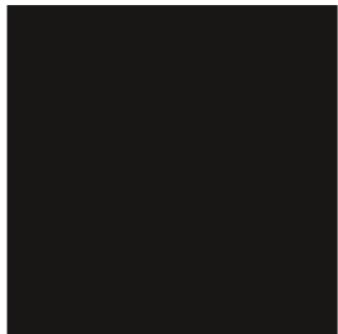


There is nothing but patterns and frames.

*Jiří Zbořil, Praha, Lipová 2025*

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# THE MANUAL



**T**he whole book is a distillery. It reminds the author of few important things as distilled from the course of his own life. For a long time, he used to search for a universal method, for the Philosophers' Stone, something which would provide him with a source of meaning to everything, with an everlasting source of purpose. He has walked many paths both bright and dark. At certain point, he realized that if there was anything like that, it was him. That there would be no purpose to his life unless he generates it. There would be no meaning to things unless he supplies it himself. And that it cannot be made once and for all. It has to be done continuously. Literarily every day.

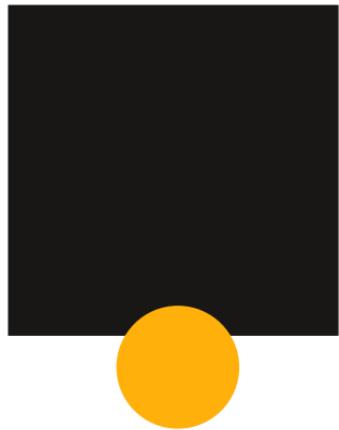
Saying so, he is far from denying God or Karma or Heaven or Hell. He has only come to a simple conclusion that freedom he is provided with is somehow bound to certain duties. Religions are not quite sure about whether freedom has been meant as a

kind of acknowledgement or a downright punishment. Science, which can be understood as a special case of a powerful religion, is not even sure whether there is such a thing. Sometimes it all feels just like a joke. But maybe it does not matter at all. It is what it is. If there is no freedom after all, he just has had to write the book anyway and you have to read this bit so what's the big deal? However, should there be a thing like freedom in human life what directly follows is that a person is fully responsible of how she or he is dealing with it. You too, naturally. And them? Forget about them. They are just logs in flooding rivers.

This is not a therapist's book. It does not list encouraging cases of miraculous treats that have solved the matter once and for all. But there can be a method in distilling.

Do you know the story of a Paris dustman who earned his bread by sweeping the small shops of artisans? „At the end of the day he threw out all the refuse he collected, except the sweepings from the jewellers. These he sifted carefully for he knew that they contained gold dust from the jeweller's file. After many years, he found himself in possession of a sufficient amount of this gold dust to make a mould of it and to shape it into a golden rose.

Every minute, every chance word and glance, every thought, profound or flippant, the imperceptible beat of the human heart, and, by the same token, the fluff



# THE TALE



**A**t the beginning, all was one.  
There was no weight and no worry.  
Only mild waves.

There was no space and no separation.  
No longing and no expectation.

Until something happened.  
Something unutterably horrible.

Pressure occurred. And Weight.  
The All squeezed.  
The All crushed.  
The All ground.

The All disappeared.  
Instead:

Dazzling Light and Piercing Noise.

Big Bang.

Space. Coldness. Separation.

Horror. Fear.

Then:

Breath.

The All split into Sky and Earth.

Only One Way remained to hold together:

Breathing.

Yet,

when breathing stops

Sky and Earth

become whole again

All the same.

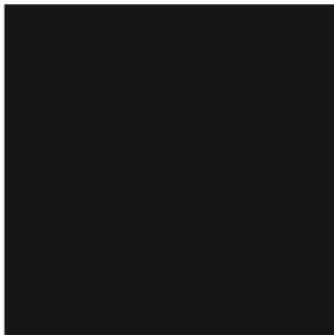
But until then:

It must have been the worst experience of your life.

And yet. Can you remember?

And yet again. You managed! You survived!

How did you do it?



# EPIPHANIES



**A**s a little boy, I was afraid of death. I could not stop thinking about it. I kept trying to imagine how the world would be without me, and it felt funny. On the other hand, I suspected that it must be somehow possible, as, apparently, there was a world without me even before I had turned up in it. So I tried to imagine both: the world before me, as well as the one after.

Once I almost got it. But mostly I just cried at night. I never shared my thoughts and feelings with anyone. I did not know how to and could see no one who might understand a bit of it. Adults were always concerned with different things, as well as other kids.

