



**MercenaryTrader**

*Metaprocess Report:*  
**METAPROCESS: THE CORE  
MANTRAS & ACRONYMS**

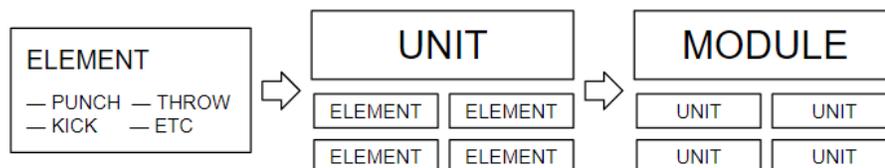
## **METAPROCESS: THE CORE MANTRAS & ACRONYMS**

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## METAPROCESS: THE CORE MANTRAS AND ACRONYMS

If you haven't yet, we recommend reading **Metaprocess: The Gateway to Superhuman Performance** – the prior report explaining how Metaprocess works.



*Metaprocess is organized like a mental martial art.*

To quickly refresh: Metaprocess is organized like a mental martial art.

When learning a martial art, the basic elements are punches, kicks and throws.

These basic elements are first learned individually, then in combinations, progressing from elements to units to modules.

As the combinations grow more complex, skill levels increase. An advanced Kata – a series of choreographed movements – can be multiple modules put together.

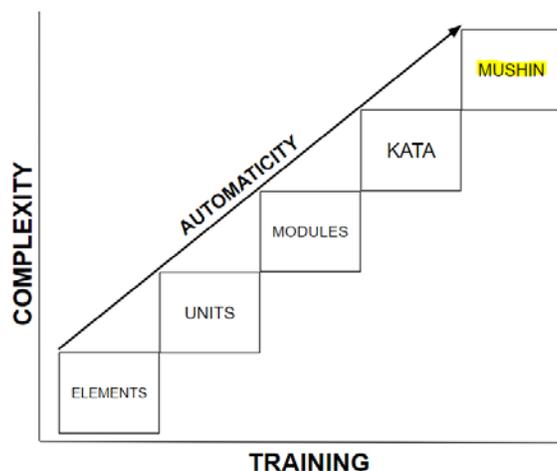
With sufficient practice and training, automaticity develops. This allows movements to be executed automatically, without conscious thought, while retaining the proper form and technique.

With enough practice, Mushin is developed – the ability to flow in a state of “mind without mind.”

It is the state of Mushin that is prized, because Mushin is the height of effectiveness in live combat.

When Mushin is achieved, the training takes over instinctively.

This allows for levels of heightened perception and creativity, with the mind unburdened by execution.



*The core mantras and acronyms of Metaprocess are comparable to the basic elements of a physical martial art.*

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The goal is the same: To practice with the elements, in order to gain comfort and familiarity with technique, and eventually to advance into Mushin.

Metaprocess makes use of Linguistic Performance Management (LPM) because, rather than via physical movements, the mantras and acronyms are activated via language: Either reading, speaking, journalizing, listening, or simply visualizing.

To quickly refresh the principles of LPM:

Structural change to a mental network is **pursued incrementally**, via an accumulated series of small steps over time.

Any effort to create change has to be **immersive and enthusiastic**, embraced as a wholly engaged and top-of-mind endeavor.

**Expectations of repetition, patience and commitment** must be cultivated early, to avoid disappointment or discouragement from temporary setbacks or overquick expectations.

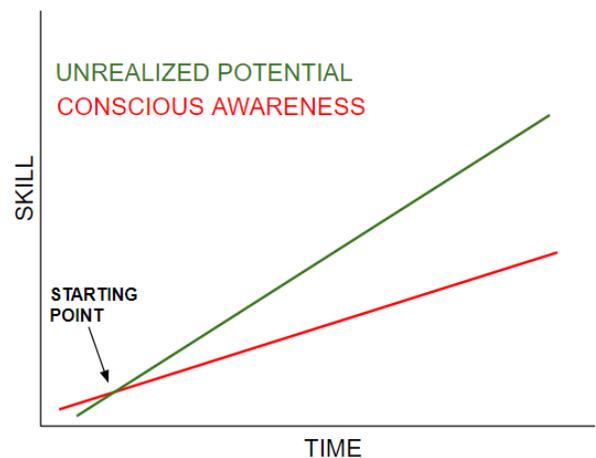
Effort must be made to **self-analyze and routinely interpret feedback**, in order that progress and results might be analyzed and contemplated, fueling insights and adjustments toward the goal.

*The goal of Metaprocess is nothing less than personal transformation.*

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This is as true for the advanced practitioner as it is for the beginner, via the relationship between conscious awareness and unrealized potential.

The more you learn and grow, the more conscious awareness you develop of how far you remain from your unrealized potential.



Think of the average level of physical fitness for humans today, in comparison to our hunter-gatherer ancestors (who spent their days hunting, foraging and exploring, and were the greatest long-distance runners on the planet).

The gap between what is present and what is possible, in mental and emotional terms, is even greater than the physical fitness gap that now exists.

Devoted martial arts practitioners often find that the practice goes well beyond their initial fitness goals.

The martial art becomes less about physical prowess or capability in combat, and more about a state of being and a way of life.

Metaprocess is designed with comparably ambitious intent. Putting aside labels and definitions, one's choice of mental models and daily focus efforts leads to deep consideration of questions like:

*Who do I want to be? Who will I choose to be? Would I rather conform, or walk my own path?*

*Who do I want to be? Who will I **choose** to be? Would I rather conform, or walk my own path? Do I want to be enslaved by an external system of beliefs and behaviors, thrust upon me by circumstance? Or will I define my own existence as I see fit?*

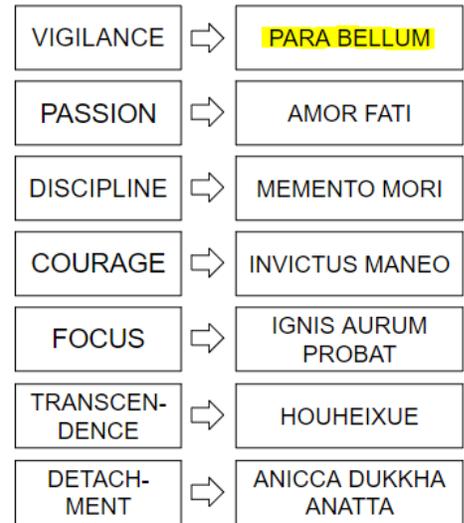
## PARA BELLUM (VIGILANCE)

Para Bellum has its origins in a Latin adage, “Si vis pacem, para bellum,” which means:

*If you want peace, prepare for war.*

The phrase is adapted from the works of Publius Flavius Vegetius Renuatus (commonly referred to as Vegetius), a writer of the late Roman Empire (circa late fourth century).

As a mantra, Para Bellum – literally “Prepare For War” – represents a **constant embrace of vigilance**, not just on occasion but as an ingrained habit and a way of life.



*Life is a struggle for survival, with combat and counter-defenses woven throughout.*

Life is a struggle for survival, with combat and counter-defenses woven throughout.

This is not a philosophical statement so much as a basic observation.

All of nature, the total history and arc of it, is a pantheon of struggle.

Species compete for scarce resources. Species develop strategies and counter-strategies in response to one another’s strategies. Species thrive and expand at the expense of other species, who sometimes falter and go extinct.

Consider one of the most important reasons why mammals need sleep – to replenish and rebuild the immune system, a first line of defense against parasites.

The body is under constant attack by viruses and bacteria. Nothing in nature can evolve faster than these two.

The virus and bacteria threat is so constant, evolutionary biologists believe that sexual reproduction came about because of it.

When the male and female of a species mate, they scramble the genes of their offspring. This is like spinning a combination lock, making it harder for a viral or bacterial invader to pick it.

*The immune system is in a constant battle with microscopic invaders. Your white blood cells are engaged in a forever war.*

One of the reasons sleep is necessary, among others, is because the body is under constant attack. The immune system is in a constant battle with microscopic invaders. Your white blood cells are engaged in a forever war.

If inadequate time is devoted to resting the body, and replenishing the resources of the immune system, the body goes into triage mode.

Like a military that demands its share of a shrunken budget, energy resources are taken from other areas, forcing the body to skimp on cognitive processes and neglect tissue repairs. The overall state of the body, and mind, is weakened and degraded. Nor is it just bacteria and viruses that go on the attack.

*In an abstract sense, the mind and ego are also under assault – routinely susceptible to hungry invaders and parasites.*

In an abstract sense, the mind and ego are also under assault – routinely susceptible to hungry invaders and parasites.

Consider, for example, the unspoken mission of Silicon Valley: To turn as many human beings as possible into consumption slave automatons.

Spend all your time on Facebook. Spend hours each evening on Netflix. Waste 30 minutes at a clip on your smartphone. Be distracted by this. Be enticed by that. Let your life be consumed by a screen.

Armies of PhDs with six-figure salaries. Big data consultants and machine learning algorithms. All devoted to maximizing your level of addiction, leveraging every additional ten seconds, tweaking for every additional click.

Modern capitalism is the greatest prosperity machine in all of human history.

It is also a system relentlessly designed to capture and monetize every ounce of unclaimed attention span – not via the barrel of a gun, but rather via carefully manipulated appeals to desires and weaknesses... in order to milk people like cows.

In a world where countless billions in R&D budgets are spent every year finding ever more sophisticated ways to siphon your attention, and thus your time and energy, the choices are two.



*Be vigilant in protecting your time and energy – or be a battery.*

Be vigilant in protecting your time and energy – or be a battery.

Vigilance is also critical because, whatever you want to accomplish – if it is a truly meaningful goal – may be harder than you think, and take longer than you think, and demand more of your blood, sweat and tears than you first realized.

Most people underestimate the inherent challenge in achieving truly meaningful goals. This is just how it works.

We theorize it has to do with unaddressed complexity. In addition to the challenges you can see, there are many challenges you can't see – at least at first.

But these extra challenges don't have to be a problem if the vigilance is there, and if an attitude of "prepare for war" (Para Bellum) was established from the outset.

An attitude of accomplishment in pursuit of a major goal is like preparing to trek the South Pole, or preparing to climb Mount Everest.

If you take the mission seriously, and prepare with vigilance and diligence, you can finish the quest. If not, the quest can finish you instead.

Peace is brought about through war preparations because, when it comes down to it, there are really only two paths to peace in the modern world.

You can fight, and engage in battles and win, and find peace on your own terms...

*There is the vigilant peace of the free and the uneasy peace of the conquered.*

Or you can surrender, and accept the dictation of someone else’s terms.

There is the vigilant peace of the free and the uneasy peace of the conquered.

Most people choose to surrender.

“Get along to go along” is surrender.

“Be comfortable with what you’re given” is surrender.

Relying on others, or blaming others for one’s failings, is surrender.

Doing work you really don’t want to do... living a life you don’t really want to live... because you “don’t have a choice,” is surrender.

Under fortunate circumstances, surrender can be comfortable.

But surrender is still surrender, whatever the perks. And for some there will never be comfort in that.

Para Bellum is waking up every day and recognizing a choice and an obligation.

If you choose not to surrender, then your choice is war. Because interests that would prefer your surrender will be warring against you.

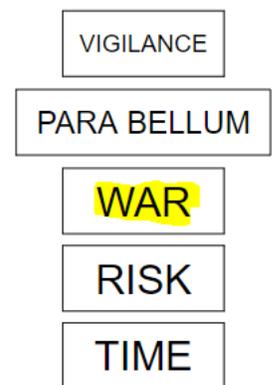
*For the one who goes to war, there is calmness in being vigilant and peace in preparation.*

And if your choice is war, then your obligation, to yourself, is to be vigilant. For the one who goes to war, there is calmness in being vigilant and peace in preparation.

**Para Bellum – WAR**

The Para Bellum WAR acronym stands for:

**WEAPONS  
AT  
READY**



From the moment you wake up in the morning, you are presented with choices.

You could choose to surf the web on your smartphone, for example, and waste 20 minutes before you’ve even rolled out of bed.

You could choose to replay an irritating comment said to you the day before, spending the morning in an ego-driven haze of resentment.

You could mull over anxieties and grudgingly prepare for your day with an unspoken attitude of victimhood or weary resignation.

Or... as an alternative...

You could recognize that every new day is the first day of the rest of your life (apart from the day you die).

*Even if you live to be 150 via the miracles of medicine, the relative timespan of your existence is short.*

You could recognize that, even if you live to be 150 via the miracles of medicine, the relative timespan of your existence is short.

And then you can choose to go to WAR – with Weapons At Ready – from the moment you wake up, for the sake of what you are building and who you are becoming.

A core recognition of the WAR acronym, and Para Bellum in general, is the fact that:

Life is full of emotional and logistical projectiles that will come flying at your head.

Life is full of things that will trap you, distract you, or trip you up.

Life is full of forces that want to siphon your time and energy.

Life is full of subtle distractions, scattered focus by a thousand cuts.

Another thing WAR recognizes:

To accomplish something meaningful, you have to push hard against resistance.

For the individual who seeks to build something, energy is even more precious.

These things require vigilance in terms of protection (self-defense) and vigilance in terms of opportunity maximization (going on offense, taking the chance to build).

WAR – Weapons At Ready – acknowledges you are not just a battery to be tapped.

Nor are you just a passive agent subjected to the whims of outside forces, or a helpless emotional mess traumatized by the outside world.

*You can understand the forces arrayed against you and you can take action against those forces. Every day.*

You have weapons. You have tools. You can take precautions. You can plan and strategize. You can understand the forces arrayed against you and you can take action against those forces. Every day.

Because to be who you choose to become... to build what you choose to build... you will have to do this (strategize and prepare and fight).

If you don't, your hopes and goals will succumb to disappointment, like a body with a non-functional immune system. Hostile forces will overwhelm.

