



Soul-Searching Life-Planning: Refreshing Your Professing Pathways to Embedding Professional Resilience

Part 3 of 4: Living an Undivided Life: Are you feeling conflicted, torn, out-of-alignment?

The upcoming CIP 2018 National Conference in Winnipeg, on the theme of *Soul*, is providing an opportunity for revisiting related aspects of the CIP 2017 conference in Calgary, when the theme was *Building Resilience*. As a College of Fellows panelist then I was inspired to explore the connection between ‘life-planning’ and ‘professional-self design’. The overall framing of [my 2017 panel offering](#) reflected an interest in insights from the application of Theory U, an awareness-based social learning technology, dealing with themes such as absencing and presencing (See Part 1 of 4). In this series I am highlighting the ‘life-planning’ foundation via three themes rooted in ‘soul-searching’ – to refresh one’s professing. The current offering, **Living an Undivided Life**, asks: Are you feeling conflicted, torn, out-of-alignment?

The work of Parker Palmer, especially in his book, *A Hidden Wholeness*, reveals the importance, if not imperative, of living an undivided life. The book title is from Thomas Merton: “... there is in all things... a hidden wholeness”. Parker Palmer is clearly attracted to this notion - but... :

‘But back in the human world (rather than in ‘the wilds’)... Merton’s words can, at times, sound like wishful thinking. Afraid that our inner light will be extinguished or our inner darkness exposed, we hide our true identities from each other. In the process we become separated from our own souls. We end up living divided lives, so far from the truth we hold within that we cannot know the “integrity that comes from being what you are”.’ (Palmer, 2004, 4)

The ‘division’ in question is – broadly – between manifesting a smaller, or ‘false’, form of your ‘self’, in contrast to your ‘True Self’. This can be rendered as the contrast between your ‘calculating’ self, and your ‘central’ self (Zander and Zander, 2000); as your ego/egoic-self at work, rather than your soul-self - at your core, the core of ‘you’, in your essence. How might this division manifest in you?

“... To cite just a few examples, it is the life we lead when: We refuse to invest ourselves in our work, diminishing its quality and distancing ourselves from those it is meant to serve; We make our living at jobs that violate our basic values, even when survival does not absolutely demand it; We remain in settings or relationships that steadily kill off our spirits; We harbour secrets to achieve personal gain at the expense of other people; We hide our beliefs from those who disagree with us to avoid conflict, challenge, and change; We conceal our true identities for fear of being criticized, shunned, or attacked” (Palmer, 2004, 6)

The ‘division’ needs to be dissolved, in a conscious ‘uniting’ or ‘unioning’ practice, an aligning – especially, in a professional context - of ‘soul and role’. The aligning entails an optimizing of one’s integrity and authenticity, especially in your dealings, your relationships, with others – in our case, especially, professional colleagues. For Parker Palmer this is territory ‘beyond ethics’; for myself (Wight 2011; 2013) it is in the realm of ‘ethos’, inter-personal, shared ‘praxis’ – a form of collective presencing, or **co-presencing**.

Ethos-making is where one’s integrity and authenticity is ‘outed’, in the company of trusted fellow professionals – sharing some affinity and vicinity. It features an effort to align/to join ‘soul and role’ with any division tendencies dissolved in a concern to embody integrity, to optimize one’s (inside) integrated-ness and (outside) integration-ability. As with praxis-making, ethos-making is fundamentally about ‘whole-making’... surfacing the pursuit of wholeness. Resilience – and much more besides – is presenced, or, more accurately, co-presenced.

Three ‘divides’ feature as the problem-setting for applying U-Theory: the Ecological Divide (between self and nature); the Social Divide (between self and other); and the Spiritual Divide (between self and Self) (See Figure 1).