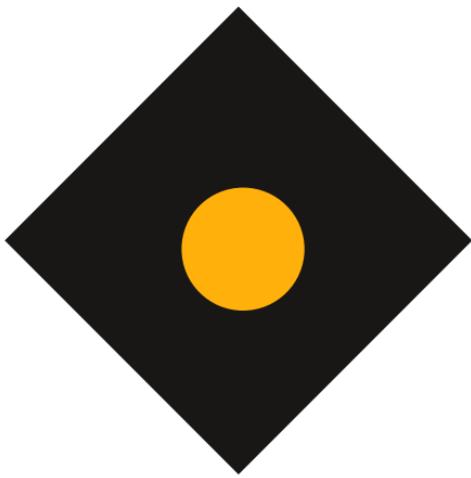
I also tried to figure out where and how the world ended, and wondered what was beyond that end. And as if it was not enough to crack, I tried hard to find out how the world had begun and what was before that. It all scared, puzzled, and fascinated me at the same time.

At those times, the world was the most frightening, lustrous and interesting place to be. I had a mission, my thoughts were mine, and my feelings were clear. Then it all turned into a blurred chain of worries. I cannot remember when.

## **Fear and Contempt**

I grew up in the 1960s in the Czech cities of Prague and Tabor. In Prague with my parents, in Tabor with my grandparents. I spent more time in Tabor and liked it better there. The apartment we stayed in covered the top floor of a three-storey villa overlooking a valley with a creek at the bottom and a medieval fortification with a towering church on the other side. Our part of the valley was wild, full of bushes, trees and grass, and a waterfall a little bit further upstream where the creek started from a big pond called Jordan. I loved the place.

At the end of August 1968, my parents drove me from Tabor to Prague. It was the end of holidays and the school was about to start soon. Our country was freshly occupied by the Soviet Union, and tanks and soldiers swarmed all over the place. Occasionally, shooting could be heard here and there. We cruised the road bravely. However, just when passing a long line of tanks, a big shot had burst right next to us and our car started bumping funnily. As it turned out, no one fired a gun, we only blew a tire. But the fact was not that obvious to the Russians. As we were getting out of the



# OBSERVATIONS



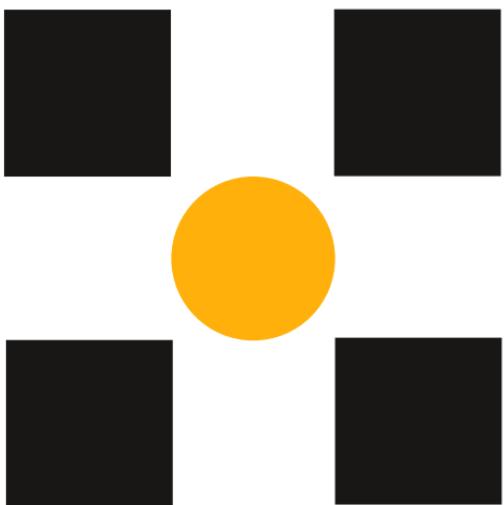
**O**nce upon a time, there were two men wandering the Earth barefoot. Often, their feet got so sore that they could not wander any more. Once, fed up with frequent pain, one of them suggested: “How if we kill all cows and cover the ground with leather? Then, we could wander freely everywhere and get hurt no more.”

His fellow-wanderer pondered the suggestion carefully and, really, the idea of walking soft grounds seemed appealing. But then something occurred to him and thus he answered: “It seems like a lot of work to me, mate. How if we kill just one cow and use the leather to cover our feet?”

Do you also feel the satisfaction of the right solution? Think twice. These are but two basic problem solving patterns. Look around. Look inside. Which one do you find prevailing around you? And within?

## Fear

Fear does not call for attention, it prefers to operate under cover. Still, it is a very efficient and relentless builder. Brick by brick, it is building its maze of a base. A little decision here and another there. You cannot turn this way because there is too much risk involved and you definitely need to put up a wall over here to prevent people peeping in. There is a little secret here so you need a convenient stash for it and some secret path in case you want to pick it up. And put it all under one roof so that you keep control over it. There is another secret there but that needs to be accessible to some, so you need to keep it separate from all yet still under the roof. People should see you this way, so raise a tower here and some turrets, too, to make it look attractive. There is a nice room for stuff here but it surely must stay closed, so that the stuff does not overflow. You call that order and build barriers to maintain it. Some stairs here and a ladder there so that you can pull it up in case of danger. An invisible fortress is being built around you, until it becomes really difficult to find a way out. One decision leads to another. Link by link a chain is forged. And then one day you say: I simply have to do this or that, there is no other way. With growing age, the barriers and corridors and halls and rooms and turrets become numberless. A ground plan does not exist and the only one who knows about all the passages is lounging about in the control room in the basement.