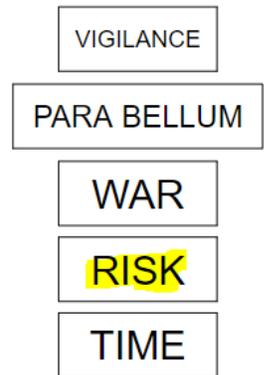
In terms of Weapons at Ready, there also actual mental weapons – KNIFE and SWORD and ROPE – as explored in the Memento Mori mantra.

But a key aspect of personal transformation here is waking up in constructive combat mode – the calm warrior, ready to do battle for your dreams and your code – every single day, until the day you accomplish your dreams or the day you don't wake up.

**Para Bellum – RISK**

The Para Bellum RISK acronym stands for:

**RIGOROUSLY  
IMPLEMENT  
SYSTEMIC  
KNOWLEDGE**



Picture the following “What would you do” scenarios.

You are at a holiday party. You notice a toddler sitting on the couch next to a pile of coats. You observe in shock that the toddler is playing with a large pocket knife, taken from one of the coat pockets. The toddler clicks the knife open. What would you do?

You are filling up your car at a gas station. At a pump a few feet from yours, you see a man filling up his supersized pick-up truck – and attempting to light a cigarette, sparks flying from the lighter, with his head not far from the nozzle as it auto-fills the tank. What would you do?

In the first scenario, you would probably rush toward the toddler and take the knife away, knowing how easily the child be hurt.

In the second scenario you would likely back away and seek cover, and possibly ask the smoker (in a loud voice from a good distance away) if he is crazy.

In reacting instantly to such situations, it is necessary – in the mind’s eye – to first observe what is happening, and then to connect the visible scenario with a possible outcome.

This is not just cause-and-effect, but cause-and-possible-effect.

Both of the near-instant reactions – to the toddler with a knife and the smoker near a fuel tank – would thus come from scenario modeling on the fly.

The scenario modeling inputs come from knowledge of how certain systems work.

It is common knowledge for most adults that, in terms of the “system” that is small children plus knives, injury can easily occur.

And in terms of the “system” that is flame near an open fuel tank, it is common knowledge that a giant fireball can result.

To heed RISK on a routine basis – to Rigorously Implement Systemic Knowledge – is to be consciously aware of systems and their possible outputs.

*Scenario modeling inputs come from knowledge of how certain systems work.*

*To heed RISK on a routine basis is to be consciously aware of systems and their possible outputs.*

Systemic knowledge, by this criterion, means a rough awareness of what could happen, along with the associated probabilities and risks.

*The concept of probability times consequence is very important here.*

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The “trading graveyard” is filled with traders who underestimated the dangers of low probability events with extreme negative consequences.

A one percent probability sounds rather low, for example.

But in games with constantly repeating scenario variations, like poker, one percent events happen on a regular basis.

Also, if someone offered to let you play the equivalent of Russian Roulette at odds of 99 to 1 – where the prize is a large sum of money, with one percent odds you die – most sane individuals would say no.

*Making use of systemic knowledge means applying probability times consequences to different scenarios and systems as a habit, on a regular basis, as a form of investment.*

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Consider the difference between these two vacation outcomes:

Rick is on vacation in Europe. He is flash-mugged on a side street in Rome. His wallet, credit cards, cash and phone are gone. He has no backup plan for what to do. He panics.

Bill is on vacation in Europe. Coincidentally he is flash-mugged on a street in Rome, the same as Rick. Except Bill had a contingency plan for this. He has access codes and instructions for his email accounts printed out in his hotel room safe. He also has cash there. He also has procedural steps for “this is what you do if your phone and wallet get stolen.” Bill is calm. Things are ok.

How much effort does it take to have a contingency plan for a lost wallet and phone?

There is a little bit of work in setting up a plan – but not too much. And once set up, hopefully the plan is never used.

But if the plan ever does have to be used, boy will it be good to have it in place. The reward of the effort pays for itself hundreds of times over.

This is the type of thinking that RISK emphasizes. Seeing the surrounding world in terms of systems, scenarios and probabilities.

Being aware of potential dangers and downsides. Making upfront risk management investments that are low cost, with an immediate peace-of-mind payoff if they ever have to be used.

To Rigorously Implement Systemic Knowledge also goes hand in hand with RAPT, the Risk-Adjusted Profit Theorem (as described in a separate report).

## Para Bellum – TIME

The Para Bellum TIME acronym stands for:

**TOP  
IMPERATIVE  
MENTAL  
ENERGY**



As Morpheus told Neo, “time is always against us.”

This is true in the sense that time and energy are your most precious resources.

*Some goals are so large they have to be approached with a sense of urgency – or they won’t get done at all.*

It is also true in the sense that some goals are so large and multi-faceted they have to be approached with a sense of urgency – or they won’t get done at all.

If a goal is already big enough to be measured in years, for example – e.g. “I estimate it will take X years to do this” – then a sense of urgency is imperative.

Lacking that, the destination will fade into oblivion.

We also agree with the scripture that says, “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

*The net average of what you think about, and how often you think about it, will shape and define who you are and what you accomplish.*

The net average of what you think about, and how often you think about it, will shape and define who you are and what you accomplish.

Paul Graham, the founder of Y-Combinator, wrote about this concept in 2010. He called it “The Top Idea In Your Mind.” As Graham put it:

I realized recently that what one thinks about in the shower in the morning is more important than I'd thought. I knew it was a good time to have ideas. Now I'd go further: now I'd say it's hard to do a really good job on anything you don't think about in the shower...

There's a kind of thinking you do without trying to. I'm increasingly convinced this type of thinking is not merely helpful in solving hard problems, but necessary. The tricky part is, you can only control it indirectly...

I think most people have one top idea in their mind at any given time. That's the idea their thoughts will drift toward when they're allowed to drift freely. And this idea will thus tend to get all the benefit of that type of thinking, while others are starved of it. Which means it's a disaster to let the wrong idea become the top one in your mind.

Being cognizant of TIME – Top Imperative Mental Energy – means deliberately and strategically allocating your flows of thought. Especially when you have a choice.

The need to maximize TIME is one of the reasons ego problems are such killers.

Think what happens to the individual who is obsessed with ego-related issues in some way or another. This can take many forms, for example:

a constant obsession with self-image and the perception of others

an easily bruised self-image quick to react to perceived slights

an attitude of resentment that permeates daily interactions

a barrage of negative thoughts associated with reduced self-worth

The problem with all of these ego-driven issues is the TIME cost.

It's like being the cool kid in high school. Trying to maintain "cool" status can be so much work, in terms of social presentation and mental effort, that time for studies falls by the wayside.

Even more directly, ego-driven issues simply burn up TIME like paper in fire.

*If you are thinking about your ego or your self-image in some way, by definition you aren't thinking about solving problems or advancing your strategic goals.*

If you are thinking about your ego or your self-image in some way, by definition you aren't thinking about solving problems or advancing your strategic goals.

TIME is comparable to RISK in terms of taking a fairly abstract concept – "what do I think about in the shower" – and trying to quantify where that TIME is spent so that the mind is put to its best use.

Another way to think about TIME is that, whatever your top imperatives are, it is probably the case that the more mental energy you pour into them, the better.

This is also true because, once a top imperative is taken care of, or addressed to the point that other things are more important, it is no longer a top imperative.

It moves down in the rotation, allowing a new top imperative to take its place.

If you imagine your brain as an expensive computer – and it actually IS expensive, if you think about education and food and sleep as costs – then it would make sense you would want that computer crunching away on top imperatives at all times.

This is the TIME mindset, which goes hand in hand with WAR and RISK and the general vigilance aspect of Para Bellum.

*The uniting thread that runs through WAR, RISK and TIME is a clear sense of urgency and a strategic level of attention paid to time and energy allocations, on a day in and day out basis.*

The uniting thread that runs through WAR, RISK and TIME is a clear sense of urgency and a strategic level of attention paid to time and energy allocations, on a day in and day out basis.

The Para Bellum mantra can be recited first thing in the morning, or as the first in the full seven mantra string (which only takes ten seconds or so to recite in full).

The associated WAR, RISK, and TIME acronyms can be recited or called upon or visualized at any point where vigilance may be required in advance, or where it is helpful to unpack and reinforce the underlying vigilance concepts as a life habit.

## AMOR FATI – PASSION

Amor Fati means “love your fate.”

The concept comes from the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who wrote:

My formula for greatness in a human being is amor fati: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it... but love it.

The Amor Fati concept has also been linked to Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius.

As Nietzsche further wrote:

I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful.

*Amor Fati is powerful in its combination of acceptance, release, and potential.*

Amor Fati is powerful in its combination of acceptance, release, and potential:

**ACCEPTANCE:** There is no other reality than this one. There are no other circumstances than these. Life simply “is.” Why not embrace this?

**RELEASE:** If no other circumstances are possible, then no other circumstances matter. Jealousy, regret, wistfulness, angst – if there is only one reality, and only one path forward, then all negative emotions can simply be released.

**POTENTIAL:** While fate is fate, the future is unwritten. That means the future can be glorious, or at least in some small measure glorious. Given this, why not fight for glory? Why not fight with passion, in battles however large or small?

*To love your fate, in a sense, is to be amazed by the opportunity to exist.*

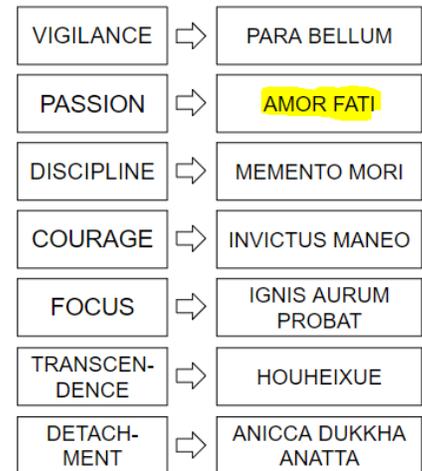
To love your fate, in a sense, is to be amazed by the opportunity to exist.

Which is better, existing or not existing? One might say that depends on interpretations of pleasure and pain, and how much of each one is apportioned.

But if the power of experience and the memories of beauty and glory matter more, in the end, than temporary pain – and all pain is ultimately temporary – then one can say it is unquestionably better to exist than not exist.

And if that is your stance and your foundational base – that it is an amazing thing to experience the gift of existence – then you can embrace the circumstances of who you are and where you are, no matter what, and you can choose to fight for glory.

To “love one’s fate” is more than just to make a constructive philosophical choice. It is to tap into a deep biological wellspring of power and health and resilience.



Studies suggest that depressive moods evolved as a survival mechanism, to reduce activity levels when hunter-gatherers were trapped in their shelters by bad weather or forced to semi-hibernate in food-scarce winters.

The modern day result is a kind of vicious circle. If conditions arise to trigger a depressive mood, the body sends out “I’m depressed” signals and the mind responds.

The loop can also work in reverse, with the mind saying “I’m depressed” and the body growing lethargic on cue.

The loop then threatens to become self-reinforcing through factors like lack of sleep, poor nutrition habits, lack of exercise, and lack of sunshine. If you combine all of the above, watch out.

The Amor Fati stance is a cure for this vicious loop in part because, if you simply CHOOSE to have a wildly powerful outlook on life – if you CHOOSE to fight for glory, not because of any externally validating circumstance at all, but simply because you exist and you are here and so WHY NOT – then it will be much, much harder for negative external circumstances to knock you into a depression spiral.

The resilience of the mind – in choosing to love your fate, regardless of what it is – then translates to the body, which takes the cue to maintain a fighting posture and to upkeep the factors that go with that: Good nutrition, exercise, sunshine, engaging in plans for the future, pushing forward.

At its core one could describe Amor Fati as a kind of reverse nihilism.

Nihilism as a belief system – the idea that life is meaningless, that nothing matters because life is meaningless – is associated with a dark and dreary pessimism.

Amor Fati could be cast as reverse nihilism in that it says: THE FACT OF MY EXISTENCE AND MY ABILITY TO EXPERIENCE THINGS IS AMAZING, regardless of what happens and regardless of how it ends... so **given that joyous freedom, why not go for glory?**

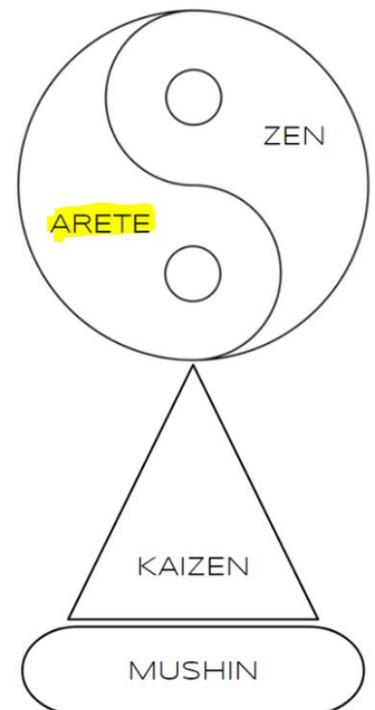
So many burdens in life are self-chosen. Most of them can simply be cast off. Amor Fati – choosing to love one’s fate – is instead a joy that can be taken up.

And who and what can stop you, if you choose to love your fate and embrace your existential destiny, regardless of what it is? Who can tell you not to like the movie? Who can tell you not to enjoy the ride?

Amor Fati is linked to Arete in the Arete-Zen balance because the fierce, unbridled passion of Amor Fati is a source of energy for the striving, the pushing and the doing of Arete – the blasting through obstacles, the crafting of plans, the kicking ass and getting things done. It is the passion that drives daily excellence.

