The Way Forward
Beyond The Dysfunctions
Of Modern Culture

Part 3: Adept at the
New Strategy for Success

Dr Robert Gilman – November 30, 2021
The Stoa’s Philosopher in Residence series
The Way Forward with 3 New Capacities

- Savvy about psychodynamics
- Skillful with diverse modes of cognition
- Adept at the new strategy for success
Contrasting Strategies For Success

Old: Enforce the domination over self, others and nature

New: Embody the harmony within, with others and with nature
## Contrasting Strategies For Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Domination</th>
<th>Harmony</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Success</strong> =</td>
<td>winning power struggles</td>
<td>living the 3 harmonies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td>fear</td>
<td>love and creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fit in today’s context</strong></td>
<td>declining</td>
<td>rising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
<td>familiarity, long history, woven into institutions</td>
<td>relevance to the present and the future</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ANS Zone</strong></td>
<td>Defensive Zone</td>
<td>Optimal Zone</td>
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</table>
Contrasting Strategies For Success

**Optimal Zone**
- flow/create
- connect
- mellow

**Defensive Zone**
- worry
- freeze

**Sympathetic Dominant**
- fight/flight

**Dorsal Vagus Dominant**
- rest & digest
- shutdown
Enforce the 3 Dominations

- All over the world for thousands of years
Enforce the 3 Dominations
Enforce the 3 Dominations

• All over the world for thousands of years

• Continues as the frequent strategy for worldly success in many cultures

• Built on willpower

• Treats “the other” as an exploitable object

• Works in a loosely-connected world where the “winners” can separate themselves from the consequences for the “losers”
Embody the 3 Harmonies

“Embracing the 3 Harmonies”
vimeo.com/425333448

- As a constellation of ideas
- As a vision
- As a practice
- As a tool
Embody the 3 Harmonies

- Partial precursors in moral systems
- New as a whole and in its details
- Win-win-win in place of win-lose
- Uses mind, heart and will in a mutually-supportive combination
- Treats “the other” as a territory worthy of empathy and respect
- Smart in today’s highly connected world
We’re In A Different World

Billions of People:
- 14,000 - 12,000
- 10,000 - 8,000
- 6,000 - 4,000
- 2,000 - 0
- 2,000 - 4,000
- 6,000 - 8,000
- 12,000 - 14,000

Year:
- -14,000
- -12,000
- -10,000
- -8,000
- -6,000
- -4,000
- -2,000
- 0
- 1
- 2,000

Earth's "Business As Usual" Carrying Capacity

Ecologically Full Earth, Communications Small World

Farming

First Cities

Renaissance

Rome
Adept At The New Strategy

• Three levels: yourself, groups and culture
## Three Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embody the harmony</th>
<th>within</th>
<th>with others</th>
<th>with nature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>for yourself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>in small groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>to benefit the culture</td>
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</table>
Adept At The New Strategy

• Three levels: yourself, groups and culture
  ✴ How the old strategy works
  ✴ Ways the old strategy doesn’t work
  ✴ What’s different now
  ✴ The new strategy
For Yourself
Self: How The Old Strategy Works

Enforce the domination over self

• oriented to a life of power struggles

• accentuates qualities that go with the "fight" response, turns them into habits
  * focus, self-discipline
  * suppression of feelings and empathy

• makes the conscious will the ruler of your life

• success = capacity to win power struggles
Self: Ways It Doesn’t Work

- locks you into your Defensive Zone
- cuts you off from Optimal Zone qualities like creativity, compassion and joy
- narrows the mind and cuts you off from the wisdom of the heart and the body
- exhausts the body
Self: What’s Different Now

• Better understanding of psychodynamics allows us to work with our full complexity rather than attempting to control it
  * neuroscience, trauma healing therapies, wisdom traditions

• Life in a highly interconnected world requires Optimal Zone skills
  * creativity, collaboration, compassion

• Focus, self-discipline, courage are also part of the Optimal Zone toolkit
Self: The New Strategy

Embody the 3 Harmonies for yourself through

- Optimal Zone living
- Optimal Zone resilience
- Defusing your emotional landmines
- Updating your beliefs
- Learning new skills
Self: Pathways To Healing

Character Style

Defensive Patterns
- Triggered Defenses
- Anticipatory Defenses
- Workaround Behaviors

Emotional Landmines
Limiting Beliefs
Missing Skills

Developmental Trauma
Self: Optimal Zone Resilience

Optimal Zone

Defensive Zone

level of threat

ventral vagal activation

B

1

A

2
Self: Neurological Reset

“In this moment, I am physically safe”

Gentle self-hug

Three times…

Lift your cheeks, wiggle your nose

Breathe comfortably in through your nose

Breathe out, more slowly, through your mouth
Self: Emotional Brain Training

For landmines, beliefs and skills
Self: Emotional Brain Training

Optimal Zone Boosters
* Take a deep breath
* Gently lift your posture
* Warmly observe yourself

