

The Great Simplification

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[00:00:00] **John Churchill:** Our culture is suffering from a lack of developmental education. We need to learn how to calm down and structure our nervous system, and there's a bunch of practices for that. But we also need to learn to shift our identity to start operating from a deeper level of identity. So the wisdom side of it is recognizing that, and then the love part of that is the experience of the intimacy and the tenderness of knowing that you are non-dual with the whole of reality.

[00:00:27] So the developmental journey, that is a deepening of the wisdom, of the perspective-taking that deepens the experience of love

[00:00:41] **Nate Hagens:** Today I'm pleased to welcome clinical psychologist and meditation practitioner John Churchill for a winding conversation through foundational concepts in both Eastern and Western wisdom traditions and the light they shine on how we might attempt to develop as individuals and as a culture. John is a founding member of the Integral Institute, a nonprofit organization that brings together experts, educators, researchers, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders to explore and deliberate more sustainable paths for humanity.

[00:01:18] He began his in-depth study of Buddhist psychology during his time as a Buddhist monk at Samye Ling Monastery in Scotland. He later spent 15 years training and teaching in Great Seal, S-E-A-L, meditation in an Indo-Tibetan Mahayana lineage. Additionally, John has received advanced training in attachment therapy, hypnosis, positive psychology for peak performance, and how I find-- found out about him, the pointing out style of Mahamudra meditation.

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[00:01:52] He holds a doctorate in clinical psychology from William James College and is a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine. In this conversation, John and I work our way through the seven stages of psychological and contemplative maturity that both individuals and cultures work through in our relationship to the living world.

[00:02:16] We touch on topics such as love wisdom, non-duality, metacognition, and why it's important to understand the difference between peak states and truly embodied stages of deeper development. This was a truly nonlinear conversation, and I will admit I didn't fully understand everything John said, but I still walked away with the sense this is an important exploration of the meditative technologies that we're going to need during the coming decades.

[00:02:50] I'm still learning. I'm still curious about all this. I hope you enjoy and learn some things. With that, please welcome John Churchill. John Churchill, welcome to the program.

[00:03:01] **John Churchill:** Thank you, Nate. It's good to be here.

[00:03:02] **Nate Hagens:** Where to start? you have spent decades bridging the ancient contemplative teachings of Tibetan Buddhism with modern Western psychology and adult development theory.

[00:03:18] You have synthesized all this in your book, *Becoming Buddha: Buddhist Contemplative Psychology in a Western Context*. You've also served several years as a Buddhist monk, and you have a doctorate in psychology. So, I'm not exactly sure where to start with your background, but I'm gonna ask kind of a random question.

[00:03:45] At least two of my friends, when I told them I would be interviewing you, told me that you originated, or at least from their perspective, the phrase,

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"The next Buddha is a sangha." And I don't know if that's true or not, if that's your quote, but maybe you could, just define what, does that even mean?

[00:04:06] 'Cause I have heard that quote a lot.

[00:04:07] **John Churchill:** Yeah, I don't think that was my quote. That was Thich Nhat Hanh, who's a Zen master. But if we look at all these contemplative traditions with their sophisticated psycho technologies of development, the next step in the evolution of those traditions and the next step in our cultural evolution is a new cultural level of development.

[00:04:38] So what it means when the next Buddha is the sangha is that the delivery system, the delivery mechanism of these teachings needs to be transformed in such a way that what we are focusing on is not developing individuals, but developing communities, and that the model of development is a group model of unfolding, a cultural model that is, that leads to, let's say, a new platform, a new cultural stage of development upon which a lot of other things can be built.

[00:05:17] So the new Buddha the sangha is saying like the new, the next stage of human development is deeply communal.

[00:05:30] **Nate Hagens:** So the next Buddha is a trillionaire? That's probably the wrong direction.

[00:05:35] **John Churchill:** I think so. I think so.

[00:05:38] **Nate Hagens:** You know, there's a lot of unpacking to do with the science and the ancient wisdom traditions.

[00:05:45] But what you just described, from an evolutionary psychology standpoint is, the maturing, potentially maturing of a species under a multilevel

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selection framework that we've kind of erred towards individualism, probably supported by the largesse from the energy carbon pulse. But that our future, should there be a long one, has to go in this direction.

[00:06:18] I assume sangha is translated as community or a group or something like that. So we have to move back to more group level actions, behaviors, and thinking.

[00:06:32] **John Churchill:** That's right. And, what I would say is that there is an oscillation developmentally through the developmental stages of oscillating between individualism and community, and individualism and community.

[00:06:44] And so we see that. So for instance, if we go back maybe 500 years, something like that, pre, pre-Re- Enlightenment, Renaissance, at that phase, it was swung the other way and society was much... The traditional society of Europe was much more o- of we-based with a lack of individualism. And then it swings at the beginning of the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, swings towards individuality, kind of swings back in the '60s.

[00:07:13] So, so does, so that there is a developmental oscillation. What's different now, if you will, is the kind of unity or the kind of, communal, kind of culture ne- it necessitates or is, based upon having completed your own i- your own individuation So we're interested in a, degree of community, in a degree of, we that doesn't suppress the uniqueness of the individual, but actually is there to enhance it and allow people to then kind of work as a we beyond the me, but without suppressing it.

[00:07:58] **Nate Hagens:** I'm not sure I fully follow that. So can you, maybe with a wider lens, can you help us see how our collective unfamiliarity with both the science and the wisdom of all the things you've studied over the years, decades,

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have spiraled out to shape the many levels of crisis that seem to surround us daily from the individual to the global level?

[00:08:26] And how do, how does the individual go to the global level, how can you parse that?

[00:08:31] **John Churchill:** We can talk about development in terms of perspective, like first person perspective, which is me. Second person perspective, you and me third person perspective, which is objectivity. Seeing some-- You and me can look at something objectively and agree that it's out there, and so on.

[00:08:56] So let's take that- let's take that journey because that's a pretty universal journey perspective. So clearly first person perspective is oriented towards, oriented towards self primarily, self-absorbed developmentally. and we can see that both in children who are still orienting from that perspective and also certain adults, you know, certain parts of the world where the warlords rule, if you will.

[00:09:26] Primarily me, right? Might is right, whether you're a tantruming child or a Kalashnikov-wielding warlord And as we then make a developmental journey to second person perspective, two perspectives, there's a cognitive movement towards what we call concrete operational, which is like black and white thinking, yes and no, in and out, bent-- basic fundamentalist cognition.

[00:10:00] and either you're part... You're either you're inside of my encampment, my religion, my race, or you're outside of it. And so in our journey of, let's say, Western civilization, we can kind of pick that up at, you know, that's been the, that's been the fra- that was the frame of Christianity to some extent, at least with the majority of the people o- on, in our, civilization, kind of concrete operational, don't do this, You know, you're part of our religion, you're not part of our religion.

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And, you know, we w- we know the world that was built and then as individuality begins to stir and that becomes too suppressive, we see the birth of third-person perspective. And you can see that in the history of art, where suddenly the art in Europe flips and there's depth in the art.

[00:11:02] It goes from like a flat art to an art with perspective. You see it in the music as well. So s- third-person perspective comes online and we start looking through telescopes and we start looking at it. Third-person perspective is about objectifying something in a particular way that you can study it.

[00:11:28] And of course, that was a major breakthrough back in the Renaissance. Major breakthroughs, and all kinds of benefits happened from being able to objectify the human body, objectify nature, objectify our experience, ma- you know, and we s- and mathematics and algebra and, the scientific method and all of that grows out of that perspective.

[00:11:55] **Nate Hagens:** So before then, like thousands of years ago, it was mostly that first and second perspective that you explained?

[00:12:03] **John Churchill:** Yes, and they would've been, they would've been the cutting edge. They would've been those developmentally who were able to do third-person perspective and therefore build the church structure and keep the, you know, the, rest of the culture kind of contained developmentally, if that makes sense.

[00:12:22] Right? So it-- More sophisticated perspectives were around, but it would've been one percent or naught point one percent of the population. What we're seeing is a general evolutionary process over, over time. What begins as the cutting edge If it continues for too long and if it maintains power for too long, it then becomes...