*At its core one could describe Amor Fati as a kind of reverse nihilism.*

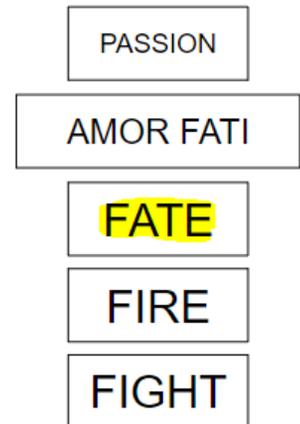
*Who can tell you not to like the movie? Who can tell you not to enjoy the ride?*



## Amor Fati – FATE

The Amor Fati FATE acronym stands for:

**FULL  
AWARENESS  
TOTAL  
EMBRACE**



Imagine a samurai on the night before a major battle.

The samurai knows this battle will decide his fate, and the fate of all his countrymen.

The samurai knows that, if the battle is lost, his family could be enslaved. And his own life will be forfeit.

The samurai also knows he could die in the heat of battle – and go to the grave not knowing whether his side won or lost.

Knowing all this, the samurai gets a good night's sleep.

How can he sleep on such a night?

Because a good night's sleep is necessary for maximum performance. And because fate is fate. Whatever happens will happen. The samurai has controlled all the things he can control. Tomorrow, he battles. And then fate has its say.

Knowing this, the samurai accepts his fate. And peacefully begins to snore.

The Greek historian Thucydides, chronicler of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC war between Sparta and Athens, once wrote:

The bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, and yet notwithstanding, go out to meet it.

The FATE acronym is about realism and resignation, responded to with passion.

**REALISM:** Accepting reality in terms of the possible range of outcomes. Not obsessing over the possibility of danger or loss – but not downplaying it either.

**RESIGNATION:** Mentally preparing for all outcomes and scenarios, including the ones that hurt. Grasping the nettle, not shying away from it.

**PASSION:** Going into battle with full strength, full weaponry, and full fury. If it is going to be a fight, then let it be an epic one. Full Arete, full Amor Fati. Which, in turn, maximizes the probability of success.

*Whatever happens will happen.*

*The FATE acronym is about realism and resignation, responded to with passion.*

FATE also recognizes the possibility of failure when going for an ambitious goal... and pushes forward anyway.

Sometimes, if not frequently, the fear of failure can be an obstacle that holds someone back.

Whatever form failure might take – a feeling of rejection, a feeling of inadequacy, a significant time or energy or capital cost – FATE comes into play if the individual weighs up the pluses and minuses, decides the goal is worth going for, and then wants passion to come on board.

A strategic decision involving rewards and risks is best made with a cool head. But once the decision is made, FATE can be used to bring up the passion reserves.

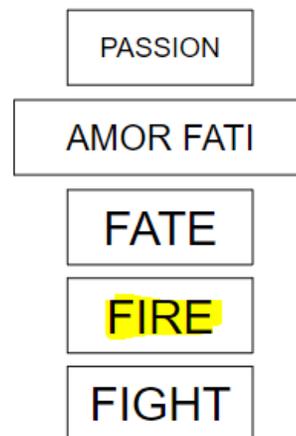
When the decision is made, and the dangers are known, and residual fear is acting as an obstacle or an impediment – FATE can be called upon to burn through and execute with passion.

Or FATE can be used to wait patiently and calmly (sleeping restfully instead of burning up energy by fretting for example) until the time to execute is at hand.

#### Amor Fati – FIRE

The Amor Fati FIRE acronym stands for:

**FIERCE  
INTERNAL  
RESERVE  
ENERGY**



*Once the decision is made, FATE can be used to bring up the passion reserves.*

*Emotion, properly controlled, is a powerful resource.*

Emotion, properly controlled, is a powerful resource.

The ultimate ideal is not to suppress or restrain or remove one’s capacity for emotional response.

Instead, the ideal is to cultivate the ability to channel emotion at will – and to cultivate the proper emotion at the proper time.

Think of the brakes on a high-end sports car.

In a way, the brakes are meant to let the sports car go faster.

How so? Because the better the brakes, and the greater the levels of available control, the more power the sports car’s engine can safely deliver to the wheels.

In Metaprocess, disciplines relating to Zen are like the brakes on the sports car. Having perfected the ability to detach or cool off at will, one can then learn to ramp up the turbo – and channel a well-timed blast of useful emotional power.



*The FIRE concept – Fierce Internal Reserve Energy – has ancient roots in biology.*

The FIRE concept – Fierce Internal Reserve Energy – has ancient roots in biology.

Think of the surge of adrenaline that supposedly allowed a grandmother to lift a car in order to save a child. (Probably an urban legend, but rooted in real phenomena.)

Our hunter-gatherer ancestors used adrenaline to hunt or fight or defend. Surges of emotion became a signaling device that prepared the body for an athletic feat.

In the modern world, these surges of adrenaline are often more harmful than helpful.

Getting angry in the context of an emotional fight, for example, can throw off one’s ability to concentrate for hours, sometimes even for days.

But just as it is possible to instantly cool down or detach with Zen techniques, it is also possible to call up FIRE – Fierce Internal Reserve Energy – in a constructive manner.

*There are times when a burst of adrenaline can be useful – when a deliberate “reaching down deep,” to come back with FIRE, serves a purpose.*

There are times when a burst of adrenaline can be useful – when a deliberate “reaching down deep,” to come back with FIRE, serves a purpose. For example:

**Breaking a depressive mood cycle.** Being subjected to the troubles of a hard problem, over and over, can lead to feeling weary and demoralized. This can result in a subtle build-up of depressive signals. Slumped shoulders. Defeated attitude. Self-doubt. A blast of FIRE in this situation can break the cycle, turn the mood around, and create new momentum in a more positive direction.

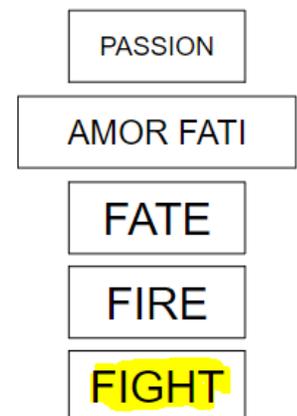
**Pushing through a monotonous task.** Certain tasks can feel grueling simply by way of their sheer repetitiveness, or the simple distastefulness of the thing. In the middle of such a task stretch the job can feel interminable, like digging a ditch a thousand miles long. A blast of FIRE here, where ferocious energy comes blasting in at a higher tempo, can shake off negativity and resentment.

**Dealing with failure, self-loathing or self-doubt.** Sometimes it is possible to feel like a complete and total idiot. A mistake, an error, a botched project or a bad call – whatever the source, anyone can sometimes feel like the world’s biggest jerk and fool, by way of their own internal harsh judgement. When these feelings become oppressive, FIRE can acknowledge the mistake, then create the fierce will to absorb the lessons and keep pushing forward.

**Amor Fati – FIGHT**

The Amor Fati FIGHT acronym stands for:

**FOCUS  
INTENSITY  
GRIT  
HUSTLE  
TECHNIQUE**



As the old saying goes (slightly tweaked):

It's not the size of the dog in the fight –  
it's the size of the FIGHT in the dog.

*However much FIGHT you have, it is always possible to have more.*

The interesting thing about the FIGHT quotient is that, however much FIGHT you have, it is always possible to have more.

**FOCUS.** Enhancing focus via cutting away distractions. Digging deeper for connections. Pushing harder for clarity. Resting and clearing the mind.

**INTENSITY.** However much passion and heart is being poured into something, it's usually possible to find some more – and to further push other things aside.

**GRIT.** Doubling down on an elbow-grease approach to researching and dissecting hard problems, then tripling down. Taking the gym rat approach to adversity – pain is weakness leaving the body.

**HUSTLE.** Just doing more. And then a little more. Pushing for that very last inch. And then pushing harder. Putting hustle on top of hustle.

**TECHNIQUE.** Being the man that Bruce Lee feared – the one who practiced a single kick 10,000 times. Practicing to repletion until technique is flawless.

The exhortation to FIGHT is energy intensive.

This is no coincidence – FATE and FIRE are energy intensive too. So is the whole AMOR FATI outlook, and the exhortation to embrace existence and love one's fate.

In Metaprocess, Amor Fati is the seat of Arete (FATE, FIRE and FIGHT all expressions of Arete) whereas Anicca Dukkha Anatta (the final mantra) is the seat of Zen.

### MEMENTO MORI (DISCIPLINE)

Memento Mori means "Remember you must die." The theme of mortality runs throughout philosophy, art and history.

A memento mori is an object or piece of art that reminds someone they will die.

Plato wrote that philosophy is about "dying and being dead."

The Greek stoics encouraged reflecting on mortality in routine daily life.

And the 2<sup>nd</sup> century writer Tertullian told of a Roman general in his victory parade, crowds cheering, with a slave to whisper in his ear: "Remember you are mortal."

*The theme of mortality runs throughout philosophy, art and history.*



*Memento Mori is especially relevant to Metaprocess because superhuman performance is rooted in care and maintenance of the body... and the body is mortal.*

Memento Mori is especially relevant to Metaprocess because superhuman performance is rooted in care and maintenance of the body... and the body is mortal.

Consider the following:

Only an immortal can drink poison and not be harmed.

Only an immortal can stay awake indefinitely.

Only an immortal can live forever.

Man is not immortal. He is very much mortal.

If man drinks poison, he is harmed (or killed).

If man shuns sleep, his body will demand rest (and eventually shuts down).

Whether he gets a few years or a lot of years, it is man's fate to die.

In the pursuit of excellence and superhuman performance, these factors matter a lot.

Yet the average human being, in today's modern world, behaves as if these factors don't matter much at all.

Consider:

**The average person consumes poison, sometimes in large quantities.** Not the "kill you directly" stuff, like rat poison, but the "kill you indirectly" stuff, like refined sugars that throw insulin levels out of whack, carbs that bloat the system, chemicals that degrade the body's ability to function, and so on.

**The average person grossly neglects their sleep needs.** A study from the UCLA school of medicine and Tel Aviv University shows that sleep deprivation can show the same level of cognitive impairment as being drunk. Many people are, in effect, walking around drunk. Also bad, their bodies have a build-up of cell damage and neglected repairs (as the body rations out limited energy stores).

**The average person wastes time and energy like they're going to live forever.** But we already know we aren't going to live forever, we are all going to die. And if a life is fully lived and experienced, even an extended lifespan of 150 years – a possibility in the coming age – could feel short.

"Memento Mori." Remember you are mortal.

*Your mortality has deeply practical implications for performance, particularly in respect to the functioning of your mind-body system as a machine.*

Your mortality has deeply practical implications for performance, particularly in respect to the functioning of your mind-body system as a machine.

The person who says "I can get by on five hours' sleep" might be correct. But that person might also be missing their full potential by a mile, in terms of the mental clarity and physical resilience that would be available at full rest levels. The same is true for the hundreds of millions who "get by" on chemical and carb-laden diets.

*Memento Mori invokes discipline, in the name of performance, because life is short and the mind-body machine needs tending to.*

Memento Mori invokes discipline, in the name of performance, because life is short and the mind-body machine needs tending to.

If combined with Para Bellum (vigilance) and Amor Fati (passion), the fact you are going to die should not be depressing or off-putting.

Instead it should be exhilarating. You are here for a limited time. Then the limited engagement ends.

What a show! Make the most of it! Make the most of your amazing machinery!

The discipline of Memento Mori also extends to information intake and distractions. This is also related to the challenge of properly tending the mind-body machine.

Most individuals don't get optimal nutrition or optimal rest because the response is, "I just don't have time."

But the same individual who says "I don't have time" for optimal nutrition and rest will often have time for junk information and low-quality distractions.

Memento Mori thus becomes a discipline of cutting:

Cutting away excess calories, excess distractions and excess commitments – anything that gets in the way of generally optimal nutrition and rest.

Cutting away non-vital things of all manner and kind, to make more time for the vital things that make life worth living.

Cutting away temptations and indulgences (except on occasion) with an emphasis on conscious discipline, and later automatic discipline, in pursuit of a deliberately chosen path and living one's best life.

*Memento Mori is a discipline of cutting away, in service to the biological reality of mortality, in order that one might maximize performance (and longevity) in pursuit of living one's best life.*

Memento Mori is a discipline of cutting away, in service to the biological reality of mortality, in order that one might maximize performance (and longevity) in pursuit of living one's best life.

**Memento Mori – KNIFE**

The Memento Mori KNIFE acronym stands for:

**KEEP  
NIO  
INPUTS  
FROM  
ENTRY**



NIO stands for "Negative Implied Odds." This concept is explored in a report on the Risk-Adjusted Profit Theorem (RAPT).

To quickly revisit the NIO concept, Negative Implied Odds (NIO) refer to the likelihood and magnitude of a negative outcome.

*Particularly awful NIO situations are ones where upside is minimal at best but the potential downside is substantial relative to reward.*

Particularly awful NIO situations are the ones where upside is minimal, at best, but the potential downside is substantial relative to reward. For example:

You have a significantly large project to finish up. But instead of getting back to work after a coffee break, you decide to surf the web for just a few minutes.

**Best case scenario:** You surf the web for five minutes, then get back to the project. Net gain from web surfing is marginal (close to zero).

**Bad scenario:** You get pulled into something interesting (though unrelated to your project) and wind up burning forty minutes of time, then feel foolish.

**Worst case scenario:** You get into a pointless message board or Twitter debate with a troll. It leaves you frustrated and furious. Not only do you lose ninety minutes, your emotional state is wrecked for the rest of the afternoon.

*To “Keep NIO Inputs From Entry” is to cut away inputs that have marginal upside but potentially significant downside.*

To “Keep NIO Inputs From Entry” (KNIFE) is to cut away inputs that have marginal upside but potentially significant downside.

This can also apply to relationship decisions, like whether or not to respond to the bait when someone delivers an intentionally irritating or cutting remark.

Upside for retaliation to a minor provocation: Probably marginal.

