

Creation: A Matter of Distinction

Werner Erhard

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I need to interact with you in such a way that I provide for you the opportunity to create for yourself another domain of knowing, communicating and being. Specifically, the domain of calling forth, of generating. And it needs to be distinct.

Physics is a very good example of calling forth. Einstein called forth a new domain. It never existed.

He invented it. He didn't fantasize it. He didn't pretend it.

He literally created a new context for physics, called relativity. Humanity is strewn with those kinds of examples. No one ever makes the distinction that that's what they are.

See, human rights. You and I think human rights, everybody knows about that. But it wasn't so long ago that that didn't even exist.

Human beings did not have rights.

Kings had rights.

Priests had rights.

But human beings did not have rights.

You and I don't know that human beings created from nothing the domain of human rights. They called it up. They *language*d it. They communicated it. And communication has that power. It has the power not only to represent, and not only to evoke, but literally to bring into being. And to know yourself as a context creator is to transform the quality of your life.

What you're listening to is an audio tape with Werner Erhard called Creation, A Matter of Distinction. The material is excerpted from a one evening event held in Toronto, Canada in February of 1982. The talk looks into our ability to create. What is presented here is not a new formula to be followed. Rather, it deals with our capacity to make certain distinctions. To notice something unseen about that which we already know.

Now, what does a distinction mean? We use that word a lot tonight.

What is a distinction?

Well, if you were an African tribesman looking at your brown cattle, you would see different kinds of brown. Whereas, if you're not an African tribesman, you don't know anything about cattle, and you look at the cattle, what you see is brown cattle. One cattle's, they're all brown.

You know, one's a little lighter, one's a little darker, but they're essentially all brown.

But if you're a herdsman, an African herdsman, and you look at that same cattle, you see 25 distinctly different kinds of brown. And you can tell from which kind of brown what the health of your cattle is. And how long your cattle can go before you need to get them to water again. And what kind of feed your cattle needs. And whether your cattle is pregnant or not pregnant. Whether your cattle's in heat or not in heat. Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

So you see, if you're not an African herdsman, the hell's the difference what 25 different kinds of brown? They're brown cattle. That's good enough for you and me.

But if I took the African herdsman, and I brought him here, and showed him an automobile, he would say, automobile. It's an automobile. That's all. It's an automobile. It takes you from one place to the other. And he would get in, and he might grab the rear view mirror and start steering the automobile with the rear view mirror. Because what's the difference? It's an automobile, isn't it? You steer the thing. What's the difference what you steer it with? See, for him, those distinctions are not important.

But now I want to show you what happens when you don't make distinctions.

When you don't make distinctions, you wind up driving your automobile down the highway of life with your hands on the rear view mirror instead of on the steering wheel, and you have a lot of accidents. And a whole big explanation about how driving is very tough.

So you talk to people, and they'll tell you how tough life is. Life is tough. And some people say life is tough, and it's terrible to me. And some people say life is tough, and I'm tough, and therefore I'm good in life. Or some other nonsense. You know, people have all... But the point is, life is very tough. Or is this that or the other thing? So, that comes from not making the necessary distinctions.

In the next section, Werner makes a distinction between two different kinds of knowledge, knowing by experiencing and knowing by conceptualization. He explores the relationship between these two ways of knowing, beginning with the more immediate, the domain of experience.

Now we're going to develop a model of communication. But we're not going to believe anything or figure anything out. We're going to do it scientifically, with no leaps of faith, no believing anything.

We're going to start out with what we've got right here.

So what you've got right here is the pressure of the chair on your backside. That's absolutely immediate for you. That's right there, right now. So, let us say that there's a domain of knowledge, that there's a domain of knowledge called experience. We'll start out with the premise, experience is.

We'll start out with that premise because it's the most immediate, direct thing available to you. You don't need to figure anything out. You don't need a nothing. You just are. See, it's like start out with you are experiencing.

So that's the pressure of the chair, the thoughts going through your mind, your feelings, sense of temperature, whatever, the body sensations, the emotions. Whatever your experiences are right now, that's where we're going to start this model. And we're going to say that people can know things experientially.

It's like if you read a book on riding a bicycle. Can you ride a bicycle?

No.

If you sit on a bicycle in falloff and get back up and sit on the falloff and get back up and sit on falloff and get back up and sit on falloff. If you do that long enough, can you ride a bicycle?
Yes most people can.

