with reality. Your organism is responding as if it’s in the past, e.g., as if you’re with the men who hurt you, not to the present.”

A third friend says, “Maybe some of your internal experience is congruent with reality and some not. Some level of nervousness is congruent. You’re meeting someone new, dating can be scary, and men in general are more dangerous than women, so it makes sense to be more alert around men than women. At the same time, the intense

fear and hatred you feel that's concomitant with memories of men who hurt you, isn't congruent."

A fourth friend says, "“Maybe some of your internal experience is congruent with reality and some not. Maybe your organism is partially responding to the present, e.g., new guy, don't know what's going to happen, men are in general more dangerous than women, some nervousness is congruent. And partially responding to the past, e.g., as if you're with the men who hurt you.”"

One thing your friends may mean by your internal experience being congruent with reality is having thoughts that you know are true, i.e., that grasp reality. E.g., 'He's a nice guy,' you observe as you interact with him, as opposed to being hostaged by, e.g., "You're an abuser. You're my ex. You're all my exes. You're like all other men. If you appear to be nice, it's just performance."

Grasping reality is highly desirable and beneficial, e.g., good to know you're not a bird and can't fly, good to know someone is nice or mean, etc. Knowledge is tremendously important for your happiness.

Feelings and images can also be part of grasping reality. You're a juror and you have a feeling that the defendant is guilty and you have an image of the defendant murdering the victim. That you feel that he's guilty, or have an image of his murdering the victim, or have the thought that he's guilty doesn't prove or evidence his guilt; doesn't constitute a grasp of reality; but paying attention to your inklings (feelings, images, thoughts) can be part of grasping reality. E.g., as you pay attention to the image, you get the idea of revisiting a certain piece of evidence.

If your thoughts, feelings, and images make you more likely to not grasp reality, e.g., make you more likely to believe your date is an abuser when there's no evidence of that and a lot of contrary evidence, arguably you could say your thoughts, feelings, and images are incongruent with reality.

A reason not to do so is that you may not believe your thoughts, feelings, or images. "He's an abuser," fear, and images of his abusing you haunt you, but you don't believe them; and you're trying to not let them sabotage your attempt to get to know your coffee date.

Another reason is that your thoughts, feelings, and images are part of reality, of everything that exists, along with the rest of your organism, e.g., arms, legs, and along with the rest of reality, e.g., the furniture in your room, distant galaxies, and reality is congruent with itself. Reality is what it is. Reality is.

You could say certain thoughts, feelings, and images harm you and make your pursuit of happiness and grasping reality harder and more unpleasant, just as a physical illness can do so, and you could alternatively describe harm as being incongruent with your pursuit of happiness and grasping reality, but at the same time the thoughts,

feelings, images, and your physical illness are congruent with reality in that they are part of reality; they exist.