Emotional disturbance downside from getting sucked into a fight: Possibly large.

The Memento Mori KNIFE cuts this stuff away like a machete hacking through brush. Useless information? No thanks. Chance to distract myself for five minutes? No thanks. Invitation to get involved in this petty altercation? No thanks.

Cut, cut, cut.

Given everything that comes flying at your head, along with all the pointless temptations in a day, it is basically impossible to keep your mind too clear.

Cut away as much as you can muster and you might get 95% of it.

*The KNIFE can also cut away superfluous thoughts or useless trains of thought.*

The KNIFE can also cut away superfluous thoughts or useless trains of thought.

Sometimes your brain gets going in a certain direction and you suddenly realize you don't need to be thinking about X at all, or you've thought enough about X for the time being and now you want to just drop it.

A line from *Dune* comes in handy here:

Arrakis teaches the attitude of the knife – chopping off what's incomplete and saying: “Now it's complete because it's ended here.”

The KNIFE of Arrakis is a mental tool you can use by remembering the word “Arrakis.”

The idea is that, if you are thinking about something you want to stop thinking about, you simply say “Arrakis,” and the mind registers that as shorthand code for: *That subject is over, no more contemplation – “it’s complete because it’s ended here.”*

*The KNIFE, and the Arrakis concept, are particularly useful because of the high frequency of informational free radicals (IFRs) floating around.*

The KNIFE, and the Arrakis concept, are particularly useful because of the high frequency of informational free radicals (IFRs) floating around.

Free radicals are damaging to the body, and the body defends against free radicals with antioxidants.

Informational free radicals (IFRs) can be similarly damaging to a mental train of thought, in terms of unhelpful information streams disturbing your concentration or emotional equilibrium or otherwise throwing you off balance.

The KNIFE is useful for cutting away IFRs – pollutive information streams that degrade clarity of thought or distract needlessly from the path.

Cut, cut, cut.

### **Memento Mori – SWORD**

The Memento Mori SWORD acronym stands for:

**STOP  
WARNING  
OVERRIDE /  
REGIMENTED  
DISCIPLINE**



The Memento Mori SWORD is like the KNIFE – as Miyamoto Musashi said, “think only of cutting” – but is put to an even more powerful use.

*The SWORD is used internally, to cut away weakness and potential lapses in discipline.*

The SWORD is used internally, to cut away weakness and potential lapses in discipline. You use the SWORD to cut away your own internal resistance, and thus to keep on pushing when your mind wants to quit.

Consider the timed two-minute planking exercise.

The standard plank involves holding the body in a stationary position, back straight, with your hands planted under your shoulders (like you’re about to do a push-up).

The two-minute planking exercise involves setting a timer for two minutes, not looking at it, and then holding the plank until the timer goes off.

If you're like most people, the two-minute plank exercise will cause your mind to cry out "STOP!" at some point. (If you are super-fit, try setting the timer for five minutes.)

Not being able to see the timer, the two minutes spent in the plank position starts to feel endless. The muscles start to quiver. The mind starts to wonder if the timer is broken. There is a sense of ice ages passing by.

Then, if you keep holding it, just as the body is about to collapse in frustration, the timer goes off and the exercise is complete.

*That feeling of resistance, where the mind is yelling "STOP!" far too early, is the feeling that the Memento Mori SWORD is meant to overcome.*

That feeling of resistance, where the mind is yelling "STOP!" far too early, is the feeling that the Memento Mori SWORD is meant to overcome.

The mind can be a spoiled brat sometimes.

It is easy to feel mental fatigue – to a point where the mind is calling out "STOP!" – long before the point where stopping would actually be justified.

This makes sense because the mind and body have safety regulators built in.

The reason the mind and body will cry out "STOP!" after running a certain distance, for example, is so that the body doesn't run itself to death.

But the regulators are set at far too sensitive a setting. It is possible, either mentally or physically or both, to push much, much farther than the untrained "STOP!" point would have us believe.

There is an ex-Navy SEAL named David Goggins who has something called the 40 percent rule.

The 40% rule is as follows:

*"When the mind is telling you you're done, you're only 40% done."*

"When the mind is telling you you're done, you're only 40% done."

Goggins is a little nuts. He reportedly used the 40% rule to finish a 100-mile endurance run while weighing more than 200 pounds, having damaged his kidneys and broken all the small bones in both of his feet. Goggins is also the World Record holder for the most pull-ups done in 24 hours (at 4,025).

Kidney damage? Broken bones? No thanks. But the 40% rule makes sense as a concept, when used within the bounds of health.

The SWORD – Stop Warning Override / Regimented Discipline – is more powerful than the KNIFE in that it is used with more power and force.

The SWORD is swung with ferocity, metaphorically speaking, to overcome fierce internal resistance. And the use of the SWORD, as with most things, gets easier with practice and habit.

The first step is recognizing that, not often but always, when the mind is crying "STOP!" it is still way too early to stop – and the mind is just being a baby.

## Memento Mori – ROPE

The Memento Mori ROPE acronym stands for:

# RECALIBRATION OF PLEASURE EXPECTATION



If you remember the story of Odysseus, one of his challenges was sailing past the island of the Sirens.

Odysseus has his men plug their ears with beeswax, then orders himself bound to the mast of the ship.

The Sirens lure men to a watery grave with their songs. But Odysseus is restrained and his men can't hear.

The Memento Mori ROPE – Recalibration of Pleasure Expectation – is like the rope that tied Odysseus to the mast.

It keeps you from temptations that would harm you (or divert you from your quest).

*Pleasure can be grouped into two categories, accretive and dilutive.*

Pleasure can be grouped into two categories, accretive and dilutive.

**ACCRETIVE PLEASURES:** Pleasures which can be enjoyed in harmony with good health and long-term life goals, for a net addition to overall well-being.

**DILUTIVE PLEASURES:** Pleasures which are at odds with good health and long-term life goals, for a net subtraction from overall well-being.

An extreme example of a dilutive pleasure might be heroin. It feels amazing (or so we hear, according to the movie *Trainspotting*). But it also destroys your life in record time and maybe kills you dead on the spot.

An accretive pleasure might be putting hardwood floors in your house, or setting up your office so that it overlooks a lake. You could draw a small measure of happiness from the warmth of those floors, or the beauty of that lake view, thousands or even tens of thousands of times.

*The idea behind ROPE is to move toward accretive pleasures and move away from dilutive pleasures.*

The idea behind ROPE is to move toward accretive pleasures and move away from dilutive pleasures.

Partaking in pleasures that add to your total quality of life? Yes. Partaking in pleasures that dilute overall quality of life? No.

Sometimes those dilutive pleasures can be tempting. That's when you use the ROPE – the Recalibration Of Pleasure Expectation – to sail past the temptation like Odysseus.

The four basic steps in using ROPE are:

**Tie yourself to the mast.** Get to a place where the temptation is out of reach, and commit to working through a verbal train of thought. This might mean physical removal. If the temptation is a bag of cookies in the kitchen, for example, get out of the kitchen.

**Work through the expectation rationale.** Explain to yourself, either verbally or through a recorded memo or journalization, why the temptation you want to avoid is dilutive – why it is net negative instead of positive.

**Visualize the negative impact of indulgence.** Paint a mental picture of all the bad or negative outcomes that will result if you give in to this temptation. Emphasize the downsides to create an “away” behavior motivation.

**Visualize the positive impacts of abstaining.** Paint a mental picture of how good you will feel if you avoid the temptation, and the psychological rewards and physical gains you will have if you stay disciplined.

KNIFE, SWORD and ROPE are all expressions of personal discipline, in homage to the reality of mortality and the performance needs of the mind and body.

*There is an emphasis on cutting away distractions and low value inputs because, by the time the mind and body’s needs are cared for, time is invariably short.*

There is an emphasis on cutting away distractions and low value inputs because, by the time the mind and body’s needs are cared for, time is invariably short.

And there is an emphasis on cutting away resistance because, without training, the mind is inclined to throw in the towel far too early. It takes practice and training to recalibrate the settings.

ROPE then orients toward accretive pleasures rather than dilutive ones, so that all indulgences of pleasure, to as great a degree as possible, are in harmony with bigger picture goals and the overriding mandate to live one’s best life.

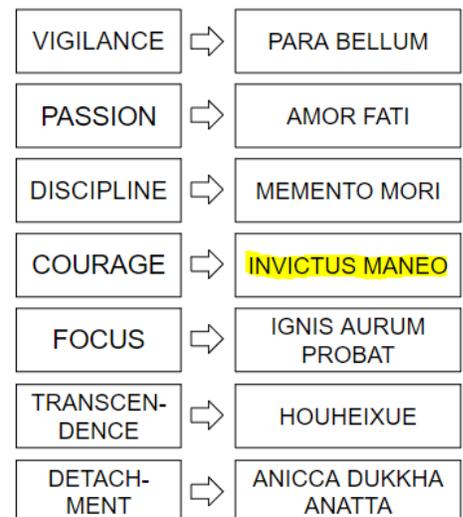
### INVICTUS MANEO (COURAGE)

Invictus Maneo means “I remain unvanquished.” It is the motto for Clan Armstrong, a Lowland Scottish clan of the Scottish Borders – one of the 32 council areas of Scotland – with roots dating back to the eleventh century.

Two of the most distinguished modern-day Armstrongs are Sir Alexander Armstrong, an Arctic explorer, and Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon.

Invictus Maneo is a battle cry of resilience and defiance. It is a refusal to give up or give in. It is a way of saying, “I’m still here... and I still have the will and strength to fight.”

*Invictus Maneo is a battle cry of resilience and defiance.*



Invictus Maneo, like the Memento Mori SWORD, is internally directed.

It gives an appearance of external defiance. “I Remain Unvanquished” calls to mind Jake LaMotta in Raging Bull: “You never got me down, Ray.”

But in the context of Metaprocess, Invictus Maneo is an internal battle cry, not an external one, because it is directed at inner demons, meant to overcome inner turmoil and doubt.

Specifically, Invictus Maneo marshals courage in the presence of fear, pain or shock.

Fear can be hampering, or even paralyzing, if left unchecked.

Meanwhile the anticipation of pain, or the fear of pain, can sometimes be worse than the actual pain itself.

And shock, or the anticipation of one, can be fear, pain and turmoil mixed together.

Invictus Maneo is the counter-response to fear and pain and shock, to keep these things from being paralyzing or debilitating.

“I remain unvanquished” is a reminder that even if pain comes, even if a particular fear comes to pass, the fight goes on.

This reminder can be important when emotional distress signals, related to fear or anticipation of pain, flood the mind and temporarily short-circuit access to rationality.

Invictus Maneo is thus a means of saying to the self, when gripped by fear or pain: “No, this is not catastrophe. I remain unvanquished. I am still here.”

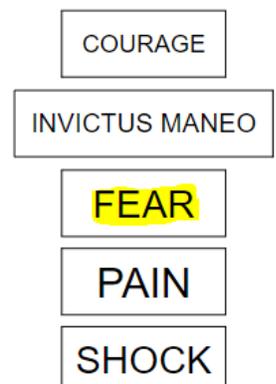
This recalibration can then help reestablish the frontal cortex as the seat of control, facilitating a return to rational thought and a receding of emotional distress signals.

Courage is operative here because it takes bravery to look fear in the face, or to contemplate the onset of pain, and then return to a calm and rational stance.

### Invictus Maneo – FEAR

The Invictus Maneo FEAR acronym stands for:

**FIND/  
EVALUATE  
APPROPRIATE  
RESPONSE**



Pain and fear exist for good reason. At root they are allies, not enemies. Pain and fear are signals, meant to elicit a protective, corrective or evasive response.

*Invictus Maneo is the counter-response to fear and pain and shock, to keep these things from being paralyzing or debilitating.*

*Pain and fear exist for good reason. At root they are allies, not enemies.*

*The origins of pain and fear can be easily understood in a survival context.*

The origins of pain and fear can be easily understood in a survival context.

Pain is necessary to keep a wounded body from destroying itself. The pain of a sprained ankle says, “Do not walk on me while I heal.”

Pain overall is a feature, not a bug, because the signals it sends help the receiver to survive, or heal, or avoid certain activities.

Fear is similar – in a world of predator and prey, the herbivores who serve as food for carnivores need fear to keep from being eaten. If the impala had no fear of the lion, lions would get fat and impalas would go extinct.

In the modern world, fear also serves a purpose.

Fear can be the subconscious mind’s way of saying “Danger!” or “Something must be done!” or “Something is wrong!”

Because fear serves a purpose, it’s no good to be rid of fear completely. Fear signals should be paid attention to, and analyzed for their content.

An attuned mind will be sensitive to fear and anxiety signals, and will move quickly to analyze them.

The key adjustment is that, if a fear has been properly addressed – or if it is clear that the signal is invalid – the signal can then be turned down or turned off.

To run a FEAR analysis – Find / Evaluate Appropriate Response – is to conduct a rational breakdown of the inputs, in order to trace where the fear is coming from.

At that point, a logical decision can be made, and the signal can be quieted.

Working with FEAR signals means developing an inter-mind relationship where the emotional center learns to trust the rational capacities of the frontal cortex.

Think of someone who constantly says “Things are okay” when they really aren’t. There will be no weight of trust in the assurances from this person.

In contrast, think of someone who is consistently sound and logical, and who is generally correct when they say things are okay. This person’s words will build up a weight of trust. If they say “It’s okay” later on, a measure of real relief will be felt.

Now imagine the person being described is the frontal cortex – the reasoning portion of your own mind.

If you try to fool yourself with rationalizations that you don’t really believe, you will have no credibility with your own subconscious. Your attempts to calm yourself, and neutralize a FEAR signal based on logic, will come to naught. Your mind can’t trust the source, even when the source is you.