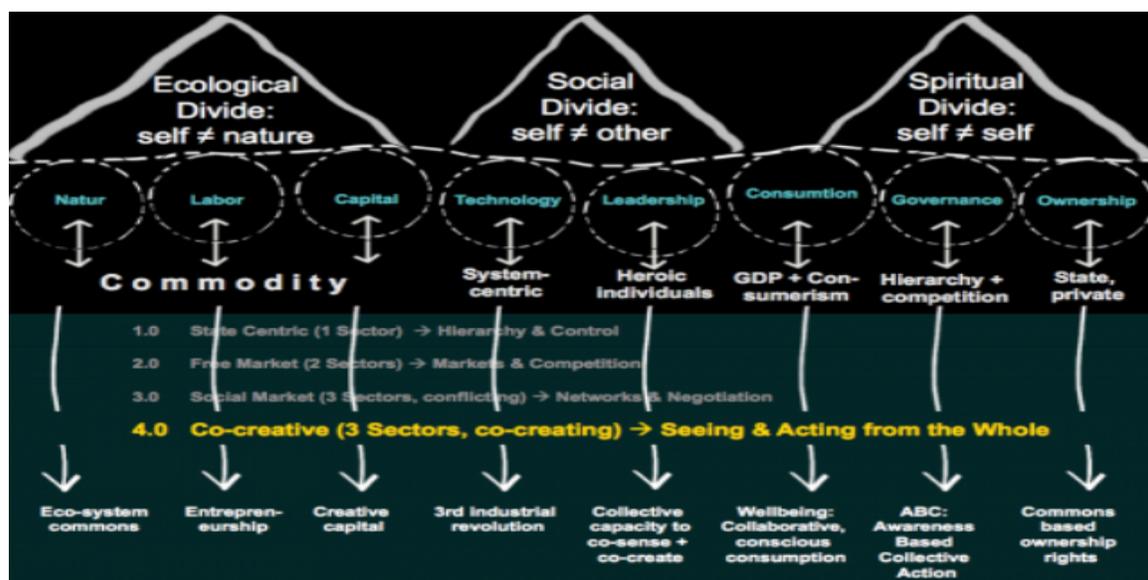
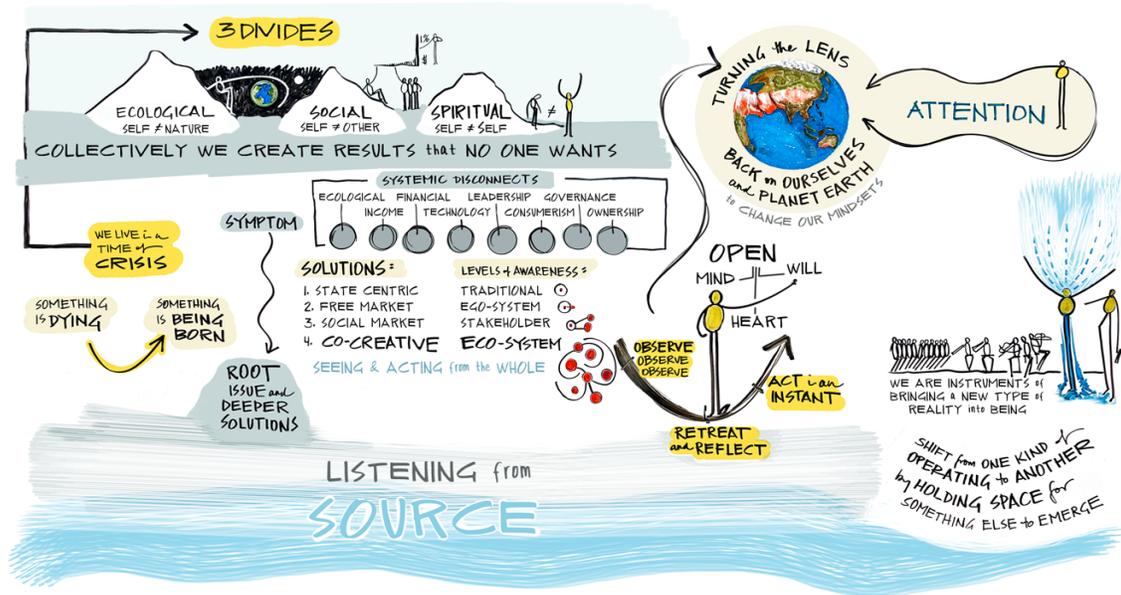


Figure 1 : U Theory – The Three Divides

These three major ‘divides’ help to articulate several ‘acupuncture’ points, for transformative innovation, targeting system-change to ‘4.0 Co Creative’ (The diagram above relates to the system context of ‘capitalism’). The ‘bottom-line’ reflects the operative ‘future consciousness’, in terms of the framing ‘leading from the emerging future’.

Journeying ‘around the U’ (see example below) can help expose the divides, and the dividing, but in a way that transforms them from zones of absencing to zones of presencing.



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The Spiritual Divide may be viewed as transcending, while including, the other two divides. It best reflects the divide that most concerns Parker Palmer – but U Theory, and ‘presencing’ helps to tease out pathways for intervention/action – clarifying intentions, to be attended to. One’s consciousness is implicated – big-time; ‘the conscious professional’ is being called to presence.

NB Neil Seligman furnishes lines of support for such inner work:

- <http://www.theconsciousprofessional.com/> including: ‘The Nature of Presence’ (Practicing Presence, Presence and Nature, The Inner Voice)
- <http://www.theconsciousprofessional.com/library/articles/the-nature-of-presence/>
- ‘The Conscious Professional Way’ (Integrity, Alignment, Authenticity)
- <http://www.theconsciousprofessional.com/library/articles/the-conscious-professional-way/> and ‘The Conscious Approach to Spiritual Enquiry’ (The Big Questions, Truth, Self-knowledge)
- <http://www.theconsciousprofessional.com/library/articles/spiritual-enquiry/>

References:

Palmer, Parker J. (2004) *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (Welcoming the soul and weaving community in a wounded world). Jossey-Bass

Wight, Ian (2011) 'From Codified Ethics to Co-Created Ethos: Staking Common Ground in Uncertain Times'. *Plan Canada*, Winter 2011, 32-35
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291678940_From_codified_ethics_to_co-created_ethos_Staking_common_ground_in_uncertain_times

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https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317503569_Praxis_Ethos_Poiesis_-_The_Makings_of_Professionals_An_Elephant_of_a_Professional-Self_Design_Project

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https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289073537_Exploring_inter-being_and_inter-becoming_as_ethos-making_The_integrally_informed_pursuit_of_professional_community_well-being

Zander, Rosamund Stone and Benjamin Zander (2000) *The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life*. Penguin Books/Harvard Business School Press.