# PRACTICES



**D**isillusions and disappointments never come from outside. They are discrepancies between what you expect and what you get, and you can fine tune only one side of the equation: the expectation. The rule of disappointment is one of few unbreakable limits of the world, similar to a horizon. Which is why it needs to be simply accepted.

You've been programmed to make unreasonable expectations all the time so you definitely should not expect that you'll quit once you have realized. You should accept that, too. Make ready for more disappointments. Only each time remember they are not failures, just stepping stones in white waters. And carry on.

## Find the Fear

Find it. Lose it. Find it again. Lose it again. Repeat. The losing part never means that you've got rid of it.

It only means that you've lost sight of it. So find it again. Get used to it. Make it your companion. Never make important decisions before you have touched the grounds of the fear involved. Never run from it.

Imagine yourself a teenager who beseechingly wants to join a forbidden party. Parents are not at home so there is a good chance they won't find out. Should you stay or should you go?

Find the fear and make it real. Imagine that parents are going to find out. Then consider the other part. Is it worth it? Are you ready to accept responsibility for breaking a rule? Are you? Go. Are you not sure? But maybe they won't find out after all... Forget it. If you can't do it face to face with your fear, don't do it at all. Accept. Because if you don't, you'll have to lie. You'll have to cover. You'll have to do many things you didn't mean to. You'll be building the maze of Fear's base. You'll become a prisoner in it. And you won't enjoy the party either.

You do not have to be a teenager and the issue might be different, yet the pattern stays the same most of the time.

Sometimes the fear is stronger. There is no shame in acceptance. It is the excuses that enslave you in the end, not the fear itself. The fear of fear.

You can't build or change habits overnight.

Try. Fail. Try again. Repeat.

This is a lifelong program, nothing for next week, month or year. Accept that.

## Success

There is only one way to tell whether you are succeeding. It has nothing to do with achievements. It has all to do with how you feel. Regardless of age, do you feel each year or two better than the year or two before? If yes, you are on the right track. If not, you are wandering astray. At any age. Literarily.

There is only one ultimate success: to die in happiness. Until you have died, there is always time to practice.

Practice is anything you do. Practice is all you do.

## Awareness

Where there is awareness, there is qi, says Traditional Chinese Medicine. It does not mean that there is no qi without awareness. In some form or another, qi is everywhere in the world. The awareness helps qi to flow. Wherever qi gets stuck, pain occurs.

The more you understand the process of whatever you are doing the better you get at it. When you do not understand it properly, regardless of how diligent or even efficient you become, you may accomplish a lot but hardly feel better. And there are always going to be undesired side effects.

Aware-ness heals, amalgamates. Aware-less leaves you exposed regardless of how hard you press to control the outside.

Only one thing matters: transformation. It is happening regardless of your will or preferences. You may let the world transform you to its own ends. Or you may become involved, enjoy the process, and bring it to the happy ending.

You can start at whatever state you currently are. Young or old, strong or weak.

But what does it mean to start when you are always Here, anyway? It means to start employing awareness. To create little spaces among thoughts, emotions, feelings – places of free choice. Opening narrownesses, letting qi flow. When you lose it, start again. Over and over. There is no shame in losing. The only shame is not to start again.

There are things you need to do, and there are things you must let ripen. And there are things you must let rot, too.

Stop fighting for truths. Truth is there regardless of you. Truth does not need you. You need truth to prove the world to be wrong. Forget it. Seek harmony.

## Create spaces!

When you lose it, get back to it.

Maintain the axis, balance your three bodies.

When you lose it, get back to it.

Do it any time you remember.

Breathe.

Let go. That's it.

Ok, fine. There is always a longer way to put it. Let's have some more fun.

There are many ways to create spaces.

## Mirrors

As any commander, Fear does not like open spaces. Where there is a space, there is a possibility to change direction, to choose. Space breaks the action-reaction chain. It provides important insights, too. Think about metaphors. By spotting hidden similarities between two different ideas, metaphors break the habitual way of thinking, give you a new angle, different perspective. It is the space between where inspiration is born. Therefore, metaphors are important allies of a healthy mind. Which is also why it is so good to read poetry. Or write it. Or both. Not to pretend to be a poet or intellectual. Not to pretend that you understand stuff other people do not. But to play around, practice, create spaces, gain insights. Do you like poetry?

Anyway, there are other ways to have fun with metaphors, too. Look around. Keep catching reflections. Develop metaphors. Ponder them. They are like mirrors that let you see behind a corner.

The mirror principle applies on various scales. Have you ever noticed how human-shaped landscapes reflect some modern times diseases? Maybe studying concrete housing estates may help to understand cancer. Maybe

