



Dharma Circle February 2020 Summary

Unique Self Response to the Tech Plex
February 2021 Dharma recap by Krista Josepha

Unedited Introduction to Skinner from previous teachings on "Diagnosing the Tech Plex".

"B. F. Skinner was a very well-known utopian, behavioral psychologist. His utopian novel *Walden Two* is about creating a socially-engineered society, and it's actually in many ways, the basis for the worldwide web.

Skinner realizes that we're facing existential risk and he is talking about creating a technology of behavior in order to prevent what he calls "the abolition of the human species".

His books, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971), and *Walden Two* (1948), are actually based on the threat of existential risk and the realization that existential risk is going to come from a Separate Self gone berserk.

Although Skinner doesn't cite him, he actually gets Buddha's critique of the Separate Self. In Buddha's time, the illusion of Separate Self created suffering. But in our time, merged with exponential technology and nuclear power, the Separate Self will lead to "the abolition of human society." That was Skinner's real intuition.

Skinner says that the way to respond to this existential risk is to formulate a new vision of the human being as a Social Self and to create a socially-engineered society."

Notes from last week's Dharma Circle:

B.F. Skinner is misread as a behavioral modification. Skinner comes up with conditioning. Not because he is bad, he saw a problem: existential risk. In his book "Beyond Freedom and Dignity" he says, 'we need to abolish autonomous man, the inner man, autonomous man and the inner man, is a possessing demon."

Skinner is a great man. He shaped so much of the world after he died. He writes stunningly:

"Man's abolition, the man defended by the literatures of freedom and dignity, his abolition is long overdue.

Autonomous man is a device, the free man has been constructed from our ignorance. We must abolish the autonomous man to prevent the abolition of our species."

His critique is Buddhist critique. Separate Self causes suffering. Skinner's move is different from Buddha's move. Buddha's move is True Self. Separate Self is the root of suffering. Move beyond suffering, by entering True Self.

Skinner doesn't like that move, because he is post Western enlightenment. Separate self is the source of human dignity. Any self that is part of the larger field (church, nature country), is a mess.

The individual separate self is the source of human dignity. He cannot go to True Self. Therefore, he says we have to move beyond Freedom and Dignity. He cannot find True Self. His response is 'Social Self', to save the planet.

Skinner dies. Pentland comes. Pentland is a data-scientist. Pentland starts companies embed in Google and Facebook, based on social pressure and social cues, stealing your attention, geared towards the ego-self and its desire to be socially approved. They use Skinner's term: Stimuli-Response to design the web. You are constantly part of an experiment to create the Social Self. And now we have the technology to collect and use the data to make a profile, for each one of us.

Unedited Introduction to Pentland from previous teachings:
Along comes an entire new generation of data scientists. One classical representative of these data scientists, is Alex Pentland in a book called Social Physics: how social networks can make us smarter (2015).

Pentland like Skinner is a utopian. Pentland never mentions Skinner because that's political suicide, but actually what he says is a direct continuation and completion of Skinner.

In Social Physics, Pentland talks about data science as the mathematical structure that's going to give us these new physics, that's going to allow us to actually enact this new vision of society. In an essay "the myth of individuality" Pentland agrees with Skinner that we need to actually facilitate the death of the contemporary Western notion of individuality.

Pentland says, "We now do have the machines and methods to do this. We have data science, and data science is a new mathematics. With this new mathematics, we can track the human being, and human being is not a 'Separate Self.'"

Notes from this Dharma Circle:

Information is fed to machine intelligence. We sell predicted analysis to third parties. They say, we want the human being to be manipulable.

Our response is Unique Self. There is a social self, but beyond that there's a unique self, that cannot be manipulated, that is SACRED, that is a Unique Expression of the will of Kosmos.

Six core needs of human being: We need to be intended, needed, chosen, desired, love adored, recognized!

All these needs are met in uniqueness.

What uniqueness means is, that there is a dimension of infinite value that lives in me uniquely, that is not only acted upon by the world, but that acts upon the world.

Within me is the energy and Eros of action upon the world. I am not just created, I am a creator.

I am participating directly in the field of infinite desire and my dignity comes from that ability.

We were born to give our gift. That is our right!

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This dharma circle was a continuation of Marc's deep teaching on "Diagnosis the Tech Plex." For those of you who haven't been with us in [One Mountain, Many Paths](#), here is some background information.

Short Clip [10min]

[The Unique Self Response to the Existential Risk of the Tech Plex](#)

First Principles, First Values Clip [60 min]:

[Diagnosing the Tech Plex: From Digital Dictatorship to Digital Intimacy, Social Self to Unique Self](#)

Blog Post Summaries:

[The New Existential Risk: Not the Death 'of Humanity' but the Death of 'Our Humanity'](#)

[The Unique Self Response to the Existential Risk of the Tech Plex](#)

Blog Post Coming Soon:

Diagnosing the Tech Plex: From Digital Dictatorship to Digital Intimacy, Social Self to Unique Self

Books Marc is referring to in these teachings:

C.S. Lewis: Abolition of Man

B.F.Skinner: Walden Two & Beyond Freedom and Dignity

Shoshana Zuboff: Surveillance Capitalism

Alex Pentland: Social Physics: how social networks can make us smarter