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[00:12:44] It begins to erode. It begins to then become problematic. and so that's what we're seeing right now developmentally, is that we are stuck at a developmental stage.

[00:12:56] **Nate Hagens:** We humans or we Americans or we as individuals?

[00:13:00] **John Churchill:** Good question. We, as the center, as the govern- well, the governing power of civilization, so there's that, the, center of where power is organized developmentally.

[00:13:15] and therefore, the majority of the institutional structures related to that, like the media, the, scien- the, academy, the center of power itself is located, right? Third-person perspective, individualism, Wall Street, the scientific method, empiricism, Cartesian dualism, that's where the center of the power is held.

[00:13:41] And a fourth-person perspective can take a third-person perspective as an object. It can see it and this is the... Developmentally, this is w- the development of a pluralistic view. It begins as a pluralistic view. It begins by recognizing that something's missing from the picture. That something could be, that, the planet is missing.

[00:14:10] We don't have a perspective that is ecological. It could be that women are missing. It could be that the, that, various, races and genders are missing from the discussion. So the beginning of the fourth-person perspective is very horizontal in its wisdom, very pluralistic.

[00:14:31] **Nate Hagens:** Does that map onto postmodernism?

[00:14:35] **John Churchill:** It's postmodernism, yes.

[00:14:36] **Nate Hagens:** Oh, it is that? Okay.

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[00:14:38] **John Churchill:** It is that, yes. So third-person perspective is modernism. Second-person perspective is traditionalism, right? Fourth-person perspective at the beginning, the f- as it begins, is postmodernism. And so what it does is it goes horizontal and it really starts integrating horizontally.

[00:14:57] and it's also because what's happening is the heart is opening, and the heart wants to be inclusive, and it wants to welcome more in. now because things are speeding up, we can also see that also has a shadow. So you and I could probably agree that modernity has a massive shadow, which is the objectification, commodification, extraction of reality.

[00:15:22] and we could probably both agree that it was probably at some point in time a useful mechanism to get something going for a certain degree of time. You know, like the extraction of coal, the extraction of oil for a certain degree of time was useful. And as we move into postmodernity, we could also probably agree that integration and the recognition of the necessity of diversity and of pluralism is also really important.

[00:15:52] So that's a, like that's a horizontal dimension of fourth-person perspectives. And as fourth-person perspective matures, what also comes, slowly develops, is a recognition of a vertical dimension. Meaning, oh, not only are they, not only are there voices horizontally outside in the world left behind, there are also voices within me left behind developmentally.

[00:16:20] Oh, there's a part of me that's an animal, there's an emotional body. There's a part of me that is traditional and orientated with values and with absolutes. There's a part of me that is a modernist and values that way of thinking. There's a part of me that's postmodern and wants to... So that fourth-person perspective literally has four directions, right?

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[00:16:46] It literally goes horizontal and it literally goes vertical. It can look up and it's like, "Oh, there are traditions of contemplative development. I've come through four stages of development. Wow, maybe there's four stages of development above me." And, so when fourth-person perspective fully matures, it begins to realize it's, that there's a developmental process at play, both within ourselves, but also outside in the world, and that civilization is the, structure, if you will, the structuring of those processes, and culture is the interior of those processes.

[00:17:27] So that's where we get to fourth person, and then, we begin to move into, more spiritual, for want of a... or developed stages of development above that, fifth and sixth-person perspective. From a fourth-person perspective, you begin to recognize the relativity of things, of experience. Fifth-person perspective, you begin to recognize the relativity of language itself, that language itself is a construct.

[00:17:59] Now, what happens is th- as you're doing that, if you begin to recognize that there is something that's functioning behind language, beneath language, that is not, that is not constructed. Essentially, you begin to wake up to a ground of beingness. This is this non, this, the, non-dual, if you will.

[00:18:21] You begin to wake up to a degree of consciousness that's beyond structure. As that continues, into a sixth-person perspective, so that, at the beginning, that becomes a state, then it becomes a trait. So the difference between the two is one is an altered state that comes and goes, and the other is it becomes your operating system.

[00:18:45] That's where your consciousness resides. Once that becomes stable, then what also happens is you begin to realize a number of things. You begin to realize that your c- your consciousness, that your awareness is part of a

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collective. The non-dual is, not, i- is a... One of the challenges with the traditions is that they're kind of framed philosophically, not framed ecologically.

[00:19:16] So if we understand that these levels of consciousness open you to different dimensions, not just of your own consciousness, but of the planet itself, of planetary intelligence. So as you're opening up these deeper layers, it's not just... It isn't just psychology. One of the problems, or, of the last 100 years, the only way we could save the sacred was packaging it in psychology.

[00:19:44] But the truth is, we're not talking about something that's just my subjective experience. When you open up those dimensions, those deeper and deeper dimensions, you're opening up deeper and deeper relationship and information flow with a larger planetary intelligence. So finally, when you get to the seventh person perspective, which in the traditionally in the West we'd call that logic, that, essentially your consciousness is able to interface with the logos of the planetary system.

[00:20:17] The other way of putting that is holonic. So you've opened up access to the holon of the whole system. Now what that means is, this is where we get to why it's not just a psychology. So from the perspective of these traditions... And if you update the tradition. So it isn't just the same... You don't just want to have Western psychology and Eastern psychology.

[00:20:42] You have to update both into something that is relevant for now, if that makes sense. So essentially, that developmental process is about beginning to experience yourself in a deeper and deeper way as being interdependent with the planetary system. What comes along with that is the experience that your cognition, your mind, isn't just separate from the larger system.

[00:21:15] And so cognitions or the complexity of thought begins to start operating in systemic and meta systemic ways.

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[00:21:25] **Nate Hagens:** Okay. Okay, timeout.

[00:21:27] **John Churchill:** Sorry.

[00:21:28] **Nate Hagens:** No, no need to apologize. I'm just reflecting that had you been one of the first guests on my podcast four years ago I might have pulled the plug because I wouldn't have understood why this is relevant.

[00:21:42] and now I still don't fully understand what you're saying, but now I have a ton of questions. So we had these ancient traditions, and, I know you've also studied deeply with Dan Brown, Mahamudra, which I believe goes back 1,500 years or so. But was it the fact that we, kind of had European conquest in the world and then the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, followed by the discovery of the carbon pulse and the boost that gave our consumption and material existence, that all this stuff kinda got pushed to the back corner because it wasn't as salient to, at least to the power brokers, that ran the world in successive generations?

[00:22:42] D- does that-- What do you think about that?

[00:22:45] **John Churchill:** I mean, essentially, yes. I mean, essentially, if you understand a little bit about the history here. If we go back to Alexandria, the central point is Alexandria. So if we go, we can look at the story, because we live inside of a story, and it's important to know the story.

[00:22:58] So we look at, you know, Alexandria, and I- I'm gonna be vague here with the dates, but I think probably founded, I don't know, what, 300... Is it 300 BCE? but anyway, point being is, we're at a very similar point of cosmopolitan integration. So by the Sacred Academy, I would mean the kind of the, this kind of Neoplatonic synthesis.

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[00:23:26] This is the same kind of intelligence that we have now, we had then. And so there was a project, if you will, to, have a planetary teaching to, to integrate. Because whilst there's the Druids, and there's the Druze, and there's the Greeks and the Romans, clearly those of a certain level of development recognized there was also something that was universal.

[00:23:49] And so that project was also integrating wisdom from the East and the West. There was, there were pl- there was playback also from Alexandria to India. So for instance, the birth of the Mahayana in many ways is born, one of the things is born in Gandhara. So Gandhara was a Greco-Indian civilization where actually the Greek wisdom had fed itself back into India and then integrated with i- Indian meditative technologies.

[00:24:25] so the in- the East and West integration's been going on for a long time, and that project, which was hijacked by the forces of the empire, like, 2,000 years ago. Had it not been hijacked, we would have had i- an academy, if you will, that recognized the scientific method and recognized the sacred within that.