Do they know how to ride a bicycle?

No.

If you mean can they write the book on how to ride a bicycle?

No.

If you mean can you explain how to ride a bicycle, yes, if you mean by do they know how to ride a bicycle, that they can sit on a bicycle and ride it.

So there's clearly distinct domains of knowing.

So now we want to do an experiment. We want to do this experiment very rapidly, and we want to do the experiment.

Now, some people don't do the experiment, they think about the experiment, and I want you to know that when you think about doing experiments, you get a different experimental data than when you do the experiments. So none of this is going to make any sense to you if you think about the experiment, you actually have to do it, because that's what you need, that data.

So here's the experiment. In a moment, I'm going to tell you to describe to yourself what you are experiencing in that moment, because experiencing, this domain of experiencing is right now, right now, right now, right now, right now, right now, right now, right now, experience happens like that, doesn't it? It's right now, and right now, and right now, and right now, and right now, and right now, and right now. It's like that.

So in a moment, I'm going to ask you to describe to yourself what you're experiencing right now. And if you would, do that.

Do describe to yourself what you're experiencing right now. So do that right now.
What are you experiencing right now?

Now stop.

Because some of you are thinking about the experiment and not doing it. You don't get the data unless you do it. Describe to yourself what you're experiencing right now. Go ahead. Right now.
Okay, stop. That's enough data.

Everybody failed to do what I asked them to do if they really did the experiment. What you discovered is that you cannot describe what you're experiencing right now. Because by the time you stopped to describe it, it was not what you were experiencing right now. It is what you were experiencing a moment ago. Right?

So if you actually did the experiment, you know now, unequivocally, that you cannot describe what you are experiencing. You can only describe what you were experiencing. And it's worse than that. You

didn't only fail to describe what you are experiencing. You didn't even describe what you were experiencing. Because what you were experiencing no longer exists as an experience. It's disappeared as an experience. It is now a memory of an experience.

But you see, most people don't make any distinction between an experience and a memory of an experience. They treat them both the same. Because most people are ignorant. And what's worse, they don't know that they're ignorant. That's called blindness. To not know is one thing. To not know that you don't know, that's tragic.

You don't know, and you didn't know that you didn't know, that you weren't making a distinction between experience and memories of experience. And your life reflects it. What do I mean by that? Well, first off, let's tease out the model. Because now we have experience, and we have the representation of experience, and we've got two domains of knowing. We've got experience and the memory or the representation of experience. Two domains of knowing.

So by starting off with nothing more complex than experience, we've already, without any leaps of faith, without having to believe anything, without having to accept anything, we've demonstrated to ourselves that out of experience comes representation of experience, and you and I, for the most part, do not make any distinction between the two.

So for instance, if I say, do you love your wife? You say, oh yeah, I love my wife. But you don't mean I love my wife.

So when you say I love you to your wife, that's not what you mean. You don't really mean, when you say I love you to your wife, you don't really mean I love you. What you really mean is, I live my life consistent with the concept I love you. But the experience is rare, and I don't even make the distinction between the experience and the concept.

See, all experience, because of the way you and I are constructed, devolves the concept. Concept is a representation of the thing itself.

See, you know when you have the experience, I love you, it turns your life on, you feel really alive, things look beautiful, it affects your whole life. Is that what's going on? Or what's going on is you and I are living with the concept I love you. See, I behave in such a way, and I try to feel in such a way, and I try to see in such a way, and I try to act in such a way, has to be consistent with the concept I love you, but I don't have the experience very much.

And you want to know what it bothers me? Because my experiences are inconsistent with my concepts, and sometimes I feel guilty about it. See, I can put a whole human life together with those two notions, and just those two notions, and just by making those two domains distinct, you can suddenly see the labyrinth in which most people live their lives with their relationship with the person they say I love you to.

See, I don't know why they don't feel it anymore, why the excitement is not there, why the being turned on is not there, why the aliveness is not there. A lot of serious faces in this room now.

So I tell you that a lot of that is nothing more than the lack of the distinction.

I just said an amazing thing.

Did you hear what I said?

I said making a distinction in domains of knowledge can transform the quality of your life, and you can do it like that. You already did it. It's over. Go home. No, not yet.

So you and I just made a distinction between knowledge as experience and knowledge as concept. And one of the things that's true is experience always devolves. Experience always devolves into concept.

So the instant you get something as an experience, right away it becomes a concept, doesn't it?

