

Ultimate Between-ness
by Bart Marshall

[The following is an expanded version of notes used for a workshop given at the September 2007 TAT Conference, "What are You Becoming?" The workshop, entitled "Aligning Will and Destiny: The Effect of Intent and Between-ness on the Manifesting Mind," was presented to small groups in separate sessions.]

The question this weekend invites us to ask is, "What am I becoming?" It's a good question, a good seed for self inquiry, but as with any question or statement, we should look at the assumptions it's based on before we address it on the level of content or meaning. In this case there are two key ideas to examine. One is contained in the word "I," which of course invites the question, "What is 'I'?" The other is the concept of "becoming," which implies a movement or evolution from one state to another.

The highest teachings tell us that the concept of "I" is a false idea, a mis-identification that vanishes in the moment of Awakening, and that the universe this false "I" experiences is but a *seeming*, a mirage, a dream playing out in the timeless, changeless *presence* of pure Awareness. And *You* are That. You are pure Awareness. You are already and always All That Is. What could you possibly become?

So in the realm of who you *really* are, the idea of movement or evolution has no meaning. Any ideas of becoming must therefore necessarily take place within the illusion, and be experienced by the false "I," the dream character.

But false or not, this dream character is complex beyond imagination, and has a tremendous desire to improve its lot and "become" more than it perceives itself to be. It wants to become successful, admired, courageous, rich, happy... Sometimes it even wants to become "enlightened"—to "know" Truth first hand.

But how much, if any, control does this vague collection of thoughts we call "I" have over its dream life? Is the dream mechanism rigid and fixed, or is it possible for the dream character to bend it to its will?

There are two main things I think are worth studying. One is how to wake up from this dream we call life. The other is how to get what you want within it. As it happens, the formula for both is the same.

It's a formula you might say for aligning will and destiny. By will we mean the personal will, the ego will that says, "I want this, I don't want that," and so on.

By destiny we mean the sense we have that life and events unfold according to some higher will or imperative—call it God’s will, predetermination, karma or whatever—that seems to operate with almost total disregard to personal will. Or does it?

What we’re going to do today is experiment with a certain way of *holding your head* so that your desires become manifest in your life experience. Richard Rose referred to this as *between-ness*, which is as good a term as I’ve heard for it. Rose sometimes spoke of between-ness as living “without fear of failure or hope of gain,” which in a way says it all, but we’ve got 90 minutes to fill here, so we can’t just leave it at that.

Between-ness can be used to get anything a person wants in life, from the most mundane to the most exalted. As an experiment, Rose even used it when playing poker to get the cards he wanted dealt to him. He also taught that between-ness could and should be employed as a means to Self-realization. Used in this way he referred to it as *ultimate between-ness*.

I never really understood the concept of ultimate between-ness, and as a seeker I never consciously employed it. But as some of you know, three years ago I had a realization experience that ended my seeking, and in the time since then I’ve come to the conclusion that what finally did the trick was that somehow I stumbled into a state of ultimate between-ness, and that this state proved irresistible to Grace.

Which is not to say that in any way I caused it to happen. Realization is always an accident, a gift that has nothing to do with worthiness or effort. And yet it seems there is not a total disconnect between desire and actuality. In fact just the opposite. An intense, unconflicted desire for Truth may be the single most important aspect of the spiritual path.

Between-ness is a unified state that is impossible to describe without breaking it down into composite elements that can be talked about individually, but it is much more than the sum of these elements—and also much simpler than it seems when we dissect and describe it—so don’t get lost in details. What we’re after today is to get a taste of a complete *way of being* that we’ll call between-ness.

Mostly I’d like to focus on the practical aspects—how to feel what it is, how to live it in daily life. But if we have time we can also touch on the mechanics of it—what’s going on behind the curtain, so to speak.

As we talk about the various aspects of this mechanism, it will be helpful to have a specific desire in mind to work with rather than trying to retain the principles

in the abstract, so let's do that now. Pick a desire you want fulfilled. It can be anything—a specific object, money, health, lover, Truth, anything.