[00:24:54] So we would've had... I'll give you a good example. We would've had a psychobiology-- biology department. We would've had psychedelics for 2,000 years. And if you look in the written documents, the legal documents of the Inquisition, you'll see the list, you know, that they're burning the poor lady at the stake for a list of herbs, and a bunch of those are including psychedelic, you know, psych- psychedelic herbs.

[00:25:18] So every single biology, chemistry, architecture, mathematics, every single part of the university had a dimension of the sacred. And essentially, the forces of the empire came in, stripped that out, and maintained and kind of basically controlled the educational process for a couple thousand years.

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[00:25:41] **Nate Hagens:** And what was the role... And by the way, a quick pin that you said is meditative technologies. You did not say meditative practices.

Mm-hmm. So you, back then, meditation was viewed as a human technology. I guess it's just semantics, but-

[00:25:59] **John Churchill:** Yeah. Well, the practices are the practices of a techne, of a, technology that speeds a process up.

[00:26:07] Yeah.

[00:26:07] **Nate Hagens:** And so until that time, plant medicine and psychedelics were part of a bridge for humans to get closer to the sacred. It w- it was just part of the way-

[00:26:23] **John Churchill:** Yeah, one of, one of the departments, one of the departments, right? Like, would've been With skillful means, you know? I mean, I'm just- Yeah ... but just imagine, the degree of sophistication of the chemistry that we would have now had that been a continuous process.

[00:26:43] So we've been hijacked. So, because of the struggle of the historical process, that academy has-- was suppressed for, you know, approximately a couple of thousand years.

[00:26:54] **Nate Hagens:** And is it still in existence, and is it growing again?

[00:26:58] **John Churchill:** It's still part of the deeper ecosystem of our planet.

[00:27:03] **Nate Hagens:** But there are still pockets of people in Tibet and in the United States, and certainly in India and Nepal, that continue carrying on these wisdom traditions and have cataloged and maintained the core of them.

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[00:27:24] So I look at the world, John, from an ecological perspective and an evolutionary anthropological perspective. and so my critique of what you just described, you referred to empire and these things have been kicked t-to the background for 2,000 years. I look at that as a fall from grace from hunter-gathering, and then we started agriculture and started to store grain and surplus, and from that, hierarchy ensued, and we're off to the races.

[00:28:00] But I just wonder, you were just mentioning the tissue and the planetary experience, which I don't fully understand. So let's just pause here, John, and let me ask you for some brief definitions of some words you just said. Sure. planetary intelligence, what do you mean by that?

[00:28:18] **John Churchill:** Let's imagine in Tibet, like the tradition in T- you know, the education in Tibet is, like, befits a 12-year educational journey.

[00:28:28] So there's some- there was something comparable in the West that we've lost. So I'm going to... So, I have to kind of update y'all on what if we had the Sacred Academy in the West for the last 2,000 years, because there's been a little bit of shenanigans in the West and the suppression of our wisdom tradition.

[00:28:49] So, so I'm gonna... So this is not actually Eastern wisdom. This is actually part of the Western Sacred Academy, but so the... Okay. So what we mean by planetary intelligence, we mean that not only does our planet have a kind of, no, a, not only is it a physical whole system of organic intelligence.

[00:29:13] So if you pull back, you could see Lovelock's conception of Gaia as a whole system of intelligence where everything is integrated into a s- a beautiful symphony of integration. So that's one level of that. But in the traditions, they say that, not only do you have a physical body, you have a bioenergetic body, you have an emot- an imaginary body, you have a mental body.

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[00:29:42] And, so in the, tr- in the meditative traditions, there's an understanding that the human, that what you're seeing right now is just one f-wavelength, the lowest wavelength of a spectrum. That's also true of our planetary organism And so all of what you hear... So when you take plant medicine, you open up the imaginal dimension, not just of your psyche, that's your personal unconscious, but also of the collective unconscious, what Jung called the objective psyche, meaning that the planet itself actually has dimensions like ecologies that are beyond the physical.

[00:30:30] And when we talk about, you know, shamanic journeying or heavens and hells, those are very traditional ways of understanding that this planetary system is a multidimensional intelligence, that, and that it itself is in an evolutionary process, and that humanity is a f- is a function within that evolutionary process.

[00:30:55] **Nate Hagens:** How does all of the work that you've done, of which you could just share a tiny little kernel of it in this conversation, how does it... what's the Venn diagram with that, with the field of evolutionary biology or evolutionary psychology and the pla- the fact that we are evolved organisms that are related to every other living creature on life, and there's a, trajectory that brought us to this moment?

[00:31:24] Is it congruent with that?

[00:31:27] **John Churchill:** In a multilayered evolutionary multidimensional system, there's gonna be multiple streams of evolution. So what you're just describing is one stream of the evolution of matter And so you can look at psychology, I don't know, biology, geology. You can look at probably every department of the academy through that particular lens of evolution, and it will give you, like, really good information.

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[00:32:02] But that isn't the only one. You could... There's also, from the point of view of, let's say, the sacred academy, for want of a better term, a way of also looking at the evolution of consciousness and how it interacts with that evolving material substrate. So it's, it's-- there's multiple evolutionary systems, if that makes sense, interacting with one another.

[00:32:28] I d- So yes, they're integratable, at a fifth-person perspective because those perspectives are also degrees of cognitive complexity, if that makes sense.

[00:32:41] **Nate Hagens:** Getting back to my questions on your questions, you mentioned sacred academy, you mentioned Western sacred academy.

[00:32:52] what does that mean?

[00:32:53] **John Churchill:** We have to define it only by being able to use terms that are secular because that keeps us kind of where we are right now. So I think the sa- the sacred has to do, in my experience, to do with a deep experience of value When, where, w- when somebody gives you something that's really precious, there's a...

[00:33:16] Y- you relate to that in a particular way. So the experience of the sacred in my mind, one of its dimensions has got to do with the, well, it's the value of beauty, and it's the value of goodness and the value of truth. So goodness, goodness has to do with the depth of intimacy Beauty has to do with, the, valuing aesthetics.

[00:33:51] So first, second, third, fourth, sixth person perspective, those... That is the development of aesthetics of perception. And truth is valuing what's, like, really true. So what is sacred is what is true, what is beautiful, and what is good.

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[00:34:08] **Nate Hagens:** So I'm smiling. Not only do I understand and agree with you, but I don't know if you know Iain McGilchrist.

[00:34:15] He's been on my program three times. He basically said the same thing that you just said a few weeks ago. and I don't think you guys are studying the same things necessarily, so it seems like that finding may be robust.

[00:34:29] **John Churchill:** That view, in my mind, is one of the fundamental archetypal structures of the next civilization.

[00:34:35] Goodness, truth, and beauty, that's first person, second person, third person, right? Aesthetics is the... Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. So the whole line of dev- of personal development, ri- y- you can think of it spiritually, but I like to think of it as aesthetic appreciation of deeper and deeper levels of beauty and reality.

[00:34:52] **Nate Hagens:** When I say the word sacred, I think of, a primeval, forest or an old growth forest or the animals in, the meadow, undisturbed nature, and I think you would agree that is part of sacred. But you also mentioned when someone gives you something precious or there's a painting or an experience, it doesn't necessarily have to be nature.

[00:35:16] It's, the whole human a- and non-human maybe experience.

[00:35:20] **John Churchill:** Well, I think we mean the same thing. Nature in third person nature in second person and nature in first per- like, what is natural? In the Buddhist tradition, they call it Buddha nature. Let's just take Buddha, throw the Buddha term out, and say nature.

[00:35:37] Nature in her manifestation of beauty, what you're describing, when you see that, do you experience it as being beautiful? Like, what is it? Is it

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beauty– is it beauty that stuns you there? Is that what makes it sacred? Or is it a sense of relationality, goodness? Or is it a sense of the truth of the, of appreciating the systems and how everything is woven together?