Instantly.

As a matter of fact, what can you do about experiencing?

You can't do anything about it. The instant you try to notice it... See, the instant you... It's worse than you can't describe your experience, you can't do anything with your experience. Because the minute you try to notice what you're experiencing, it isn't what you're experiencing, it's what you were experiencing, and it isn't what you were experiencing. It's the concept of what you were experiencing, and the two things are different.

You know when you go into the restaurant to read the menu? You eat the menu. No kidding. People eat the menu. Because they don't make any distinction between the meal and the menu. And it makes them ignorant. And not only that, they don't know that they're ignorant, so they're blind.

Now, what really happens is that the concept then begins to determine the experience.

So when you meet somebody, you don't meet them freshly, authentically, openly. You don't say, ah, this person. No, you say, let's see, now you look like somebody I knew over there, and let's see, you have this on, so you must be like that, and you have gray hair, so you must be like this, and you're sitting with that gentleman, so you've got to be like that, and so on and so forth.

See, what happens is, experience devolves into concept, and concept begins to determine experience. And a conceptually determined experience reinforces the concept. And the reinforced concept more fully dominates the experience. And the more fully dominated experience, more, that's the people who are good at going through the motions, God. You've got security, and position, and reputation. You might even be an expert, an authority, a world figure, looked up to by everyone, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Whatever you think is good.

All that's possible functioning in this vicious circle, where experience evolves to concept, concept begins to dominate experience, the dominated experience reinforces the concept, and you've got a vicious circle. Then people don't know why their achievements don't really nurture them. I've forgotten who I was talking to. It was just a little while ago. Sorry, I can't remember. It'll take me too long. But they were talking about, didn't mean anything. And what they achieved didn't mean anything. I said, oh, that's not quite true. It means something for a week or two. You know, when you become the vice president, or the president, or whatever you become, that's great for about a week or two. Then you've got to pretend it's great.

See, then you've got to live after that with the concept that being the whatever it is you are is great. You've got to act like it's great, and talk like it's great, and smile like it's great, and all those things. But it's all eating the menu. You don't get to participate in the meal.

So all modern psychotherapeutic methods work because they break the hold of concept on experience so that people can experience directly and authentically. And it's wonderful. I mean, it really turns people

on. You come from a really well-done encounter group with a really good leader, and first off you walk outside the door and there's a tree there. But it's not a tree. It's a tree. You know, like it's really a tree! And you get home, and it's not your wife. It's this! It's the woman I'm married to! You see, like that. And the people have had that experience. You don't need to go to an encounter group to do it. Sometimes people fall down when it happens to them. But not often.

So the problem with that is that, well, then you have this wonderful experience, and that devolves into concept, and the concept begins to determine your experience with the person, and the conceptually determined experience reinforces the concept. The reinforced concept more fully dominates the experience, and you're back in the vicious circle.

Now Werner goes to the blackboard to expand on the model he's developed so far. He introduces a way of knowing beyond the vicious circle of concept and experience. It's a realm in which experience is created by yourself, rather than determined by the circumstances of your life.

What's missing from up there is being. B-E-I-N-G, being.

What's missing from up there is the domain of context.

What do I mean by that?

What I mean by that is very difficult to grasp, and most people are never going to grasp it. Now you need to decide whether you're going to be one of the most people or one of the few people who are going to grasp it. And it's up to you. I don't have anything to do with it.

That's your choice.

You also need to know that a hell of a lot of what you can't grasp is nevertheless true. And some of it even makes a difference. And I'm suggesting to you that this is one of those.

This is the domain in which we're good at communicating this representational, conceptual domain. You ever meet anybody who couldn't explain everything?

Everybody I know has something to say about everything.

Do you ever notice that people's explanations don't make a damn bit of difference? Do you ever notice that most people don't notice that?

Well, I didn't do it. But you see, I couldn't do it because what happened was na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na.

Nobody notices it.

What made a difference is that they didn't do it. And why they didn't do it doesn't make any difference. But people don't notice that. They think that the na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na, that makes a difference. They must think it makes a difference. They spend most of their time going na-na-na-na-na-na.

So, we can all communicate readily in the area of representation, in the area of concepts, and our lives look like it. With a lot of skill, there are people who can communicate in the experiential domain. They're called poets for the most part.

But, you see, if this is the domain of concept, and this domain is the domain of evoking, so that a skillful poet can, without representing the experience which he or she wants to communicate, literally evoke that experience in the listener.