If you build an internal track record of honesty and credibility, however, the emotional center of your brain can learn to trust the frontal cortex.

*The key adjustment is that, if a fear has been properly addressed – or if it is clear that the signal is invalid – the signal can then be turned down or turned off.*

*The practice of building credibility in your own pronouncements – learning to trust your internal logic – is also one of deliberately rerouting brain activity from emotional centers to the frontal cortex.*

When this happens, you can credibly say “Calm down now, the signal has been addressed,” and your mind will actually relax and respond.

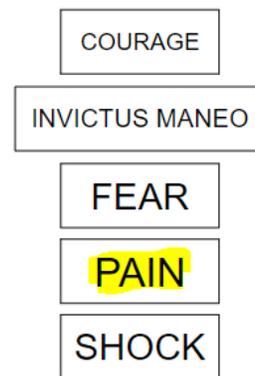
The practice of building credibility in your own pronouncements – learning to trust your internal logic – is also one of deliberately rerouting brain activity from emotional centers to the frontal cortex.

This activity in and of itself, engaging in logical analysis and working through analysis steps, can play a significant role in tamping down a FEAR signal.

**Invictus Maneo – PAIN**

The Invictus Maneo PAIN acronym stands for:

**PERCEIVE  
ANALYZE  
IDENTIFY  
NEUTRALIZE**



Various studies have shown that resisting pain can actually make the pain worse.

*To categorize pain as bad or awful or unfair, or to emotionally push back and struggle against existing pain, can significantly increase the level of discomfort.*

To categorize pain as bad or awful or unfair, or to emotionally push back and struggle against existing pain, can significantly increase the level of discomfort.

This makes sense because, in creating emotional drama around the presence of pain, a stronger flow of emotion is directed at the pain source, which magnifies it.

The alternative is to think about pain in as clinically detached and rational a manner as possible. Not fighting against the pain, not trying to resist it – simply accepting its presence.

The second approach minimizes the amount of emotion (and drama) being felt in association with the pain. It engages the frontal cortex, which is more inclined to process the pain analytically. And it encourages the decision to let go, releasing any sense of resistance or resentment around the fact that the pain exists.

To process PAIN analytically – and this can include emotional pain – the steps are first to perceive the pain’s source; second to analyze that source; third to identify the purpose of the pain (the point of the signal); and fourth to neutralize the signal to as great a degree as possible, by taking the necessary healing steps, acknowledging those steps were taken, and then focusing on letting go.

*The greater the degree to which FEAR and PAIN can be recognized as signals, the more quickly and efficiently those signals can be parsed for valid information to take action.*

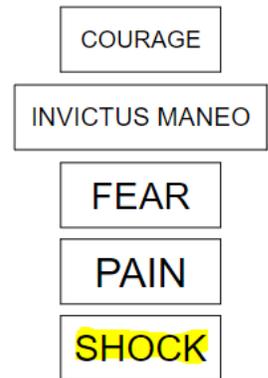
This can be hard to do, which is why Invictus Maneo marshals courage reserves – sending an internal signal that the game is not over, that the fight is still on.

The greater the degree to which FEAR and PAIN can be recognized as signals, the more quickly and efficiently those signals can be parsed for valid information to take action – allowing the signal to then be neutralized or minimized.

## Invictus Maneo – SHOCK

The Invictus Maneo SHOCK acronym stands for:

**STRESSORS**  
**HAZARDS**  
**OBSTACLES**  
**CONFLICT**  
**KABELSALAT**



SHOCK is a general purpose acronym for surprise issues that can lead to emotional derailment.

The result of feeling a SHOCK does not have to be fear or pain.

It can also be a sense of tiredness or defeat, or the general feeling of being demoralized in the presence of unrelenting challenges and problems.

Stressors, hazards, obstacles and conflict are all fairly self-explanatory.

Kabelsalat is a German word which translates as “cable salad.”

It represents the messy complexity of a problem or a task with many snarled elements, likely requiring a heavy effort to untangle them.

*The worst instances of SHOCK occur when all the elements are present at once.*

The worst instances of SHOCK occur when all the elements are present at once: A stressful project that has turned into a hazard, with significant obstacles to solving it, and interpersonal conflict and kabelsalat to boot.

When a SHOCK gets extreme, or hits at a low point, it can be helpful to recognize what is happening analytically, and then to apply Invictus Maneo deliberately, to shore up courage and tap internal reserves.

It may be an ugly battle, but it is still just one battle. Resilience in the face of SHOCK increases the odds the battle will be won.

Invictus Maneo is a way of reminding one’s self that “it isn’t over until it’s over.”

It becomes a source of courage in the presence of fear and pain, and a morale booster when demoralized or thrown out of whack by SHOCK.

Invictus Maneo is similar to Amor Fati in that both apply resilience to hardship.

But Amor Fati is more about optimistic passion and the will to pursue glory, while Invictus Maneo is more about courage and the will to endure.

*Invictus Maneo is a reminder that, whatever the world throws at you, you can get through that too.*

Some of the deepest struggles involve pain and fear. Invictus Maneo is a reminder that, whatever the world throws at you, you can get through that too.

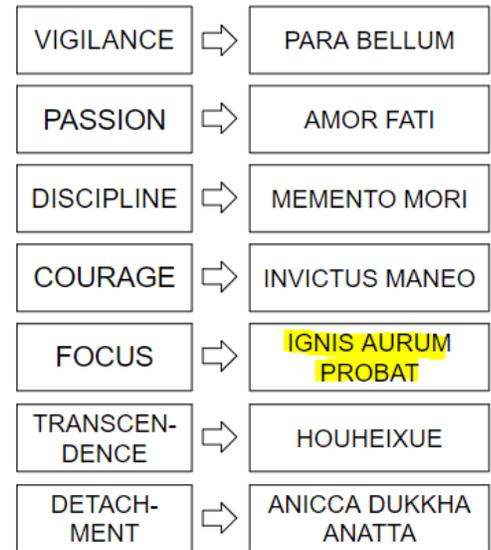
### IGNIS AURUM PROBAT (FOCUS)

Ignis Aurum Probat means “Fire tests gold.”

It is taken from Seneca, the Stoic philosopher and Roman statesman, who wrote: “Ignis aurum probat, miseria fortes homines.”

Translating to English: “As gold is tempered by fire, so strong men are tempered by suffering.”

Ignis Aurum Probat is the focus mantra because, as fire is used to purify and refine gold, focus is used to purify and refine analysis and ideas and plans.



*As fire is used to purify and refine gold, focus is used to purify and refine analysis and ideas and plans.*

In the solving of hard problems... or the overcoming of obstacles... or training in a challenging discipline... it can be necessary to bring extraordinary focus to bear.

Focus is powerful in part because it is hard. There are so many avenues for being disrupted, it is easy to get off track.

A deliberate commitment to focus is like gathering the sun’s scattered rays to a single point through a magnifying glass.

A lack of focus, in contrast, is comparable to scattered rays with no concentrated force. Bathing a problem in the warm light of one’s attention, on a sporadic and occasional basis, won’t get anything done.

Focus is also a challenge because it requires a rested and replenished mind to really pull off. Many modern day jobs can be handled in a fuzzy or partially sleep-deprived state, especially if the activities are rehearsed and routine.

But real focus isn’t achievable in a fuzzy mental state – not for anything more than short bursts anyway.

*Attempting to focus with low energy levels is like trying to lift weights without enough sleep.*

Attempting to focus with low energy levels is like trying to lift weights without enough sleep. The muscles rebel, and so does the mind. The whole act feels irritating. The body and the mind just seem to grind to a halt, without clear indication as to why.

As with most of the other areas, the act of cultivating focus, and doing so on a routine basis, tends to expand beyond the “basic skill set” category to become a way of life.

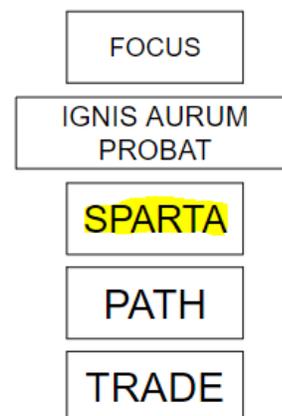
The more one can focus, the better use one can make of TIME – Top Imperative Mental Energy – which better allows one to FIGHT – which in turn encourages more enthusiastic use of the KNIFE and SWORD, which improves results further, and so on.

Everything ultimately connects, in a self-reinforcing virtuous circle.

## Ignis Aurum Probat – SPARTA

The Ignis Aurum Probat SPARTA acronym stands for:

**SITUATIONAL  
PERSONAL  
AWARENESS /  
REAL  
TIME  
ANALYSIS**



*The idea behind SPARTA is to self-monitor and track performance on a real time basis to maximize output.*

The idea behind SPARTA is to self-monitor and track performance on a real time basis to maximize output.

The gains from doing this (versus not doing it) can be dramatic. For example:

When the brain is tired, it can be easy to slip into a low-productivity, wheel-spinning type state without realizing what is happening. Energy ebbs and flows mean there are specific times of day where this is more likely to happen.

If this state goes unrecognized, it becomes possible to waste half an hour... an hour... two hours... or even larger blocks of productive time, before realizing the brain has checked out. (Powers of observation also decline in this state.)

Trying to get a depleted brain to carry out a string of logical executions can be like yanking repeatedly on a lawnmower cord. The thing just won't start.

Using SPARTA as a habitual check-in means being sensitive to the brain's energy and performance levels – which means noticing much more quickly when performance is slipping, and having a sense of how to adjust.

Learning to quickly recognize when the brain has slipped into a low-energy state, and cutting off procrastination excursions before they get out of hand, can save significant amounts of time all by itself.

*It can also be useful to recognize that certain types of work deplete mental energy faster than other types of work.*

It can also be useful to recognize that certain types of work deplete mental energy faster than other types of work.

The work of building out a complex process, for example, can drain mental energy rapidly, as brain changes occur alongside the work.

Other forms of work, which are lower impact, can be done for hours at a time without a comparable energy drain, as the brain runs routines without forcing any changes.

If an area of work has **high complexity and low familiarity**, it is more likely to be mentally draining. If an area has **high automaticity and high familiarity**, on the other end, it is more likely to be low impact.

Different times of day and different energy levels are appropriate, depending on the type of work being done. Then too, sometimes the most productive thing, on balance, is stop for rest and replenishment, coming back later with a fresh head.

But how do you know? You have to self-monitor, and develop rules of thumb for this.

*The more real-time performance awareness one has, the more one can tailor specific types of work to specific times of day or mental states, matching natural ebbs and flows of personal energy levels.*

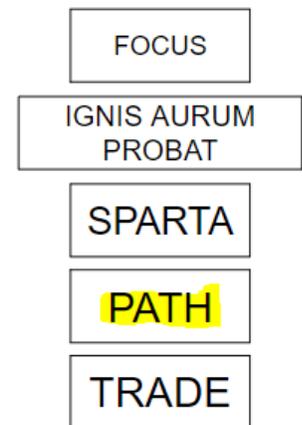
The more real-time performance awareness one has, the more one can tailor specific types of work to specific times of day or specific mental states, matching natural ebbs and flows of personal energy levels.

SPARTA is at the center of this, in respect to self-monitoring and self-adjusting for optimal output as a habit.

### **Ignis Aurum Probat – PATH**

The Ignis Aurum Probat PATH acronym stands for:

**PROJECT  
AND  
TASK  
HIERARCHY**



It sounds shockingly simple, but much of focus is simply staying on the PATH, meaning, creating a clear Path And Task Hierarchy, then sticking with it.

*While creating a clear PATH sounds easy in theory, in practice it can be harder than it looks.*

The hidden trick might be that, while creating a clear PATH sounds easy in theory, in practice it can be harder than it looks.

Many projects look simple – or far more simple than they are in reality – on surface-level inspection. The false simplicity trap can even lure in experts.

The reason this happens, much of the time, is because the unaddressed complexity within a project starts to pop up and cause unanticipated problems.

There may be half a dozen small decisions that have to be made, which weren't originally accounted for. And then making a call on those half dozen decisions leads to ten more decisions. And then the total volume of decision threads starts to become unwieldy. And then surprise, what looked like an easy PATH is now a headache.

*Part of getting comfortable with PATH work is letting go of the “easy” or “simple” confidence assessment.*

Part of getting comfortable with PATH work is letting go of the “easy” or “simple” confidence assessment.

One is better off with the Zen aphorism: “The wise man thinks what is easy is hard.”

Unraveling the hidden complexities of a PATH – when it was supposed to be simple – can further require the willingness to look and feel like a student.

One of the few small advantages a student can have over a teacher is the willingness to look foolish, and feel foolish, in pursuit of the answer to a question.

Sometimes that sense of foolishness was actually the good sense to follow an unexpected line of inquiry to its full completion point. (The wise man is happy to feel like a fool at times, if such helps him to avoid looking like one.)

*Good PATH work enables focus in the way a well-groomed trail enables a good run.*

Good PATH work enables focus in the way a well-groomed trail enables a good run. If the path is known, the ground is firm, and the obstacles are few, you can just get into a rhythm zone and start clicking off miles.

But it also takes focus to create a clear PATH in the first place. The trail has to be prepared before you can run it. So this becomes a case of focus enabling focus.

First you focus to clarify and define the project. Then the clarity of the project helps define the task sets. Then you define the task elements necessary to complete the PATH layout... which allows you to walk (or run) the path.

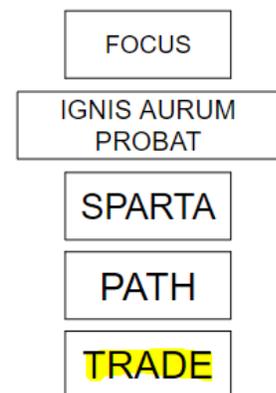
Focus on top of focus on top of focus. You can't do this with a fuzzy brain. You need rest and discipline and a sense of purpose and the courage to press forward.