[00:35:59] **Nate Hagens:** Okay, I'm gonna answer that with another question. I think the answer is, partially all three– Yeah ... but partially something that I can only feel and I cannot describe, in words. So here's a question. Recently, I think I might have sent it to you a few weeks ago. I shared that I have spent months trying to conceptualize the concept of non-duality, and I got right to the cusp of it, and then I lost it.

[00:36:27] But why is that concept so important now in our culture, in the face of our converging global crises, that more people be– begin to actually experience non-duality rather than think about it? And just in that, in your last little paragraph, I felt again that I was right on the cusp of it, d– integrating your, truth, and beauty comments.

[00:36:53] **John Churchill:** Non-duality is not the heart of it. Non-duality is a perceptual dimension of what is at the core of what's being spoken about So what we're, what is central here is the intelligence of the heart-mind and its recognition of what we would call love wisdom, and the fact that the heart-mind perceives in a non-dual way.

[00:37:26] The reason that's important is if you get stuck with non-duality just perceptually, you don't understand that actually that which perceives in a non-dual way most naturally is the heart. And so there's a way of perceiving experience that is related to the heart. Now, the heart is the central relational organ.

[00:37:52] So we're not just talking– we're not talking about a nice warm, fuzzy feeling here. We're talking about relationality and being touched by something.

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And so from a second person perspective, you'd be touched by a little, you know, like, "Oh, they're part of my clan." When you get to a sixth person perspective and you realize that the body itself is an open construct, you've got thousands of tendrils of relationality extending intimately into an interconnected field.

[00:38:23] So, the feeling of non-duality is love. If you approach it philosophically, the danger of that, you're gonna get caught with the head trip around it and not the naturalness or the goodness of that intelligence. And why is it central? The heart-mind is ... The heart-mind organizes the psyche. So if we look at the research at HeartMath, the more this energy field gets coherent, it actually coheres the brain.

[00:39:03] Now, let's not forget that the heart isn't just here. That's one end of the sensory nerve. The heart is actually in the head, because everything is in the brain. So a- the heart coheres the brain mind, and as it coheres the brain mind, the psyche becomes more integrated. And this heart field is in resonance and coherence with the electromagnetic field of the planet itself.

[00:39:34] So there is a communication of information from the larger planetary intelligence to the individual heart-mind that as that becomes more coherent, then coheres cognitive processes that become more and more planetary by virtue of the person's development.

[00:39:55] **Nate Hagens:** Okay. I wanna ask a follow-up question on love wisdom.

[00:40:00] Yeah. But before I ask that, there's some part of me is feeling and not fully understanding what you're expressing, and the feeling I get is sadness and That our 8.1 billion strong number of social primates are just expressing ourselves as a tiny, destructive fraction of what we're capable of, given the, landscape that you're, laying out, and it just feels like such an enormous tragedy in some ways.

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[00:40:46] That's what I'm feeling when I'm looking at the words and the concepts you're describing for what we're capable of, and then looking at the clown show that is the weekly news that you and I are both paying attention to. This is Wednesday, June 17th.

[00:41:02] **John Churchill:** Yeah, we have a crisis in education, and this is maybe related more to the history of what we're talking about.

[00:41:10] And we mentioned the Sacred Academy. We're then talking about history, and we're talking about then, forces of control and power over human consciousness over the last couple of thousand years that have led to the deliberate enslavement of human consciousness and hand humanity as part of an extractive process.

[00:41:31] **Nate Hagens:** I'm gonna come back 'cause I wanna ask you what love wisdom means, 'cause you mentioned that. But let me ask you this: Is there a way to look at this as we almost had to go through this last 2,000 years of immaturity and individuality and all the chaos that, we're wreaking on the planet right now to arrive at this moment to make the next maturity leap up the journey that you started this conversation with?

[00:42:02] What are your thoughts on that?

[00:42:04] **John Churchill:** Yes. Yes and... I mean, yes and no. The yes part is, that's the way that we got here, so, so we had to do that.

[00:42:13] **Nate Hagens:** That's

[00:42:13] **John Churchill:** right. Right? The no part, what's the no part? The no part is that we're working with, like, accumulated forces of multi-generational trauma That, and when those forces are expressed culturally, they become, they,

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you know, they become forces of, within, our own c– within our own s– psyche of the shadow, of suppressing, of controlling.

[00:42:41] And in the outside world, within civilization, they become forces that might suppress new developments. So, I mean, you and I are here because this was the road that we had to take, but had I, you and I, don't know, had a better therapist when we were 25, then maybe things would have unfolded differently.

[00:43:05] So this is where we find ourselves. There's a lot of hope, and there's also not a lot of time, and we have to grow up, and we have to ... Yeah, we have to grow up, and, everything that's needed, everything that's needed is here except for the resources for the very thing that's actually needed. That ma– Like, and to bring the pieces together.

[00:43:34] **Nate Hagens:** We're gonna get to that. I know in your work and in this conversation, you use the word love wisdom. and you also previously said heart mind. maybe you can explain what love wisdom is and what happens in a person, or a culture when we have one half of that equation without the other.

[00:43:55] **John Churchill:** The wisdom without the love?

[00:43:56] **Nate Hagens:** Or the love without the wisdom maybe.

[00:43:59] **John Churchill:** I don't think we have that. okay.

[00:44:04] **Nate Hagens:** Yeah, the wisdom without the love. To be honest, I think our culture is starving for both of those, but what... Why do you hyphenate that word? What led you to use that in your work?

[00:44:17] **John Churchill:** Well, I think the first thing is it's, a term that not many people know, so it's like, "What's that?"

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[00:44:24] And it also stirs something. It's like, Because love wisdom could also be, if we take it into Greek, is philosophia

[00:44:35] **Nate Hagens:** I didn't know that.

[00:44:36] **John Churchill:** It could be love of wisdom, but it could be love wisdom So that's what I mean by the, aca- the, academy, the philosophical academy. If I said to you, like, the-- from one perspective, your physical body definitely has boundaries to it, right?

[00:44:56] You're, a bounded body of meat

[00:44:57] **Nate Hagens:** And I'm learning about that more every day.

[00:45:04] **John Churchill:** but if we turned up, if we looked closer and we'd started looking at the level of electrons, do you think that we'd be able to find a, boundary between your body and the electrons around the body As, you, go in deeper, does...

[00:45:23] Is this boundary actually a thing, or is it a probability? I- is it like an active probability pattern? As you get- look deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper, the boundaries of the body become more and more open until there's a level of depth where this body, like we, we don't see it because your eyes aren't seeing it, because whenever you look in the mirror, you're like, "Oh, there's Nate," and you format your experience based on what these eyes can see.

[00:45:50] And so your experience is constantly being conditioned by a self-image of who and what you think yourself to be. So the wisdom side of it is recognizing that, and the wisdom side of it is recognizing that, hey, we built a microscope with human consciousness. Human consciousness, you're, can do the same thing as a microscope.

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[00:46:14] What I mean by that is I can take my human consciousness, I can look deeper and deeper into my experience until I'm like basically where you discover that the body is like 99% space. And then from there you go out. And what happens when you go out? There's no bo- there's no boundary.

[00:46:32] There's no boundary because we are like, we're like mountains, right? That, that goes into the earth. We are like mountains that extend actually into the field around us. And then the love part of that is feeling that now, if things are already like that, then, the experience of love is, and you know it, then the experience of love is the experience of the intimacy and the tenderness of knowing that you are non-dual with the whole of reality.

[00:47:02] and to the extent that you know that by heart and that you're confident in that, then the experience of that begins to deepen and deepen and that love wisdom has all kinds of dimensions. It, you know, the wisdom dimension is, well, well, if that's true, then what does a financial system look like that kind of understands that we're interdependent with everything?

[00:47:26] What does a medical system look like that understands that? So the deepening of the developmental journey, first, second, third, fourth, fifth, that is a deepening of the wisdom, of the perspective-taking that deepens the experience of love.

[00:47:42] **Nate Hagens:** So do you think our culture is suffering from a crisis in love and wisdom?

[00:47:47] And in what way is that failure playing out in how we're collectively responding or not responding to the more than human predicament?