Think about it for a minute. If you've ever been to a great movie, a great play, great music, that's all in the experiential domain, not in the conceptual domain, for the most part.

Without ever saying love, a poem which is effective can elicit in you the experience of love. Without ever using a word. See, without ever representing it, it can actually evoke it. Without throwing up the concept, it can evoke the experience.

So, we're all good at the conceptual realm of language. Some of us have some skill in the experiential realm of language, but the realm which I'm talking about now, the creative realm, the being realm, the generative realm, the contextual realm, none of us knows anything about that.

Why?

Because it's very difficult. Because it's hard to understand. As a matter of fact, it's almost impossible to understand.

What I mean by understand is that you don't represent it or evoke it. And that's about all you've got room for.

So, I understand I can't understand everything, so I'm going to get it experientially. No! There's another distinction of communication. There's another distinction of knowledge. Another distinction of being other than the two I've got up here. And the other one is damn difficult. Because it can't be communicated conceptually.

I need to interact with you in such a way that I provide for you the opportunity to create for yourself another domain of knowing, communicating, and being. Specifically, the domain of calling forth, of generating.

The domain of being. The domain of self. And it needs to be distinct.

I want to read something to you. This one is Ludwig Wittgenstein. He was probably one of the two or three great philosophers of this century. He said a thing which is really remarkable. I want to tell you about this. A very beautiful quotation. I first heard it, and many of you will have heard it, with the last line of the quotation.

And the last line is:

"Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent."

Somebody once said that to me, that quotation. I looked it up, you see. That's why I looked it up, because somebody said it to me once. They were trying to tell me to shut up. So I looked it up. The quotation doesn't mean shut up. It means something very powerful. Something fundamentally powerful.

Here's what the whole quotation is. This is one of the most eminent philosophers of our time speaking, of the century.

“My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way. Anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical. When he has used them as steps to climb up beyond them, he must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he’s climbed up on it. He must surmount these propositions, then he sees the world rightly. Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.”

So you see, my understanding of that is that you and I are now communicating in a realm in which something cannot pass between you and me in order for the communication to occur. Because what passes between you and me will in this realm ultimately be seen to be nonsensical. So that nothing that I’m saying to you has any sense to it. It doesn’t make any difference what I’m saying. But if you can stand on what I’m saying, if you can climb on it and stand on it and look out for yourself, what you see can transform the quality of your life.

See, this is strange communicating.

I’m not wanting to represent something, to conceptualize something, for you to leave with a concept, for you to leave remembering something, a slogan, a tip.

I’m not trying to give you a rule to live by or a principle to live by or laws. I’m wanting to give you the space, the opportunity to recognize something about yourself which previously you were not making a distinction about.

You were not distinguishing yourself as a being capable of calling forth. You still aren’t quite. Because you aren’t quite sure what I mean by that.

But we’ve gotten pretty damn deeply into the conversation in a very short period of time.

In a very short period of time, we’ve gotten to the heart of what it means to be a human being.

And it has to do not with something you and I don’t know. It has to do with ways of knowing which you and I have not distinguished heretofore. The mere distinguishing of which brings them into existence. Now let me show you what happens.

If you have a domain of knowledge which is generated, a way of being which is generated, if you can create context for your life, then your experience is not conceptually or circumstantially derived.

Your experience of life ceases to be a function of your circumstances, of your concepts, of what you believe, and it begins to be a function of, a reflection of, what you’re generating, what you’re creating of your own being.

And now the moments of experiencing, see, it would be like you don’t go to a relationship with your wife trying to get love out of it. It’s like you go to the relationship with your wife having created a context of love. And the relationship becomes a place in which to experience and express the context which you’ve created. And that begins to move the circumstances around so that the circumstances, what do I mean by circumstances?

Well, your memory of your feelings, your memory of your attitudes, your memory of your bodily sensations, how you move and walk and feel and all that stuff, all the names you give to that. See, that all starts to get reorganized to be consistent with what you created, the love that you created using this example of, I love my wife. But you see, this is applicable to all life, not just to the relationship which is represented by the words, I love you.

So, I'm saying that you and I have not made a distinction of domains. Like, you know all the books you've read? Did you ever see one in the front of the book that said, this book is not about real life. This book is actually about the symbols of real life. And caution to the reader, the world of symbols is not the same as the world of reality.