The components of Metaprocess are like the components of an engine. They must all fit together for the engine to roar into life.

### **Ignis Aurum Probat – TRADE**

The Ignis Aurum Probat TRADE acronym stands for:

**TARGET**  
**RANK**  
**ASSESS**  
**DECIDE**  
**EVALUATE**



*The TRADE acronym provides a hierarchy for making planning decisions, thus enabling a way forward on the PATH.*

The TRADE acronym provides a hierarchy for making planning decisions, thus enabling a way forward on the PATH.

More specifically the TRADE acronym is designed to:

Target **Priorities**

Rank **Objectives**

Assess **Variables**

Decide **Actions**

Evaluate **Steps**

**Priorities** are first. They represent the most important aspects of what’s to be done, spelled out in terms of goals or outcomes.

**Objectives** are second. They are specific actions in service to priorities.

**Variables** are third. They are the factors involved in deciding on a course of action. Time estimates, resources, risks, opportunity costs, materials, and so on.

**Actions** are the shape of plans and tasks. They take the objectives and break them down into actionable pieces.

**Steps** are a granular breakdown of how to carry out actions. A specific action, for example, might be broken out into half a dozen individual steps.

Often the hidden complexity resides at the step level, where it then catches the planner by surprise.

A plan can look workable on first glance. You can have your priorities laid out. You can know your key objectives. You can know the variables involved and the actions you need to take. Many will assume this constitutes a plan in its entirety.

But then you get down to the level of carrying out actions – the specific steps – and micro-level complexities hit like an exploding cigar.

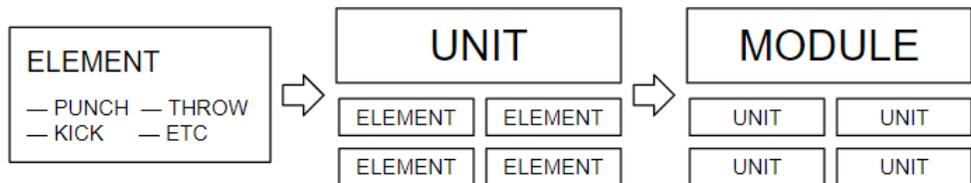
There can be more additional decisions than anticipated in carrying out the steps. Small but numerous, with no ability to skip.

Some of those decisions can create conflict. The new threads invite confusion. The small decisions pile up and lead to the mental equivalent of vapor lock. The plan trips over its own feet. The exasperated planner throws up their hands.

Most people have experienced the frustration of what was just described – but not at that level of description or understanding.

It is more a visceral feeling of “this sucks” or “planning is hard” or “why does stupid stuff keep going wrong” or “why does the universe hate me.”

(Hint: It doesn’t. Hidden complexity is there to ruin anybody’s day if it fails to get properly addressed.)

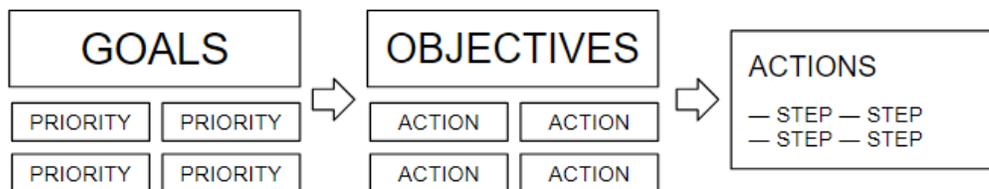


Recall the elements-units-modules diagram from the “Gateway to Superhuman Performance” report.

That diagram showed how skills are combined in a fractal manner, with increasingly sophisticated combinations at higher skill levels.

*There can be more additional decisions than anticipated in carrying out the steps. Small but numerous, with no ability to skip.*

*Hidden complexity is there to ruin anybody’s day if it fails to get properly addressed.*



With planning, and using the TRADE acronym, you run a version of the diagram in reverse, breaking down a larger entity into smaller digestible pieces.

It is fractal, but going in the other direction as you reverse engineer the process.

Most people understand the importance of planning. But they miss the vital detail that, much of the time, vague plans are only a starting point... and have to be broken down into their deeper level subcomponents to wring the hidden complexity out.

*When you've addressed all the pieces, you can build a clear PATH – project and task hierarchy – that doesn't run into snags or roadblocks that derail you.*

When you've addressed all the pieces, you can build a clear PATH – project and task hierarchy – that doesn't run into snags or roadblocks that derail you.

TRADE is a tool that can be used informally on the fly, to organize priorities in a general way, or formally and specifically, in service to a complex project.

**Informal-General example:** A scheduled meeting or event – which was going to take up most of the afternoon – is canceled at the last minute. You suddenly have four hours free. What do you work on?

There are multiple possibilities. So you run the TRADE process – **Target** priorities, **Rank** objectives, **Assess** variables, **Decide** actions, **Evaluate** steps. This crystallizes your picture of what to do with the afternoon.

**Formal-Specific example:** You want to work on a big undertaking or a “master plan” project of some kind.

You set up TRADE in a table format and spend a few hours trying to fill in every level of detail, working out possible connections, in order to get a better sense of what you are dealing with and how to proceed.

This gives you the clarity you need to break out your objectives further into projects and subprojects. From there you work on creating a PATH on which you can move forward.

TARGET PRIORITIES
RANK OBJECTIVES
ASSESS VARIABLES
DECIDE ACTIONS
EVALUATE PLANS

*Focus is one of those things seen as notoriously hard, without real understanding as to why.*

Focus is one of those things seen as notoriously hard, without real understanding as to why. Much of it comes down to energy levels, self-management, and the ability to analyze complexity, breaking things down into a series of definable steps to allow for disciplined forward movement. SPARTA, PATH and TRADE facilitate this flow.

### HOUHEIXUE (TRANSCENDENCE)

Houheixue (roughly pronounced How-Hay-Shweh) is “Thick Black Theory,” also translated as “Thick and Dark Theory.”

Thick Black Theory was a philosophical treatise written by Li Zongwu, a Chinese politician and scholar born in 1879.

Zongwu wrote:

When you conceal your will from others, that is Thick. When you impose your will on others, that is Black (Dark).

VIGILANCE	⇒	PARA BELLUM
PASSION	⇒	AMOR FATI
DISCIPLINE	⇒	MEMENTO MORI
COURAGE	⇒	INVICTUS MANEO
FOCUS	⇒	IGNIS AURUM PROBAT
TRANSCENDENCE	⇒	<b>HOUHEIXUE</b>
DETACHMENT	⇒	ANICCA DUKKHA ANATTA

Li Zongwu was angered by the political climate of his day. According to Chin-Ning Chu, a Chinese author and business consultant, Li’s work described the ruthless and hypocritical means by which men obtain and hold power.

Thick Black Theory was published in 1911, went through several printings in China, and was then banned for being subversive.

But Chin-Ning Chu notes there is much of value in Thick Black Theory, separate and apart from the political intrigue. As she wrote in her book, *Thick Face, Black Heart*:

*“The thick-faced person has the ability to put self-doubt aside.”*

The thick-faced person has the ability to put self-doubt aside. He refuses to accept the limitations that others have tried to impose on him and, more importantly, he does not accept any of the limitations that we commonly impose on ourselves...

A Thick Face need not be assertive or aggressive. He may be humble and submissive. Thick face is the ability to adopt whatever manner the situation calls for without regard for what other people think of you...

Black Heart is the ability to take action without regard to how the consequences will affect others. A Black Heart is ruthless but it is not necessarily evil.

*“Thick Face and Black Heart are two sides of the same coin.”*

Thick Face and Black Heart are two sides of the same coin. When one possesses the strength of Thick Face, one can ignore the criticism and disapproval of the masses. This same strength is also the source of the Black Heart; it allows one to effectively use the spear to cut through the ignorant and preconceived ideas of the masses.

It is not possible to practice Thick Face without Black Heart, just as it is not possible to practice Black Heart without Thick Face. The Thick Face, Black Heart practitioner must exercise his ability to ignore criticism, ridicule or vilification from others, and, at the same time, carry out his duties as he sees fit.

Chin-Ning Chu further describes multiple levels of Thick Face, Black Heart. The highest level is “So thick it is formless, so black it is colorless.”

There is also a transition point at which the ego becomes so large and all-encompassing it fills up the sky, thus becoming “no ego.”

*At the highest levels of focus and ambition, personal concerns – the normal issues associated with ego – tend to completely evaporate.*

At the highest levels of focus and ambition, personal concerns – the normal issues associated with ego – tend to completely evaporate.

The productivity guru David Allen calls this the “Master and Commander” level, where the presence of mind exists to effortlessly switch from big picture to little picture and back again, not getting caught up in personal issues.

*The focus is whatever is called for in the moment, with no energy wasted on self-regard.*

The “Master and Commander” is equally comfortable leading a battalion or cleaning a toilet – whatever is called for in the moment, with no energy wasted on self-regard.

Houheixue – Thick Black Theory, or the practice of Thick Face, Black Heart – is the transcendence mantra in respect to four issues.

**First, ego is a time and energy drain.** Ego can be thought of as “Energy Going Out.” Think of how much energy (and time) the self-absorbed person, or the anxious and low self-esteem person, spends thinking about personal issues related to ego, or micro-obsessing over daily events that pose a threat to ego.

It’s a disgusting metaphor, but in some ways the ego can be like a giant tapeworm that lives inside your body and eats half your life. Transcendence is needed to move beyond ego and get hard things accomplished.

**Second, the external world is hostile to boldness and change.** As Einstein wrote: “Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds. The mediocre mind is incapable of understanding the man who refuses to bow blindly to conventional prejudices and chooses instead to express his opinions courageously and honestly.”

To set out on a personal transformation quest is to all but guarantee unexpected hostility, or at minimum a pushback born of misunderstanding, from those who don’t understand or feel threatened by your desire to grow and change.

**Third, personal transformation changes personal relationships.** To undergo a personal transformation – in so doing becoming far more powerful than you were before – is to become “other” relative to what you were before.

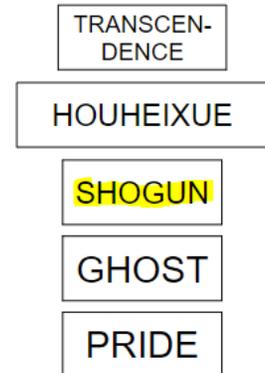
This is almost guaranteed to change certain relationships, while possibly disturbing or even severing certain relationships. This can happen out of newly realized necessity. Or it can happen by surprise, or be initiated via the confusion and resentment of others.

**Fourth, a sense of isolation will be inevitable at times.** Initiating significant change, and executing a bold plan for such, can feel lonely, especially when the road is hard and victory feels uncertain. Like loneliness on an actual, physical journey across mountains and seas, this should be anticipated and dealt with.

## Houheixue – SHOGUN

The Houheixue SHOGUN acronym stands for:

**SILENT  
HONOR  
ONLY  
GIVEN  
UP  
NECESSARILY**



The James Clavell novel *Shōgun*, published in 1975, was a major international best-seller, having sold 15 million copies by 1990.

One of the main characters in the book, Toronaga, was based on Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder and first shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate of Japan.

As Toronaga moves toward his destiny, through a series of plots and maneuvers, one of the recurring themes is Toronaga's silence.

At key points in the story Toronaga does not reveal his true intentions, even to close confidants. This becomes important later on, in coordination of the master plan.

The principle of silence – as noted in SHOGUN acronym – is a powerful one.

Maintaining silence as a default stance is practical for a number of reasons.

**It is better not to boast.** There are many benefits to the “never boast” rule. The desire to boast or brag is an indicator of weakness below the surface. The habit of boasting or bragging creates hidden friction with others. A habit of never boasting, never bragging, is a measure of internal confidence and strength.

**It is better never to complain.** Picture the person who never complains about anything, ever, unless they are suggesting a specific action to take. Now think about the person who complains constantly. Which do you like better? A habit of never complaining, unless for very good reason, is another measure of strength.

**It is better not to share plans and intentions.** Sharing plans with someone can be a hostile act. By speaking of your boldness, you can make another person feel inadequate or insecure because they lack such boldness themselves. Sharing plans can also lead to confusion. If the person does not understand, or doubts and criticizes, what was gained? Far better to say nothing.

Humans are social, which creates a strong temptation to share, or otherwise to say “hey look at me.” Going the other way – choosing not to share, not to speak out, not to reveal intentions, but instead to keep one's own counsel – is thus an act of will. And that is one of the things that makes SHOGUN powerful. Silence can be strength.

*Maintaining silence as a default stance is practical for a number of reasons.*

*Silence can be strength.*

Also, as discussed via Houheixue, a quest for personal transformation is bound to create relationship complications.

*Why make it worse by talking about it? Why not just smile and keep your own counsel?*

If you actively change, you are probably going to alienate some people. Why make it worse by talking about it? Why not just smile and keep your own counsel?

Metaprocess cultivates awareness and acceptance of reality as it exists.

That means being aware of scarcity and limitations: The scarcity of time and energy. The limitations of the mind-body machine (and its requirements for rest and upkeep). The sacrifices necessary to really push for a transformational goal.

In that regard, SHOGUN is a keep-it-simple principle and an energy conservation principle. There is enough complexity to deal with, so why add more?

*Choosing not to share – unless there is good reason – makes life less complicated.*

Choosing not to share – unless there is good reason – makes life less complicated. It invites fewer issues. It means less friction. And it encourages a sense of stoicism and emotional independence, which the practitioner will probably need anyway.

SHOGUN is also useful in episodes of surprise conflict. That looks like this:

**When surprised by a verbal attack, saying nothing as a response.** The natural human response to “attack” is counter-attack. But SHOGUN encourages a wholly different response – retraining the mind to respond with silence. This creates a space in which to contemplate and react rationally.