[00:47:55] **John Churchill:** Yes, our culture is suffering from a lack of developmental education in what it means to be a human. And the developmental

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education of what it means to be human is the developmental unfolding of the heart with love and wisdom.

[00:48:14] **Nate Hagens:** In 2,000 years ago, did, Tibetan academy, the 12 years that children and young adults had to go through, was, love wisdom taught or part of the curriculum?

[00:48:26] **John Churchill:** Yeah, for sure. Well, and also in the West, the love wisdom piece is core to all of the mystic traditions. You can approach these teachings through the mind and, the head, and that's an important part of it But it's so much more powerful to feel it

[00:48:42] **Nate Hagens:** Okay.

[00:48:42] So let's start getting into the practical implications of this and why this is important. Kind of a two-part question. One of the things I've been recognizing lately, and I think in the materials I sent you, I didn't include this, is when we talk about human behavior and culture, there's a difference between the median and the mean.

[00:49:12] And I think based on what I've learned in the last year or so is that humans are better than we think or better than we've expressed. Humanity is not, at least not yet, because in aggregate, we are acting in extremely deleterious ways because a small percentage of humans that get into the power vector and steer things, the way we've steered and influence the institutions, and then there's a metabolism that carries on.

[00:49:53] So let me ask you this. What is the developmental map that you, summarized, reveal when we examine our global leaders and thinkers today, and what stage of development would we need to see in our leadership to actually meet the scale of all of the challenges and problems we're facing?

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[00:50:13] **John Churchill:** The power and the leadership are frozen at a third person individualistic perspective.

[00:50:22] **Nate Hagens:** Is that because of who they are as humans or is that because that's what their position freezes them at?

[00:50:30] **John Churchill:** The issue is that we need a global level deliberately developmental education project. You see, development, human development has not been part of the mainstream at all.

[00:50:45] **Nate Hagens:** Right. We train kids to get them into the workforce and serve the Superorganism.

[00:50:49] **John Churchill:** To the extent, let's say that mindfulness became part of the mainstream. So essentially what's needed is a cultural project, probably through the artists, probably through art and music, that is deliberately developmental, that offers a vision of a garden university planet of beauty, truth, and goodness and, reveals the developmental stages necessary to get there and offers the developmental processes and practices to do that.

[00:51:21] We have to have something comparable to the mysteries of Eleusius, the Elysian mysteries, where all the politicians and all the intelligentsia went through a developmental process. So we need to have something that's comparable to that, that if you're li- if you're not involved with this, then clearly, you know, like what's...

[00:51:40] There's a problem. So we need... So development needs to be made popular, colorful, sexy, with a vision of where that developmental ladder goes, that people are like, "Yes," like, "Let's go that, let's go that way." And frankly, that hasn't happened.

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[00:51:57] **Nate Hagens:** Here's a fundamental question that I've been sitting with. How do decent people, how does decency in a human compete on the current game board with power and the leaders that have power and are stuck at level three at best?

[00:52:23] And, like, it's not a battle, per se, because even that is the wrong framing. But I guess what I'm asking is, can decency and truth and beauty and goodness ultimately prevail in our species and the biosphere? Huge question, but what are your thoughts?

[00:52:45] **John Churchill:** Well, okay, so the most, evolved of the Indian, Tibetan, Indo-Tibetan tantric systems, so tantric systems are, If you take a culture and you integrate all of the, sciences into a single s- educational system, developmental system, that's a tantra.

[00:53:07] It's like everything gets integrated, the art, the music, the science. Okay. The most evolved of those tantras is called the Kalachakra, and it's ... Which means time wheel. And essentially what the time wheel tantra is a time machine. And what do I mean by a time machine? I mean, if you want to go from one time to another time, you have to build an initiative, an educational system that takes you in one time and out the other.

[00:53:37] And I quite literally mean time, meaning we are functioning within the Gregorian calendar. The Gregorian calendar is a calendrical representation of this chaos that we're seeing. So if you want to get to a new time and timing has to do with synchronization. It has to do with internal synchronization of the psyche, external synchronization of people.

[00:54:06] Essentially, what's needed from a Western perspective is a sacred secular initiatory operating system, which is a secular way of describing an initial, deliberately developmental educational process that facilitates moving a

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populate-- through an educational process so that you can then essentially have people educated enough to begin to function within the different departments of a proto-civilization.

[00:54:42] Meaning, if you want to get... You have to kind of, like, actually start a government in exile. You actually have to start that process. But to do that, you also have to educate people enough into that new cultural level of development so that we can learn to relate to one another from a different level of consciousness, experience a different level of consciousness, experience what it's like to work in new developmental structures.

[00:55:11] W- And that's to the extent that's sealed off, and then slowly that's allowed to grow out. At least that's how the traditions see that you make a time transition.

[00:55:22] **Nate Hagens:** I expect our viewers in the last three minutes might have had a reaction similar to mine when you said we need a structure for goodness, and you didn't say it, but it was implied, for love, wisdom, and these things to flourish.

[00:55:44] I think people felt that, like a charge, because yes, that is what we're missing. We're missing a structure to manifest goodness in this crazy twilight zone clown fest of a culture we have right now. And so presumably, you're trying-- you're working on that, with your organization and your efforts.

[00:56:09] Do you wanna talk about that?

[00:56:11] **John Churchill:** Sure. But let's be, like, clear here. To put somebody on the moon you need to be able to bring a number of engineering companies together and a number of disciplines together. and the management and the

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coordination of that project is something that our civilization does very well when it's highly invested in.

[00:56:37] It's good to understand also that this is one of-- that there's a number of archetypes within the sacred world. There's the shaman, there's the seer, there's the priest, there's the healer. This is what we call tekton. So this is the tekton. So what is a tekton? It means an architect, sacred tekton, architect.

[00:56:55] Also, it also means translated in Greek as carpenter, but, you know, tekton is a s- architect is a better... So we're talking about the architecting of a civilizational initiatory system. And people are going, "Oh my gosh." Well, actually, we used to have that. We used to... We had the Myster- Dionysian Mysteries. We had the Orphic Mysteries.

[00:57:14] We had the... You know, this is-- So this is something that can be done, but of course it needs to be funded. So there's a number of components, significant components we have, that need to be brought together, and that can't be brought together by one person. That just has to be brought together like building, like putting a rock of somebody on the moon, right?

[00:57:37] So it's at-- So-- And the problem is that people in the field of human consciousness think that we have, that we are where we are, that we have all the technology that th- Where we've got to is where the best of technology is. No, we're at the next stage where all those pieces have to be brought together.

[00:57:57] When they can be brought together, and that takes investment, and it takes all the best management skills, right? So all the departments of the Sacred Academy include finance management, information systems. But it can be done, for sure. It just needs people to understand we're talking about a cultural revolution.

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[00:58:22] We're talking-- Now, if you want to do a revolution in the '60s, this is, a revolution that is designed, specifically a developmental revolution, to seed through culture, through the sciences, a new level of development.

[00:58:37] **Nate Hagens:** So we need a developmental revolution revolution before we have a physical infrastructural one, because otherwise it won't go well.

[00:58:46] **John Churchill:** Correct.

[00:58:47] **Nate Hagens:** and following on from the question I asked a few minutes ago, how does goodness compete with power? Zach Stein, introduced me to some academic experts on dark triad and psychopathy, who I hosted last year, and I learned a lot, from them and subsequently on how much control and power there are by dark triad and dark tetrad type of humans in our society.

[00:59:23] mostly men, not all. And so this developmental path that you're talking about in a cultural revolution, and wouldn't it be a threat to the current power structure? And how would that have to be managed? Just, Trojan horse through the humanities and music and art.

[00:59:45] **John Churchill:** There's a number of stories at play here and, the world and the human psyche loves stories.

[00:59:50] So we love a love story. We love adventure stories. We love war stories sometimes. So, we have to look through multiple narratives, right? When we look through the war story, then it's like, oh, there's baddies and goodies, right? And, maybe that's where you and I played on the playground together with baddies and goodies.

[01:00:09] And so for when you're looking through that lens, then yes, you're talking about strategy, Trojan horsing, security.