Some of you may have a burning desire on the tip of your tongue, others may not be so sure. Regardless, let's take a few minutes to sit quietly and ask: "What do I really want right now?" This is not an invitation to choose a deeper or more esoteric desire, although that may happen. The important thing here, as in all self inquiry, is honesty. Pick something that has real juice for you. Pick something that seems out of reach at the moment, but not out of the realm of possibility. Something you have the capacity to receive.

As you ask, "What do I really want?" fully expect to get an answer. Wait for it. And as you listen for an answer be aware of your mental state, the *expectant stillness*. Bob Ferguson calls this the *listening attention*. It's a good thing to practice.

Also, as a desire surfaces, think about whether it may be a symptom or example of a deeper desire—whether there is a more basic underlying desire, or perhaps a bigger meta-desire that better expresses what you really want.

Now write down your desire as a complete sentence starting with the word "I."

The four elements of between-ness we'll look at today are: Intention, Confidence, Gratitude and Indifference.

Intention

The first order of business in fulfilling your desires is to know what you want and ask for it. When Rose was experimenting with between-ness playing poker, he always said out loud what card he wanted. "Steinie, deal me a jack," he'd say, and Steinie would deal him a jack.

So let's hear what you want. [*Everyone speaks their desire out loud.*]

Now let's refine the wording. The first thing I'd like you to do is use the word "intend" instead of "want" in the sentence, and change the grammar to make it work. Notice that your desire immediately shifts into a higher gear. I can say "I want to be rich" for years and never feel moved to do anything about it. But saying "I intend to be rich" implies a commitment, charts a course. Do you dare intend to have your deepest desire fulfilled?

But it's also important to edit out of your intention any implication that the fulfillment of it is *up to you*. In other words, rather than say "I intend to earn a million dollars next year," say something like, "I intend that a million dollars

come into my life next year.” This does not mean that you should do nothing to help it along, but it places the emphasis properly. It acknowledges a higher power and puts the heat on that higher power to come through with the goods.

This may be a good point to address the aspect of *action*. Setting aside for a moment the question of whether or not our actions actually cause things to happen, it is important to note that at the very least, our actions influence our thoughts, our *way of being*, and so should be consistent with our deepest intentions and desires. All the horses should be pulling in the same direction.

Next let’s get rid of any vagueness in your intention. Make it precise, specific. Make the meaning unavoidably clear, unequivocal. No wiggle room or caveats. Make it direct, simply stated—a mantra not a dissertation. If you get the wording exactly right on a deeply felt desire, it might give you a chill or emotional reaction, maybe even scare you. That’s a good sign, a sign you’re getting close to the bone.

Okay let’s read them again. [*Everyone speaks their revised intention and they are discussed individually.*]

Some common things to look for in streamlining your intention include hidden negatives and constricting prescriptions. For instance, in an earlier session today someone’s intention was “I intend to experience loss gracefully.” While that may be a noble sentiment and a valuable practice, it is not a good intention because it contains a hidden negative. In order for that desire to be fulfilled, loss must continually be introduced into that person’s life.

Constricting prescriptions in an intention can be very subtle. For example, someone said they intended to double their salary. But that has the hidden prescription of having the money come via *salary*, which implies a job (which in this case he disliked). What he really wants is twice as much *income*—no matter where it comes from.

The entity or force we are addressing with our intentions—call it God, Higher Self, Universe, whatever—is very literal. Be sure to ask for exactly what you want, with no room for misunderstanding. This, of course, requires that *you* know exactly what you want, which is really the essence of it.

Another intention—a common one in the TAT environment—is the intention to “awaken,” “become enlightened,” “have a realization,” “know Truth,” “get a final answer”... It’s an especially tough one to word effectively because, unlike intending to have more money or better health, with this one we have no idea what we are really asking for, or how it relates to the “I” who is asking. But if we

get it right, if we intend this with power and immediacy in a way that speaks to our deepest yearnings, we may feel it as if for the first time—no matter how long we've been at this thing. In one of our earlier sessions this happened for a long-time seeker, who began to weep as he heard himself speak it out loud in no uncertain terms.

Okay, so now you have a clearly stated desire or intention. At this point you need to look at whatever might be countermanding your desire. This requires more time for introspection than we have in this setting, but on your own, think deeply about the roadblocks you yourself have set up to prevent the fulfillment of your intention.