**When surprised by a burst of anger or pain, showing no external sign.** The natural human response to a burst of anger – or pain – is also to cry out. “WHAT THE F---” and so on. But again, neuroplasticity means this response can be changed. SHOGUN cultivates silence and stillness as an immediate learned response, rather than a verbal or physical outburst.

There is nothing like an external disturbance to violate someone’s silent honor.

If something or someone provokes you into yelling, or getting riled up, or otherwise having an episode, that is exactly what has happened.

Maintaining silent honor in these circumstances makes you more powerful. (If you want to be unnerved, try yelling at someone who instantly responds with calm.)

It also gives you more response options, as the silence response is like a placeholder, allowing the frontal cortex to process the logic of the situation before deciding how to react or what to do.

*To be a SHOGUN is to be a feudal warlord and benevolent military dictator in respect to your own personal territory.*

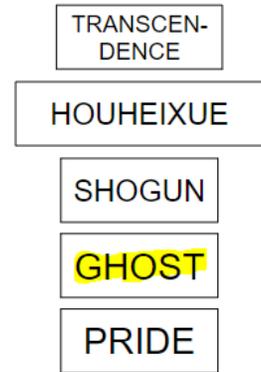
To be a SHOGUN is to be a feudal warlord and benevolent military dictator in respect to your own personal territory. Your ancestral lands are the scope of your body and mind. You can decide how to defend those lands, and how to respond to threats.

One of the most powerful ways to respond is with silent honor, while keeping your own counsel, thus minimizing disturbances and complications in the external world.

### Houheixue – GHOST

The Houheixue GHOST acronym stands for:

## GLOBAL HEIGHTS OR SUBMERGED TERRAIN



*GHOST is a means of transcending an emotional disturbance, no matter how big or eventful.*

GHOST is a means of transcending an emotional disturbance, no matter how big or eventful.

There are times when you need to work – or when you need to dial in and focus – but an emotional event has thrown you off balance.

This can be extremely problematic. An unwanted emotional episode threatens to create problems with lost work, lost focus, and lost time.

*GHOST works by transporting the self from surface-level reality, either up to global heights or down to submerged depths.*

GHOST works by transporting the self from surface-level reality, either up to global heights or down to submerged depths (see diagram).

Imagine your present self – your emotional sense of self – is at surface level. Below you there is ocean. Above you there is sky.

An emotional disturbance at the surface level is an external event that creates bad weather. Like a storm, a hurricane or a typhoon.

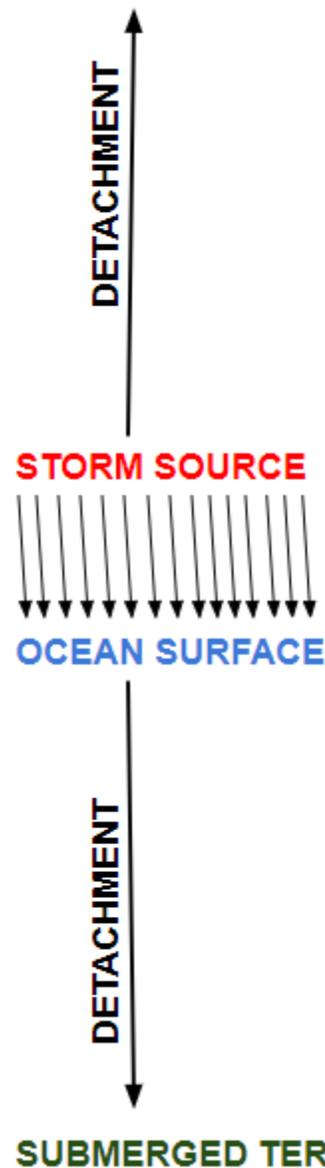
To transcend higher – toward global heights – you take a big picture perspective and reframe your view far above the level of the personal.

You can raise your perspective to such heights that not only do you pass above the storm, you rise above the atmosphere, to the point of seeing all of earth as a perfect sphere.

Alternatively you can submerge, below the surface of the water, into the extreme micro-details of a situation, breaking it down into scientific and strategic components.

Far below the surface it is also calm, even as the storm continues.

### GLOBAL HEIGHTS



GHOST can also work in the absence of a disturbance. You don't need the presence of an emotional storm to rise high above a situation in terms of macro perspective.

And you don't need justification for diving deep into the mechanics of a situation, looking at it from a scientific and strategic perspective.

*Gaining the ability to zoom out to the extreme macro level – or zoom in to the extreme micro level – is useful in terms of understanding and solving problems.*

Gaining the ability to zoom out to the extreme macro level – or zoom in to the extreme micro level – is useful in terms of understanding and solving problems.

It also removes self and ego from the equation, which is useful for flow purposes even in the absence of a disturbance.

One of the most elegant examples of a global heights perspective is the “Pale Blue Dot” monologue from Carl Sagan, inspired by an image taken by Voyager 1 in 1990.

The Voyager 1 craft was more than 4 billion miles away when it took the photo, showing all of earth as a single pixel in a vast frame. As Sagan wrote:

Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there--on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.

The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that, in glory and triumph, they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot. Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of this pixel on the scarcely distinguishable inhabitants of some other corner, how frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another, how fervent their hatreds.

*The micro perspective – moving toward submerged terrain – is like seeing yourself in a lab coat, observing an experiment from behind mirrored glass.*

The micro perspective – moving toward submerged terrain – is like seeing yourself as a third party in a white lab coat, observing an experiment from behind mirrored glass.

We know as a general rule that, if a couple has a heated argument over a small thing, the argument is really about something else. In a heated interaction with another person, there are at least five separate levels of interpretation, if not more.

There is what the person is saying; there is what the person is trying to communicate (which may be quite different); there are the stated motivations and intentions; there are the unstated motivations and intentions; and there are the behavioral and psychological drivers for the whole episode.

To move toward submerged terrain is to break all of this down in a clinical manner. Examining the elements engages the frontal cortex and displaces the emotional view.



*Learning to GHOST as a matter of habit, without conscious thought, dovetails with the SHOGUN concept of rewiring standard responses to anger or pain.*

Learning to GHOST as a matter of habit, without conscious thought, dovetails with the SHOGUN concept of rewiring standard responses to anger or pain.

The SHOGUN ideal is to respond to verbal provocations with silence and stillness by default – giving time to think about the response – while also responding to surges of anger or pain with silence, again creating time and space for a measured reaction.

But how do you create that silent space in a window where the normal person would be reacting emotionally? By learning to instantly GHOST, without conscious thought.

Bruce Kovner, one of the handful of Market Wizards who retired with billions, described how, if a major loss-producing event occurred that he did not understand, he would simply get out of his positions. He wouldn't dally, he wouldn't mull, he would simply get out.

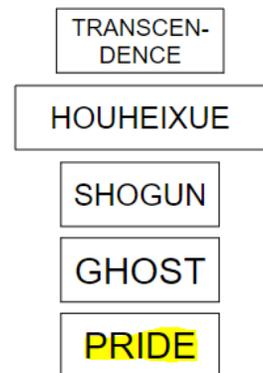
Learning to GHOST first thing in response to a major emotional disturbance is a similar idea. The alternative is a wild surge of counter-emotion that might take you someplace you'd rather not have gone.

The "automatic" nature of this goes back to repetition and training in pursuit of automaticity and Mushin – like the martial artist who will instantly parry or dodge an incoming strike as soon as the subconscious mind anticipates it, well before the conscious mind even registers what is happening.

**Houheixue – PRIDE**

The Houheixue PRIDE acronym stands for:

**PERSONAL  
REFLECTION  
INTENTIONALLY  
DISSOLVES  
EGO**



Ego in the modern context is a problem.

Self-esteem is healthy. A quiet self-regard is healthy.

But ego in the sense most commonly understood is a burden and a cost – a thing that carries a lot of downside and not much upside.

A big ego demands to be fed, like a tapeworm. It eats the time and energy of its host.

Ego can also be destabilizing. If you feel the need to defend your ego at random times, it can throw off your center of gravity. It can put you flat on your face.

If you could give a person an ego removal operation, while leaving their self-esteem intact, they would be far better off. So why is ego such a common thing?

*A big ego demands to be fed, like a tapeworm. It eats the time and energy of its host.*

Consider the “alpha male” social hierarchy structure for chimpanzees, gorillas, and various other primates.

The alpha male in a primate community gets the best food and mating choices. Some of the other males don’t get to mate at all.

The presumption is that the alpha male got to be “alpha” in the first place because he has the most physical prowess or talent. As alpha male, he passes on these traits, which then helps the next generation.

Human societies are far more complex, but the same kind of “alpha” logic originally applied. Traits of superiority led to social dominance and high places in the tribe.

The dynamics of the tribe also meant that acceptance by one’s peers was a matter of life and death. To be rejected by the tribe was to be cast out, and potentially to starve to death or be killed.

Hence the intense fear of rejection that humans still feel, and the intense need for social recognition from peers (which seems to hit a peak in the teenage years).

Ego is not all bad. There is a mix of the healthy and unhealthy.

But as a general rule, the greater the degree to which one can be free of ego, the better. The whole ego game is grossly expensive, from status signaling to worrying and fretting to reckless acts of dominance and vengeance that spur conflict.

The antipode (direct opposite) of ego is equilibrium.

*Equilibrium, as we describe it here, is balance and poise in the moment.*

Equilibrium, as we describe it here, is balance and poise in the moment.

Balance is a crucial concept in martial arts because the act of striking, or responding to a strike, requires rapid shifts in body movement. This requires a finely-tuned sense of balance so as not to topple over.

If you lose your balance while extending a punch or kick... or if your opponent catches you off-balance in the middle of a transition step... then you become vulnerable. Your lack of balance is an exploitable weak point that becomes your downfall.

Some martial arts styles take balance to the extreme, with demonstrations of a master practitioner avoiding strikes or launched projectiles while standing on a pole.

*Think of ego like a bag of heavy sand that swings freely when you move. Get rid of the bag and it’s a lot easier to stay balanced.*

Think of ego like a bag of heavy sand that swings freely when you move. Get rid of the bag and it’s a lot easier to stay balanced.

So dissolving ego is done in service to promoting and maintaining equilibrium. The more balance and poise that you have, the more capability you have for a fluid and rational response in any given situation, for higher likelihood of a positive outcome.

Consider the extreme opposites of a 100% ego focus versus a 100% equilibrium focus.

**100% EGO FOCUS:** Total emphasis on ego, zero regard for strategy. Zero ability to resist a harsh response or rash action in the name of defending ego, even if the consequences are self-destructive. No ability to sacrifice ego for strategy. Ego comes first, always.

**100% EQUILIBRIUM FOCUS:** Total regard for strategy, efficiency and rational response, zero regard for ego. Think of the diplomat or high level negotiator capable of wholly ignoring an insult, knowing that the focus on subtle maneuvering toward a desirable outcome is critical.

*PRIDE encourages spot-based ego removal – cleaning up ego issues in real time – through an emphasis on the downsides of ego, the value of removing ego considerations from decision making, and the general folly of inflated self-regard.*

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Under the Houheixue mantra, the SHOGUN, GHOST and PRIDE acronyms combine to facilitate transcendence in daily life.

There is no way to live and exist in the world without facing disturbances from the external world, on a regular and frequent basis.

There is also no way to go for personal transformation, and the achieving of powerful goals, without experiencing some measure of pushback – perhaps a lot of pushback – from individuals who aren't on board with the new program.

And there are many cases where transcendence is necessary as a matter of personal need, to maintain a sense of calm in the presence of disturbance.

**ANICCA DUKKHA ANATTA (DETACHMENT)**

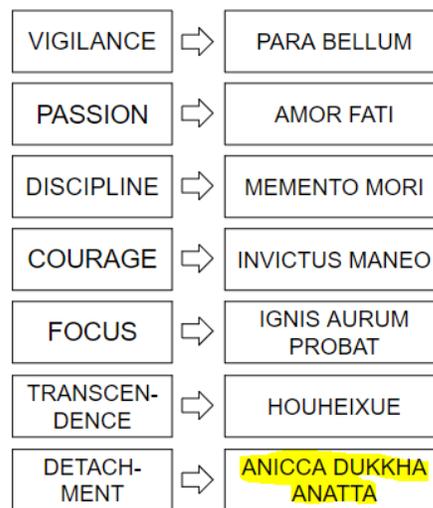
The three marks of existence – Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – are central to Buddhist teachings.

Anicca is impermanence. Dukkha is suffering. Anatta is non-self or the illusion of self.

The three marks of existence are not religious assertions or origin stories.

Instead they are empirical observations of reality – descriptions of reality itself, as a human being can observe it and evaluate it.

A key idea is that delusion and resistance to the three marks creates needless suffering.



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To stop resisting – to find peace with the three marks of existence – is to be free.

Anicca – impermanence – recognizes that everything is in a state of flux and has an expiration. There is a coming into being and a dissolving of being. Life and death, creation and destruction, aging and decay, are all part of a constant natural cycle.

Dukkha – suffering – recognizes that the core of life is suffering, in the sense of life at its root being infused with struggle, unsatisfactoriness, or pain.

This does not mean that all of life is painful. (That is clearly not true.) Instead it recognizes that pain and suffering and struggle are at the heart of things.

This is visible through empirical observation of nature; the constant and widespread presence of death and loss; the lack of permanent fulfillment in day-to-day things; the struggle for survival that defines all living organisms; and so on.

*To say that the core of life is suffering sounds gloomy and pessimistic. But in many cases it can produce the opposite mood, via lightness of perspective.*

As a side note, to say that the core of life is suffering sounds gloomy and pessimistic. But in many cases it can produce the opposite mood, via lightness of perspective.

For example: It is easy, and has always been easy, to look around and lament how horrible many human systems are.