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[01:00:17] **Nate Hagens:** But if we're using a war lens, and you do have an actual answer to my question, maybe, from a Sun Tzu perspective, we shouldn't be saying it out loud on a public podcast.

[01:00:29] **John Churchill:** Maybe not

[01:00:31] **Nate Hagens:** Yeah.

[01:00:31] **John Churchill:** But there's also another lens, which is how do we do it? Well, well, I think one thing is you educate the pop- the public around the nature of the human shadow and culturally and civilizationally. The other way we do it, we just make it a hell of a lot more fun and a hell- Yeah ... of a lot more sexy and a hell of a lot more colorful.

[01:00:49] **Nate Hagens:** Well, I think that we are our culture now with the Epstein files, now with this Hormuz thing. Th- these are, like, staring us in the face that things are not what they seem. and the story that we've followed, on the backs of our carbon slaves have, divorced us from truth, beauty, and goodness, and hard work and some suffering and lots of other stuff from our ancestors, and I think our culture actually is deeply hungry for a path like this.

[01:01:30] **John Churchill:** I agree. I think it's ... I think we're ready for it. I th- I think that we, you know, when you ... It can't be approached in a n- naive way, and it needs the best of the various departments to be brought to it. You know, so at least, my ... For myself, like, in terms of my own work, it's like I've g- I've got to the point where I'm kind of coming down the mountain or coming out of the cave or whatever that is and like, "Hey, who, like, who knows these other pieces?"

[01:01:59] But, you know, because this is a group project.

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[01:02:03] **Nate Hagens:** That resonates with me. And actually a project like this kind of undergirds some of the biophysical interventions in culture. And like I believe we need a lot more people who are soldiers, not, that's not really the right word, but that are mentally, physically, spiritually, m-mature and capable to do the hard work that's ahead, which is what drew me...

[01:02:35] Actually, it didn't draw me. Several of my colleagues said, "Nate, you would benefit from going to a Mahamudra week." And I did benefit, but I still can't quite get into the view on demand, not remotely. I digress, but I wanna backfill some of the things that, that, came up, and then we'll get back to your work and your plan, before this conversation concludes.

[01:03:01] So firstly, you have been focused on, in this conversation, what Eastern wisdom traditions have brought to the table. What has Western psychology, maybe, added or revealed that the Tibetan tradition alone couldn't address? What has the West contributed to all this?

[01:03:24] **John Churchill:** A lot of my work is about redesigning a new contemplative system.

[01:03:29] Meaning, my apprentice with Dr. Dan, I apprenticed with Dr. Dan for 15 years, and essentially what I was studying was how to analyze various contemplative systems in order to understand the deep structure so that a new, synthetic system could be developed that integrated the best of East and West.

[01:03:56] So what's the best in the West? Well, Western psychology is really good. Well, first thing to understand is there's probably hundreds of schools of Western psychology, so you have to at least have metasystemic cognition to be able to integrate all of those schools to have a sense of what Western psychology is, right?

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[01:04:15] It's not cognitive behavioral, it's not humanistic, it's not psychodynamic.

[01:04:19] **Nate Hagens:** And metacognition is thinking about how we think.

[01:04:23] **John Churchill:** Yes. Think– thinking about how you think or then being aware that you're, like, being aware that you're thinking, like one step removed from that. So Western developmental

[01:04:34] psychodynamic, we ha– the Eastern approach has been studying consciousness from a first-person perspective. The Western tradition has been particularly studying consciousness objectively, looking at children, how do they develop? Looking at testing. You know, there's a certain way of understanding how development unfolds that is structural and dynamic and developmental, and that happens from a very Western perspective of looking at it, right?

[01:05:04] Like the s– kind of scientific method, whether that's even Freud's approach or cognitive behaviorism or, any number of those approaches to psychology. So Western psychology is very good at looking from the outside and looking in. looking both at, particularly at structure Like how does the s– how does the self become structured?

[01:05:28] Early, for instance, early, what's called early attachment structures from ... These are related to the kind of very basic ways the self is structured and how very early relational patterns become the fundamental structures of human consciousness, if you will, and then the various developmental stages that structure goes through and becomes more complex.

[01:05:53] So that's a ... Western psychology is very good at understanding that. Understanding the shadow piece, which the East does have that, but it has it at a different ... it doesn't look at it through that lens. By shadow what I mean is at

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each stage of development, it's easy as you move up to disavow the intelligences of prior levels, to suppress them, right?

[01:06:18] So it's easy to suppress the body, bodily intelligence. It's easy to suppress emotional intelligence. It's easy to suppress ethical intelligence.

[01:06:27] **Nate Hagens:** What does that mean to suppress emotional intelligence?

[01:06:31] **John Churchill:** If in our natural state our emotional flow can digest experience, feel pain when it's appropriate, feel love when it's appropriate, feel anger when it's needed, and all of

[01:06:44] Like actually our emotional body, how we, w- when we're whole human beings respond intelligently to, appropriate circumstances.

[01:06:55] **Nate Hagens:** Like crying when someone dies, for example,

[01:06:58] **John Churchill:** or something like that. Yes, versus not crying when you run out of, you know, when someone gives you ice cr- you know, the wrong flavor ice cream or- Right

[01:07:08] you know right. Yeah, right. So because of developmental trauma, you know, like let's say you're in a household where your dad beats you if you cry because it's a sign of weakness- Yeah ... then you're gonna supper- Yeah. Or let's say you're in a family where having boundaries doesn't exist, and everybody wants just bound, w- kind of flowing all over one another.

[01:07:31] These, so if that's the case, you're in a household that suppresses individuality and boundaries and no, right? So, so that, so the developmental journey that we get to become sitting here, you and I as adults, there's a bunch of stuff that gets pushed away that suppresses our emotional intelligence until we're just operating at third person, and, that's one of the reasons why our cul- our

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contri- our culture is so destructive- is because if relating to nature or the natural world reminds you of your own pain ... So th- these, you know, as psychopathy and sociopathy is it gets worse and worse, there's am- there's immense amounts of pain there So as the natural world reminds you of pain, then you're gonna do everything you can to destroy whatever it is that reminds you that you have, like, feelings inside.

[01:08:31] So you're gonna actually unconsciously start burning down the forests and kind of destroying the world because it actually makes you feel something. That's the most extreme. That's, that would be the most extreme version.

[01:08:45] **Nate Hagens:** So that's a shadow?

[01:08:47] **John Churchill:** That would be sh- yeah, that's shadow. So one of the problems of Western civilization is suppression, right?

[01:08:54] A third person ... A first person perspective is that my intelligence is an animal. Like a chimp, right? You and I have chimp intelligence. That's been suppressed, so that's not ... So that's ... We've suppressed our own bodies, but because we've suppressed our own bodies, we can create factory farming slaughterhouses and do that to other bodies because we're not- we're out of touch with our bodies.

[01:09:19] And then if we suppress the second person, I, thou, and the whole relational intelligence, we suppress that. Then, of course, we can do, you know, we can ... We're not feeling anything anymore. We've suppressed our bodily intelligence. We've suppressed emotional intelligence. And now we're just cold, third person perspective, which is just complete objectification of reality, developmentally with a bunch of trauma underneath that I'm not willing to feel or see because if I do that I'll start crying and my daddy beat me if I was crying, both individually and culturally.

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[01:09:58] And also suppression of anything above because, you know, I don't wanna see that there's ... Because, a third person perspective is so achievement-oriented, right? Meaning it's an achiever self. It's so highly individualistic that if it realized, that it was not the highest on the ... That there were

[01:10:21] Then it would be like, "Oh, what the?" That would also threaten its sense of self.

[01:10:25] **Nate Hagens:** Oh, if someone at the third person level of development was told there was a fourth through seventh level, that itself would be threatening.

[01:10:38] **John Churchill:** Well, that's why it needs to be out there culturally, 'cause the moment it does that, becomes part of the cultural conversation.

[01:10:43] The moment you do that, this emperor's new clothes.