Situation
* The situation is …
* What I’m most stressed about is …

Intensity
* I feel angry that …
* I can’t stand it that …
* I HATE it that …

Transition
* I feel sad that …
* I feel afraid that …
* I feel guilty that …

Expansion
* I feel grateful that …
* I feel happy that …
* I feel secure that …
* I feel proud that …

Memory Reconsolidation
In Small Groups
Groups: How The Old Way Works

Enforce the domination over others
Groups: How The Old Strategy Works

- Resources concentrated at the top
- Command and control from the top
- Patronage and violence distributed down
- Depends on low mobility, limited horizontal communications
- Success = establishing and maintaining control and concentration of resources
Groups: Ways It Doesn’t Work

- Often traumatizing for everyone
- Makes poor use of the distributed intelligence in the group
- Suppresses creativity and commitment
Groups: What’s different now

- Literacy, education and quality of life are higher
- Peer-to-peer communication is easier
- Mobility is easier
- Optimal Zone qualities are more valuable
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Literacy Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>85%</td>
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ourworldindata.org
% of World Population in Extreme Poverty

![Graph showing the percentage of world population in extreme poverty from 1820 to 2020. The data shows a significant decrease from 94% in 1820 to 10% in 2020.](ourworldindata.org)
Groups: The New Strategy

Embody the 3 Harmonies in groups through

- Shared Optimal Zone living
- Group Optimal Zone resilience
- Group creativity supported by diverse modes of cognition
- The synergy of agency and alignment
Groups: Optimal Zone Resilience

- Share Optimal Zone concepts in the group
- Share simple practices like the Neurological Reset
- Practice Optimal Zone first aid *before* the group needs it
- Use it when someone gets triggered
Groups: Support Creativity

- Become skillful with design thinking
- Support design thinking with visual and kinesthetic thinking
- Expand creativity with Optimal Zone intuition and somatic awareness
Groups: Synergy of Agency and Alignment

- Create a community of mutual support and open communication
- Align around shared vision and intention
- If needed, create a nested hierarchy of visions
- Trust people to do their best once they are aligned with the vision and understand where their piece fits in the whole
New work groups that …

• embody the 3 Harmonies

• with the help of the 3 Capacities
  * Savvy about psychodynamics
  * Skillful with diverse modes of cognition
  * Adept at the new strategy for success

• to become wonderful and unusually productive places to work
To Benefit The Culture
Culture: How The Old Strategy Works

Enforce the domination over others and nature

- Grab the center of power
- Impose your will
- Success = being a ruler
• Cultures are complex adaptive systems, not machines
• Power-grabs create a lot of trauma and provoke ongoing resistance
• A lot of energy goes into ongoing power struggles
Culture: What’s Different Now

- All of the differences noted for “you” and “groups”
- Higher level of interdependence among societies and with nature
Culture: What’s Different Now

- World Biocapacity
- Food, Fiber & Timber
- Built

“Full Earth” Approx. 1970

CO₂ from fossil fuels

2050

2000

1950

1900

Approx. 1970

2020

2000

1980

1960

1940

1920

1900

Number of Earths Required

Year
Culture: The New Strategy

Help the culture embody the 3 Harmonies through

- Being a Cultural Co-Evolver
- Innovating-Implementing-Communicating
- Being savvy about the psychodynamics of the people you are communicating with
- Using diverse modes of cognition in your communications
- Focusing your efforts strategically
Culture: Being a Co-Evolver

• Understand culture as an evolving Complex Adaptive System – work with it

• Have a clear sense of direction, a compass; don't fixate on outcomes

• Prototype and iterate
“You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.” - R. Buckminster Fuller
Culture: Innovate-Implement-Communicate

Diffusion of Innovations

- Innovators
- Early Adopters
- Mainstreamers
- Laggards

Time

Extent of Adoption

Ideas → Examples
Culture: Innovate-Implement-Communicate

Understand the layers of motivation in your audience

Find the resonant modes of cognition to connect with them
Culture: Innovate-Implement-Communicate

Use the strategy of water – flow around the rocks

Voluntary adoption lasts longer and generates less resistance
Culture: Be Strategic

Something you care about

Something you can affect

Something that spreads the 3 Harmonies
Culture: Be Strategic

- Experimentation
- Pilot Projects
- Support-system Building
- Popularization
- Electoral Politics
- Regulation (if need be)
Adept Take-Aways

Embody the 3 Harmonies for yourself through

- Optimal Zone living
- Optimal Zone resilience
- Defusing your emotional landmines
- Updating your beliefs
- Learning new skills
Adept Take-Aways

Embody the 3 Harmonies in groups through

- Shared Optimal Zone living
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Adept Take-Aways

Help the culture embody the 3 Harmonies through

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• Using diverse modes of cognition in your communications
• Focusing your efforts strategically
Coming Up

• Weaving the threads of the 3 capacities (Dec 7)
Want To Go Deeper?

Next Bright Future Now

Jan 8 - Mar 5, 2022

One (!) space still available

Registration ends Dec 18

context.org
Thank you!