Government is horrible. The school systems are horrible. International relations are horrible. Global poverty is horrible, etcetera. There is a truth to this type of lament.

But that horribleness is made worse if one assumes utopia exists (it doesn't).

And it is made more palatable if one recognizes that human ideals, and imperfect human systems, are born of a struggle against nature – a struggle against suffering.

If suffering and a brutal struggle for survival are the base case to forever push back against, well, that is not a very palatable truth. It is a hard pill to swallow.

But if the statement is accurate, then the modest steps mankind has achieved in the name of noble ideals, however imperfect or flawed, can be seen with appreciation as movement in the right direction. (And man continues to gradually inch forward.)

Anatta – non-self – references awareness that the idea of “self” is actually an illusion.

*As Douglas Hofstadter once put it, the concept of a conscious self is “a hallucination hallucinated by a hallucination,” meaning that the notion of “I” is an emergent property born of the workings of consciousness, another emergent property, which is itself not a standalone thing but a collection of other interacting properties.*

As Douglas Hofstadter once put it, the concept of a conscious self is “a hallucination hallucinated by a hallucination,” meaning that the notion of “I” is an emergent property born of the workings of consciousness, another emergent property, which is itself not a standalone thing but a collection of other interacting properties.

Metaprocess draws a lot of power from understanding how the brain works, understanding how the body works, and understanding how the mind-body system works in terms of related and inseparable interactions.

If you really dig deep into all the physicalities of the mind-body system, the reality of Anatta becomes apparent.

“Self” is an emergent property of the mind-body system, which operates in a particular place and time, with all of the particulars of cultural and emotional and nutritional influence that the given place entails. Who would you be if you were born in a coastal fishing village in the sixteenth century? Someone else entirely.

*Anicca Dukkha Anatta is the detachment seat of Metaprocess.*

Anatta – non-self or the illusion of self – is another deeply unsettling concept that creates a sense of freedom once it is accepted and understood.

Anicca Dukkha Anatta is the detachment seat of Metaprocess.

It is the philosophical expression of Zen, in the same way Amor Fati is a philosophical expression of Arete.

To see the unvarnished reality of “impermanent suffering non-self” as an ultimate expression of the way things are... and to accept that observation in a calm manner, not fighting against it... is to find a deep level of detachment and peace in the moment.

But of course, Metaprocess is not Zen alone. It is Zen balanced with Arete, with balance as the key.

To be Zen alone is to lack passion and fire. Arete is the passion, the fire, the turbo – the will to care about something deeply because one chooses to do so, and the ability to self-create meaning on one’s own terms... and to then go out and fight for that meaning.

You need both – Arete and Zen – in the manner that a tennis player needs both a forehand and a backhand.

If a tennis player has a strong forehand but no backhand, or vice versa, they will be weak on one side of the court, and defeated by the shots hit to that side of the court.

In the game of life, you will have shots hit to both sides – the Arete side and the Zen side – thus rewarding a performance capability in both.

### Anicca Dukkha Anatta – FAIR

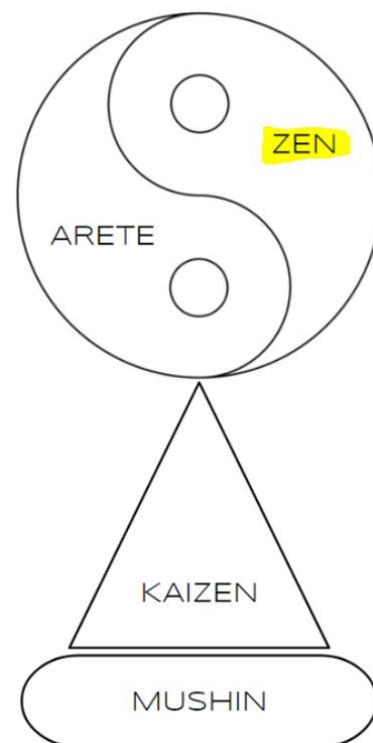
The Anicca Dukkha Anatta FAIR acronym stands for:

**FALSELY  
ASSUMED  
INTERNAL  
RATIONALIZATION**

Fair – as in “that’s not fair” – is an emotional construct.

There is confusion precisely because emotion is involved.

One does not always think: “That’s not fair!” with a sense of detachment. One can sometimes feel this unfairness... in an intense way... at a gut emotional level.



*Metaprocess is not Zen alone. It is Zen balanced with Arete, with balance as the key.*



Dogs and Capuchin monkeys also exhibit a sense of fairness and resentment.

Experiments have shown that, if a researcher treats certain social animals unfairly (by creating an uneven distribution of rewards for the group), the slighted animal will punish the researcher with an observable form of rejection.

This is the animal's way of saying: "That's not fair!"

*Instinctive punishment for unfairness – the gut response of "That's not fair!" – is an evolved response meant to protect cooperation gains in social groups.*

Instinctive punishment for unfairness – the gut response of "That's not fair!" – is an evolved response meant to protect cooperation gains in social groups.

In any social group where the members cooperate, there is a risk of hoarders, freeloaders or cheaters taking advantage of the group.

Punishing hoarders and freeloaders and cheaters, upon spotting unfair behavior, was thus a means of keeping group cooperation levels high.

As such, groups that learned to punish hoarders and freeloaders and cheaters tended to thrive, and expanded faster than groups that didn't.

The response then expanded to a sense of distribution – wanting to get a fair share.

But still, "fair" is just a perception – an embedded emotional response.

The universe doesn't care about fairness. The universe simply exists. We can observe the laws of physics, from which the laws of nature arose, and fairness does not show up anywhere.

And to the degree fairness exists in society, it is a human ideal imperfectly administered – which is a very different thing than assuming fairness "does" exist or "should" exist at some cosmic distribution level.

The purpose of the FAIR acronym is to release one's own tendency to say "That's not fair!" and to thus let go of the internal disturbances born of that emotional response.

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From a certain perspective, there is a great deal in life that is unfair. There is enough awfulness and hypocrisy and unfair circumstance and undeserved privilege to fill up an ocean.

This is not disputed. Life can be horribly unfair – from the human perspective of what is right and what is wrong – and to assume otherwise is probably a sampling error.

But the point of the FAIR acronym is to recognize this state of affairs (no pun intended) and let it go. Certain aspects of life's unfairness cannot be changed – they just "are." And always have been, and perhaps always will be. This is a part of Dukkha.

Some of the "Falsely Assumed Internal Rationalization" in FAIR is the hope or assertion that some form of moral justice must be coming for the wrongdoers.

*Reality is often grossly unfair in many ways. One can acknowledge this and let go.*

It simply isn't the case that wrongs are always made right. Sometimes they are not. Often they are not. Mao and Stalin, two of the biggest murderers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both died in power in their bedrooms, and both still have millions of admirers today.

FAIR recognizes that the human perception of fairness has no hold on the universe. Reality is often grossly unfair in many ways. One can acknowledge this and let go.

Recognizing this, one can still work for fairness as a cause if a sense of passion and meaning is felt in doing so. One can still support noble ideals, the general advancement of compassionate societies, and the righting of wrongs in the world.

But FAIR brings about a letting go of the emotional downside, the emotional disturbance, that is found in needlessly resisting the fact that the world is unfair.

It also brings about a detachment from negative events that happen to the individual.

"Life is not fair! Why did life do this to me?" Well, talk to the Rohingya about fairness. It never existed in the first place. Why does life do anything to anybody?

The universe does not intentionally distribute favor to some individuals and malice to others. It simply has no stake. There is no conscious agency in random distribution.

FAIR is a recognition of this too, a release of self-pity for the sake of peace of mind – and maintaining equilibrium when one is tempted to fret that life is not fair.

**Anicca Dukkha Anatta – CALM**

The Anicca Dukkha Anatta CALM acronym stands for:

**CLEAR  
ACCEPTANCE  
LOSS  
MEDITATION**



CALM recognizes the potential for loss in all things – and potential to lose everything in the future, thus finding a peace by preparing for this in advance.

There is a story about a Zen master who enjoys hot tea in a delicate porcelain teacup.

As he enjoys the tea, he sometimes contemplates the teacup being smashed or crumbled into dust.

He doesn't do this to be a pessimist, or to darken his mood, but to keep a mental awareness of the fact that all things are impermanent... and that nothing should be clung to, including a sense of ownership over the cup.

*Learning not to cling – to accept loss in advance – can enhance enjoyment in the moment, while releasing anxieties as to what will happen in the future.*

Learning not to cling – to accept loss in advance – can enhance enjoyment in the moment, while releasing anxieties as to what will happen in the future.

It is a heightened "living in the now" exercise, to the extent it cuts away the desire to hold on to things.

Some Tibetan holy men take this idea to an extreme.

As part of their training they spend multiple days and nights in a tent, alone, with the body of a deceased relative.

The idea behind this practice – spending days alone in the presence of a cadaver – is to be shed of the natural fear and revulsion surrounding death. This is a means of accepting the ultimate loss.

*Loss meditation can take place after a loss has been experienced, but it's more useful prior to a loss being experienced, allowing one to become detached in advance.*

Loss meditation can take place after a loss has been experienced, but it's more useful prior to a loss being experienced, allowing one to become detached in advance.

Life sometimes delivers losses, and takes things, in a manner beyond our control.

If you cannot prevent an undesirable loss, the next best thing is having a logical response pattern for when it happens. CALM is a reflection on loss in order to cultivate this attitude of letting go, which further enables natural detachment when loss happens.

It's also just a way not to get too attached to things in general. Because you want to own "stuff" but you don't want "stuff" to own you.

*If any possession you have creates the point where you experience anxiety around it, the question arises of whether you own X or whether X owns you.*

If any possession you own leads to a point where you experience anxiety relating to that possession, the question arises of whether you own X or whether X owns you.

David Rubinstein, a founding member of the Carlyle Group (a top private equity firm) once made a very interesting statement.

At a college speaking engagement he remarked that: "Most of the billionaires I know are tortured and not that happy."

With Rubinstein being a billionaire himself, and knowing many billionaires via the top echelons of the private equity sphere, that was a powerful admission.

Think about how odd it is for a billion-plus-dollars in net worth to bring great unhappiness on balance, instead of happiness. The assumption is that, with all the worries you might have, money would at least not be one of them. Right? But no.

The billionaire who is anxious about losing a chunk of their fortune, or not living up to a self-imposed performance standard, can be far more burdened than the individual without much money to lose.

In this case the billionaire does not own the money. The money owns the billionaire.

CALM is meant to prevent or ease situations like this by reflecting on the fact that it all goes away – and nothing that can't be held onto is worth clinging to.

## Anicca Dukkha Anatta – CURE

The Anicca Dukkha Anatta CURE acronym stands for:

**COMPREHEND**  
**UNBURDEN**  
**RELAX**  
**EXHALE**



*The CURE for a burden is recognizing the futility of obsessing over it, and then letting the burden go.*

The CURE for a burden is recognizing the futility of obsessing over it, and then letting the burden go.

If you are carrying a backpack full of rocks, why not set it down for a while? You can always pick it up again later.

Or better yet, set it down for good and just completely walk away.

As with so much else, this goes back to biology and scarce resources and rational allocation of time and energy.

It is a waste of time and energy to worry about burdens when the worry is not productive or constructive.

And because time and energy are limited, spending time and energy on burden worry detracts from all of the rest of life.

There is also a form of release in recognizing that everything will come to an end – that the joys and burdens of life itself, and all they entail, will one day cease.

*The reality of impermanence has an upside as well as a downside.*

The reality of impermanence has an upside as well as a downside. If all this stuff is going to disappear someday, that includes worries and concerns and bad stuff too.

There is the riddle of the ring with an inscription on the band.

The words of the ring's inscription, when read, have the power to make a sad man happy or a happy man sad. What are they?

The answer: "This too shall pass."

CURE is about looking at "This too shall pass" in a constructive and detached manner, to help with releasing and letting go whatever burden of the moment is tiresome.

There is a transcendent peace in accepting that all things are fleeting.

Whatever your problems are, they are going to go away eventually – guaranteed.

Detachment is thus extremely powerful because, when you really learn to let go, you can be mentally or emotionally free of any problem or issue in that moment.

It takes a whole lot of will and self-development to get to a point of being comfortable with detachment at the levels described here, in part because there is a lot of reconfiguring and transformation going on.

Human beings are hardwired with a relentless will to survive, to want to live, and to want to keep on living at all costs.

Learning to be okay with the ultimate loss, the loss of existence – and even the loss of legacy and loss of the future – runs directly counter to this hardwired instinct.

But with Metaprocess the benefit is in the juxtaposition, because the will to survive and thrive and fight is maintained via Arete.

Detachment does not have to be an overwhelming life orientation where all things are viewed through a lens of releasing and letting go.

Sometimes passion, the antipode of detachment, is more appropriate – the viewpoint of striving and pushing to build something, of choosing to care intensely.

*In the living of one's best life, both Arete and Zen, both Amor Fati and Anicca Dukkha Anatta, have their time and place.*

In the living of one's best life, both Arete and Zen, both Amor Fati and Anicca Dukkha Anatta, have their time and place.

If you spend all your time reflecting on detachment and loss and the fact that life is fleeting and that all shall pass, it will be hard to rise and stoke an internal flame and plunge into battles.

*If you can pair the coolness of detachment with strategically timed access to the heat of Arete, you can have the versatility you need to maximize your goals.*

But if you can pair the coolness of detachment with strategically timed access to the heat of Arete, you can have the versatility that you need to maximize your goals.

FAIR, CALM and CURE are thus performance tools in and of themselves, because releasing at the right time adds to net performance just as powerfully as striving does.

And finally, just as excellent brakes allow a sports car to go faster, one can embrace “extreme” passion (Arete) and “extreme” detachment (Zen) with more utility and safety when each one is present, in a readily accessible state, to balance the other.