[01:10:46] **Nate Hagens:** Okay. Let me bring this back down. For someone ready to begin, how would a viewer of this program start a contemplative practice that might bridge the ancient wisdom with today's science? And I guess are there any essential prerequisites before they would begin such a practice or technology?

[01:11:14] **John Churchill:** Gosh, I mean, yes, there's a h- clearly there's a whole cur- there's a whole curriculum of practices here. But let's maybe start with what's readily accessible right now. and because I'm sure our listeners have learnt about mindfulness and those kinds of, you know, those kinds of practices.

[01:11:33] So maybe, what's more interesting is, introducing a, s- a seed that might be a little different than those. What really matters is the state of consciousness that we're operating from moment by moment. So yes, the practice on the cushion or the practice in the chair matters. What m- but what matters much

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more is where are we operating from right now And so there's a very simple practice related to that, that our view- our listeners can start working with, our viewers, and that's really first understanding that how we see experience is who sees experience.

[01:12:19] So because our visual system takes up probably 70% of information, and because we spend most of our time working with our eyes open, understanding how these states of consciousness are operating in our visual field moment by moment is really helpful. So we want to define, let's say, two... We wanna make two, two different definitions here.

[01:12:45] One is the attentional system. Okay, so the attentional system is what attends. That's the cursor on the screen, right? And the attentional system is at the center of the self structure, right? What's... So what the self structure is that, sense of continuity of, experience that you recognize as being Nate, and I recognize as being John, and the, listener recognizes as being themselves, and that's glued together by the attentional system, if that makes sense, attending to various dimensions of our experience fast enough to create something that resembles Nate and John.

[01:13:23] That's the attentional system. And as long as I'm looking at experience through my attentional system, I'm looking through the self structure because the attentional system is the le- is the central organizing principle around which the self structure is built. So right now I am looking at Nate, you're looking at John, the listener's looking at me or you and listening.

[01:13:45] That's the attentional system. And the attentional system, when we're operating the attentional system, also creates a particular kind of cognition. It produces cognition that is convergent, that is going to a single point. Now, we also have another system. We have awaren- like, the, the awareness, for want of a better term, right?

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[01:14:09] And now awareness in our visual field right now is that which is viewing and seeing the whole visual field. So I can look at you, Nate, and my attentional system can see you, but I can also simultaneously look at the... I'm simultaneously looking at the whole room, my whole visual field, because those two are happening in my experience.

[01:14:34] But I might not have consciously been looking, been looking at the whole visual field before that, and that's what tends to happen. We tend to lock on to individual objects through the attentional system and go from one object to the next object, to the next object, to the next object throughout our whole day.

[01:14:55] visually, but the visual system is just indicative of what you're doing in every other system, right? So this is why do-- understanding that process with your eyes open, understanding the desktop, right? The Windows. How does the Windows app work? Well, I have an attentional system that whenever I'm looking at specific things, but whenever I look at specific things, I'm a specific self. Whenever I'm able to look at the wholeness of what's arising, which is simply first like actually orienting towards the wholeness, what that changes is who is looking.

[01:15:36] The attentional system is still there, but now it's held within a wider experiential field out there, but it's also held in a wider experiential field there. Like how you look is who is looking. It's who's looking. So if we were to use a Western term, you would say that the soul looks at the wholeness of something, and the personality looks at the particulars.

[01:16:02] So all I need to start doing moment by moment as I'm talking and I'm moving through the day is just like noticing how am I viewing experience, and what you'll notice is actually it doesn't take a lot of work to just flip that switch and open up wide. But every time you do that, you plant a seed that dismantles the tendency to just be oriented from your self-structure and gives you a wider field of experience.

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[01:16:29] Very easy to do.

[01:16:31] **Nate Hagens:** Do you do that all day long?

[01:16:33] **John Churchill:** Not anymore. It's widened. Be- because if you do something like that all day long, what, you know, neurons that fire together, wire together. So this is very important to understand that meditation isn't... Meditation is about understanding, one of it is understanding perception, and you don't necessarily have to sit on the cushion to do a lot of the work.

[01:16:57] If you understand what the work is to do, that's the wisdom side. You don't just have to follow your breath. You could be meditating the whole time because meditation has also got to do in its deepest dimensions about how you're viewing experience and where you're viewing experience from. So you go to the cushion.

[01:17:19] I mean, there's all kinds... Like, like meditation is a term like sports. It doesn't mean anything. It could mean curling or the FA Cup or the World Cup or soccer, rugby, football, you know, karate, all ki- There's a whole re- realm of s- of practices. Right. Right. But what do we... What are the viewers, what do we need to do if we need to start...

[01:17:40] Well, we need to learn how to calm down and structure our nervous system, and there's a bunch of practices for that. But we also need to learn to shift our identity to start operating from a deeper level of identity. When you then do that, then this non-duality becomes easier.

[01:17:58] **Nate Hagens:** Are most humans able to do those things?

[01:18:02] **John Churchill:** In terms of the perspective taking that I was talking about?

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[01:18:05] **Nate Hagens:** Yeah,

[01:18:06] **John Churchill:** Everybody. Yes, everybody, for sure. It doesn't necessarily mean that ev- that the person will understand what they're doing, but they can do it. So yes, most people could do the exercise and have a state change so you could take four people from four different levels of development, and you could give those instructions to those four people.

[01:18:34] They would have the same experience, but when they come back, they're gonna reinterpret it differently.

[01:18:40] **Nate Hagens:** That I understand.

[01:18:42] **John Churchill:** Th- when done well and when done precisely, people can be led quite quickly into very deep ex- very deep expanded states of consciousness. That's got to do with the precision of the science.

[01:18:53] **Nate Hagens:** So, again, I'm, really a newbie on this stuff, but I feel, even though I don't understand everything you're saying or other guests that I've had on, I feel a deep truth to this, that this is the pathway for humanity somehow to resurrect, some of these ancient practices and integrate them into this culture.

[01:19:19] So I know that you mentioned Dan Brown. You've observed the practices of Mahamudra, which examines the nature of the mind, which evolved in places like monasteries. But accessing these experiential teachings is probably gonna require a different approach if they are going to impact the number of human beings that we will need for impactful change.

[01:19:50] So you teach currently, and have for quite a while, with hundreds or thousands of students across the world. How do you think that these teachings can be adapted to meet the needs of so many humans that are, like, deeply

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embedded in a highly technological, highly distracted world, now with AI and in a culture that has leaders that are stuck at, level three?

[01:20:17] **John Churchill:** The good news is when you integrate the best of this Indo-Tibetan world wisdom to contemplative tech, when you integrate it into the Western understanding, well, the Western understanding has a very good sense of where the core injuries are. So the attachment system, the early childhood, traumas and multi-generational traumas are what higher up the stack lead to all that dysfunction.

[01:20:46] So part of the work that I've done is to see how you can take those higher tech and it can actually be folded into the lower tech, meaning that actually it's, it-- you can address both issues simultaneously if done, if the contemplative technology is designed the right way. That's why you have to redesign the technology.

[01:21:04] So that, I think, has been done. So that we have. The second piece is what the delivery system is, because the old structures of the delivery system of these traditions were hierarchical in a very traditional sense. And if it's not traditional and you have Western teachers who are teaching these teachings, then they'll teach them within a modernist structure, which is a kind of capitalist extractive structure where I'm the teacher and I'm the expert, and you're my students, you're gonna pay me.

[01:21:37] So all, so both of those, neither of those structures work, and then they're not gonna work. And also, we don't want a single teacher. So what's much more important is a decentralized, decentralized delivery system. Well, that we can do now, right? So, you know, you want a decentralized delivery system that can deliver to the, you know, the, path in a, in such a way that the actual, it's the intelligence of the members of the circle.

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[01:22:09] So rather than orienting towards the teacher, the orientation is deep towards relationality with one another. And the educational process is a, is an educational process in culture as you go through those developmental stages. So rather than going through the developmental stages individually, which is the old method, you go through those individual stages collectively and everything is oriented towards that developmental education.