The thing is, you are right now getting exactly what you want in life whether it seems like it or not. We all have hundreds of desires, large and small, most of them in conflict with each other in one way or another. Plus we have a whole set of fears (which are really just desires felt in the negative—and vice versa) thrown into the mix. And so, given this morass of cross-collateralized, conflicting fears and desires, the Universe is generating the only life experience that resolves and incorporates them all to the degree each is felt.

This is the source of your “destiny.” On the one hand it has tremendous, seemingly insurmountable momentum and we feel helpless in its grasp. On the other, we notice it seems to respond to even small changes in the fear/desire mix.

And so in order to alter or streamline destiny by force of desire, of will, you need to not only have a focused intention, but to see clearly what you are doing to sabotage yourself and prevent it from happening.

Confidence

Which brings us to the second element of between-ness: *confidence*. A couple of other words that are just as good or better for this are *faith* and *certainty*. They all point to the same thing. If you harbor secret doubts about your worthiness to receive or ability to handle it when your desires manifest, it will slow things down to the degree of that doubt. If, on the other hand you have 100% confidence, 100% faith that your desire is going to manifest, then it's full speed ahead. The message here is, don't just hope you get what you want, be certain it is coming. Your attitude should be that once you intend it, it's a done deal. Case closed. It's on the way.

So intention and faith go hand in hand. Together they are like the good seed. Gratitude and indifference make up the fertile ground.

Gratitude

To live in a state of gratitude is not always an easy thing, but there is no more powerful practice for getting what you want from the “Universe.” In keeping with the occult dictum, “As above, so below,” the principle involved is easily observed on the human level. To whom would you rather give a new toy, a child who always thanks you and loves everything you give him, or a child who looks at everything with disdain and always wants something different?

In the practice of between-ness we feel gratitude on two levels. One is tied to the faith we have that we are in the process of getting what we ask for. We are so confident it is on the way that we’re already grateful for it.

The other is an immense gratitude for our life, the world and everything in it *just as it is*. This doesn’t mean we necessarily go around being consciously thankful all the time, even though that’s a good practice. When you see beauty in “ordinary” things, notice a small kindness, experience love, joy, or a sense of connectedness—these include unspoken expressions of gratitude. The opposite is to live in a state of constant worry and complaint, which unfortunately is all too common.

So, we can begin to see what an incredible internal balancing act we are talking about with between-ness. On the one hand we are dissatisfied enough with our current state that we have an intense yearning, a powerful intention to improve it. While at the same time we feel overwhelmingly blessed to be experiencing things just as they are.

You could call this “dissatisfaction without complaint.” It is okay to want more, to want things to be better. But that’s no reason to piss and moan about your life as it is, or to engage in recreational worry about all the bad things that could happen. For one thing, it’s unnecessary wear and tear on the body, but more to the point, it’s counterproductive to the fulfillment of your desires.

Indifference

In the confluence of desire and gratitude there is a quiet spot untouched by either—an island of high indifference. Desire and gratitude flow by but you remain unmoved. It is a place where you honest-to-God don’t care. A place untouched by anything this world has dished out or offered. A place where you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that none of it matters anyway. You could also call this *acceptance* or *surrender*. There is not even a thought of desiring or being grateful. Intention and gratitude run in the background while the mind is clear and indifferent to outcome.

Intention, confidence, gratitude, indifference. Between-ness. If I were to recommend one thing to study, practice and master in life it would be this. Whether you want to be rich or enlightened or both, this is where your efforts are best spent.

A true master of between-ness can manifest very quickly, and people call it a miracle. Jesus was a master of between-ness. All the *siddhis*, the powers, listed in the *Yoga Sutras* are examples of what can be accomplished by mastering between-ness. Patanjali called it “making *samyama*.” But everything is equally miraculous. It is only when something crosses a certain threshold of speed or credulity that we acknowledge it as a miracle.

An unconflicted intention with no countermanding beliefs, given 100% attention in a state of between-ness will manifest immediately. Truly, you can move mountains.