[01:22:39] that can be scaled and decentralized and delivered, but again, it's got to do with re- it's got to do with the kind of size of oper- of project needed to do that. But that, I don't think that's a problem, and then you can convert that core, you can convert that core technology from sacred secular, which would maybe speak to a certain amount of population.

[01:23:06] The, it can be re- it can be re-skinned inc- as Christianity and Islam and in Judaism, meaning that part of the study f- that I did with Dr. Dan, I started studying Dr. Dan's work when I was, like, 14, was looking at the deep structures of these systems, and of course they're universal. The meditative traditions generally are universal because the people who worked on them were the 0.001% of the population, and they're very similar.

[01:23:34] So once you understand that, then you can have a deep structure that's universal, but you can have a languaging that is Christian and a language that is La- Islamic and a language that is Jewish, that can take at least 20% of the population to that, kind of stage of development.

[01:23:51] **Nate Hagens:** With respect to your own work in the world, what are your current fears and hopes and dreams?

[01:23:59] **John Churchill:** My-- what I'm really interested in is looking for those individuals who understand what it is that we have to build. That's where I'm really

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interested in that depth of collaboration, to mobilize within one story you call it a dharma army, within another story you could call it a rock band, right?

[01:24:30] I mean, you know, be- because it really, it needs to have in order to do what needs to be done, it needs to be outrageous in so many different ways. Because, you know, it's, cr- we're in a crazy situation. So one perspective you have to understand it, it's, like it's a form w- without the under- understanding that what we have to do is a form of theater.

[01:24:58] And by theater I mean, you know, in the great mysteries there was always a mystery play that was the center of the mystery. But the difference from a meta modern perspective is that we are in that mystery pl- play, and so f- and therefore we have to start to grow into a greater degree of narrative and creativity than we have thus far.

[01:25:21] That's what my dream and hope for the future is.

[01:25:25] **Nate Hagens:** So for people listening, I mean, you're a teacher and you've learned and experienced a lot, since at least when you were 14. What can someone listening to this show do right now, today or this month, to help address the things discussed in this podcast?

[01:25:48] Or is it all up to politicians and leaders?

[01:25:51] **John Churchill:** Well, I think each of us in our own lives have to realize that it's go time And so that's gonna look different for each of us

[01:26:04] But we need, we desperately need each other. We need to

[01:26:15] find our courage for each of us and whatever that means for you in your life to reach out to other people, to take one more step in collaborating with others and exploring what that means. Taking more time in the natural world so

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that we can, so that you feel what it is that we're fighting for and realizing that when it, when this, when the beauty goes, the beauty's gone.

[01:26:51] Whatever situation we're in, begin to practice and learn and envision that there's a way that you might open to a mycelial connection with the others that are there. If we were all connected through a mycelial web of relationality and information, what might that feel like? What does... So whenever I'm walking around, if there's a tree, I'm like, "Okay, there's a connection to that tree or that flower or that person."

[01:27:21] Like, if that was true, because the brain doesn't know the difference between what you imagine to be true and what is true, and because you're unconsciously imagining yourself to be separate, let's start consciously imagining that we're woven together. For, you know, I used to do this as a teenager on the London Underground.

[01:27:44] I used to stand on the London Underground holding that thing and just envision w- like that, weaving with everybody in the, you know, in the, Tube with me. And then the heart starts to expand, and you're in a relationship with everybody. Whether that's true or not, it doesn't matter. What matters is it feels like it's true for you, and therefore it starts to change your motivation and your behavior.

[01:28:05] So use, use your imagination

[01:28:08] **Nate Hagens:** That, that was a Mahamudra practice, that, I remember that they advised us to go through the airport, on our way home- feeling that, and imagining that. That actually was beautiful. Thank you. How would you change those recommendations for young humans in their teens and 20s who become aware of all the things, economic, environmental, issues with our current trajectory?

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[01:28:37] **John Churchill:** I think the first thing is we have to imagine a world that is more beautiful and more good and true. So we have to e-- we need that to be alive within us. and of course, because we're fed with so many images, you actually have to feed yourself. You have to let yourself dream because a lot of the youth are being suffocated by the cynicism- and the lack of beauty of our culture, right? So it's so important to let yourself... We have to let ourselves dream. You have to let yourself dream what y- what you would like that world to look like.

[01:29:17] **Nate Hagens:** Why? Why is that so important?

[01:29:19] **John Churchill:** Why? Because the imagination is worth 100,000 words, and what you imagine to be real, what lives in your imagination becomes your chemistry.

[01:29:31] What you imagine to be real, your brain doesn't know the difference between that. So if you imagine, if you're just watching the news and you're just seeing images related to a world that, that is in despair and slowly being asphyxiated and destroyed, and you're not feeding yourself with imagery of a world that is being born because, yes, we're hospicing but we're also

[01:29:56] **Nate Hagens:** midwifing.

[01:29:57] **John Churchill:** So you-- what is it that you want to be a midwife, right? And yeah, it's like, yes, it's, there's a hospice and there's a midwife, and we can do both.

[01:30:05] **Nate Hagens:** So if the imagination is that important, and we are empathic social primates, what you just suggested also implies we probably should turn off the news, given how the news is these days.

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[01:30:19] **John Churchill:** We should be discerning as to what we eat, for sure. Beauty, goodness, and truth is worth fighting for. So you need to look for those places where there is relationality, where there is relationality. I think that's so important for the-- I know with my teens, like this, the journey's been one of where do I find deep connection with my peers?

[01:30:45] Where do I find a deep connection with my peers?

[01:30:47] **Nate Hagens:** Well, on the podcast with other guests, I often close by asking people, what do you care most about in the world? So I will ask you that, John.

[01:30:58] **John Churchill:** Beauty and goodness and truth. I care most about the depth of love and intimacy that we all sh- that we all share

[01:31:14] **Nate Hagens:** And that we all crave.

[01:31:16] **John Churchill:** And that we all crave, and that is the medicine For this, time

[01:31:24] **Nate Hagens:** Yeah. If you could wave a magic wand and there was no personal recourse to your decision, what is one thing you would do to improve the future for humanity and the biosphere? If

[01:31:36] **John Churchill:** I was to wave that magic wand. I would see a planetary level worldwide developmental educational project that wove the best of the arts together in such a way that introduced this new developmental stage of a culture.

[01:32:00] It's art, it's music, it's food, it's in such a way that it kind of caught a light and could leave this tragedy that we find ourselves in behind.

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[01:32:19] **Nate Hagens:** From your imagination to reality, my friend, do you have any closing comments for people watching and listening who, at least partially understand and agree with what you've laid out today?

[01:32:33] **John Churchill:** We are hospicing, but we're also midwifing. And so there is a dawning. And so we-- so let us keep, keep our hearts aligned with that world of truth and beauty and goodness. And even though it might not be here yet, and we're watching this hospice process, let's believe in that tomorrow of humanity for our children and our children's children.

[01:32:59] And when-- and we're not gonna give up. So nobody gets out of here alive. This is a hundred percent mortality rate. So fuck, let's find something worth dying for and put our-- put ourselves into it so that there's, you know-- So that when we leave, we don't fee- we don't feel like we just were pote- kind of we watched something happen and didn't actually do what needs to be done.

[01:33:24] So whatever we need to do, whatever you need to do, whatever I need to do, whatever our listeners need to do, let's do it.

[01:33:31] **Nate Hagens:** Thank you for all your work, and your vision and your time today. definitely to be continued, my friend.

[01:33:37] **John Churchill:** My pleasure. Thanks, Nate, and thanks to the listeners for listening.

[01:33:41] **Nate Hagens:** If you'd like to learn more about this episode, please visit thegreatsimplification.com for references and show notes.

[01:33:49] From there, you can also join our Hilo community and subscribe to our Substack newsletter. This show is hosted by me, Nate Hagens, edited by No Troublemakers Media, and produced by Misty Stinnett and Lizzy Sirianni. Our

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production team also includes Leslie Batt-Lutz, Brady Heyen, Julia Maxwell, Gabriella Sleiman, and Grace Brunfelt.

[01:34:13] Thank you for listening, and we'll see you on the next episode