The Playing Field

If what we are saying here is true—and the highest teachings all report that it is—then we must ask ourselves, “What is the nature of a reality that operates on, and supports such magic?” I mean, we are talking about spontaneous creation, creation “on demand.” To say the least this is inconsistent with what we’ve been taught to believe—that we are born into a vast pre-existing universe of separate solid objects that have evolved to their present state over billions of years.

Again it is the teachings of the masters that provide the best source of information on how we should think about this, where we should look for the truth about Creation. In the first verse of the *Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tsu tells us:

*That which can be perceived is not the timeless That.
That which can be named is not the nameless One.*

*The source of heaven and earth is without form or substance.
Naming creates the ten thousand things.*

*When desire is absent, the mystery is obvious.
When desire occurs, creation unfolds.*

*Mystery and creation arise from the same source.
The source is emptiness.
Void within void.
The realm of Tao.*

Over and again in all the highest teachings we are told that what we are experiencing is not a “real” world of separate solid objects, but a virtual world transpiring in appearance only. All of this—the world, the universe, all appearances—has no substance whatever. None.

Or, you could say it has the substance of *thought*—which has no substance-- because it *is* thought. This is why and how your thoughts create your world. They are one and the same thing. There is no difference between a thought and an “object.” They are made of the same stuff, which is no-stuff. All experience is thought-experience. Nothing is actually happening.

Rose sometimes spoke of this Totality as being *Mind*. To talk about it he divided Mind into three aspects—but it exists as a singularity, *Mind*. The three aspects are Manifested Mind, Unmanifested Mind and Manifesting Mind.

Manifested Mind is everything you “experience” as life, as the world--including *yourself*. It is mind-stuff made perceivable by the body and senses—which are also just mind-stuff. In terms of your immediate experience, Manifested Mind is what you perceive to be “before” you right now--everything you see, hear, think, believe... Everything. But as Lao Tsu says, *That which can be perceived is not the timeless That*.

The “timeless That” is Unmanifested Mind. It is Source, Void, Emptiness, Absolute, No-thing. In terms of your immediate experience it is “behind” you. The “back of your head” is blown wide open to the Absolute, the Source, the Unknowable. It is that close.

What “projects” appearances *in* Source is Manifesting Mind. In terms of your immediate experience, this is located at ground zero of your experience of “Here.” You could say it is behind the eyes, or deep in the heart, or wherever it is that you experience “I Am.” This is Manifesting Mind—the light, the projector.

Everything you seek is *Here*, at no distance from *You*. *You* are the Source of All. *All That Is* is happening right now, right where *You* are and nowhere else. *You* are the One Awareness. There is no other.

But how is it possible for a dream character to “know” this? How can it witness its own non-existence? It is an unanswerable question, a question that has importance only in the dream. All that is important to know is that, inexplicably, somehow it *is* possible, and that nothing separates the dream character from this realization other than its own refusal to *See* what eternally stares it in the “face.”

In the three years since this happened for me, people have asked what I think is the key, what I would recommend as a practice and so on. I have heard myself say any number of things in response, not all of them consistent with each other—at least not on the level of words. Partly this is because my responses are specific to the person asking and to what “comes up” in the moment, but mostly it’s because I have no idea what works. Nothing “works.” Each person’s path is absolutely unique—though what is “found” is always the same. Nothing we “do” as dream-character seekers can possibly cause Realization. The mechanism is just not in place for that.

A few weeks ago, however, someone replied to an email I had sent in a previous exchange, asking some questions about what I’d said. And as I read again what I’d written, I realized that it came as close to what I believe about “success” in the spiritual search as I have yet been able to articulate:

“I think the key is intent. If a seeker's intent is to become the Truth at all costs, then it will happen. All the reading and practices we involve ourselves with are useful only to the extent that they build intent. If a burning desire for enlightenment is not present, no amount of meditation and practices will help. If it is present, no meditation or practices are necessary. Paradoxically, this burning desire for Truth can't be a reaction against a life we object to and are dissatisfied with. It must be in conjunction with an immense gratitude for what we have been given, with a "surrender" that asks for no divine rescue or special mercies. When a person who wants Truth more than life falls in love with what is, it happens.”