Did you ever see that in any one of the books, anybody in the room?

No, neither have I.

Why? Because nobody makes the distinction between experience and concept.

Nobody makes the distinction between the real thing and the representation of the real thing. And most poor suckers can't figure out why life stinks.

And what more do you need to know that you confuse the menu for the meal?

If I told you about a human being, that this human being confused the menu for the meal, that is to say that this human being did not make a distinction between the symbols of love and love, did not make a distinction between the symbols of satisfaction and satisfaction, did not make the distinction between the symbols of themselves, their own being and their own being and their own selves, what would you tell me about them?

You'd say that person's in trouble. Everybody knows who we're talking about, right?

See, what you and I call good times is in contrast to the way this planet looks, nothing. Nothing compared to what could be.

What you and I think is a life well lived, it's truly nothing in contrast to what could actually happen. And you know something? There's not anybody in the room who doesn't know that.

See, most people don't know who the hell they are.

They really do not know who they are. They all think they know who they are. We ask some people who they are and they reach in their wallet and give you their card. I always have to balance, you know, in an audience, you don't want to be too bad.

You don't want to say too bad things. But I would really like you to know that you don't know who you are.

See, it comes out as an attack, doesn't it? And I really don't, I want it to come out as an opportunity. You know, if you put it together, as well as you put it together, without knowing who you are, what?

What could happen if you really knew who you were? I always think that's exciting. Every once in a while I realize, wait a second, phony.

You don't know who you are. You're pretending to be this, that, or the other thing. Is that who you really are? I always get that little twinge of, ooh.

But then I, you know, wait a second, it's not so bad. It's not so bad. So I've gotten up to here, you know, where I am, not knowing who I am, then finding out who I am could make a real difference in my life. I'm going to go for that.

So I'm saying to you and me that in part, and in major part, that's a function of not making certain distinctions. You know, who you are, who I am is a car, which you steer. But let me know, we'll steer with what? See, we don't make the distinctions. It's just steering. What's the difference? It's just cattle. It's all brown.

What's the difference?

See, if the herdsman couldn't make the distinction, his cattle would be dead, and so would he.

We don't make the distinction about ourselves, we would be dead. And most of us are dead. The living dead. Upright dead. People who are upright and dead. People eating the menu in life instead of the meal. Struggling valiantly to get some of the meal, but not being able to because of a lack of a certain distinction.

This domain of knowing, the domain of knowing in which what you know is created. That sounds like, I mean, pretended, doesn't it? Or made up. Or fantasized. I don't mean made up, fantasized, or pretended at all. I mean literally created, generated. I mean called forth.

Physics is a very good example of calling forth. Einstein called forth a new domain. Never existed. He invented it. He didn't fantasize it. He didn't pretend it. He literally created a new context for physics called relativity. Humanity is strewn with those kinds of examples. No one ever makes a distinction that that's what they are.

See, human rights. You and I think human rights, so everybody knows about that. But it wasn't so long ago that that didn't even exist. Human beings did not have rights. Kings had rights. Priests had rights. But human beings did not have rights. You and I don't know that human beings created from nothing the domain of human rights. They called it up. They *language*d it. They communicated it. And communication has that power. It has the power not only to represent and not only to evoke, but literally to bring into being.

And to know yourself. To know yourself as a context creator is to transform the quality of your life.

See, people are pretty stupid. They think they're going to do something that's going to change everything. If you do nothing, everything will change. If you do something, everything will change. Change is a constant. Things change. Do you ever notice that things change? They always change. It's a constant. Change is conserved. Things always change.

And did you also notice that the more they change, the more they stay the same? Like, you know, you think, if only I could find the right job, then my life would be perfect, then everything would be made. And you get the right job, and it's wonderful for two weeks, and then it's like it always was. Well, it's if only I could get promoted. Well, if only I could find the right woman. Well, if only I could get rid of this woman.

See, people think that life is a function of their circumstances, and for most poor suckers, it is a function of their circumstances. Because their experience is circumstantially derived. And they live in a vicious circle of concept-dominated experience, concept-dominated experience reinforcing the concepts, and so on, and there's no real aliveness in the vicious circle.

In that circle, there is no happiness. There are the symbols for happiness, but not happiness.
In this circle, there is no love. There are the symbols for love, but no real love.

There's no health. You understand by health, I don't mean the absence of sickness. I'm talking about real vitality. I'm talking about a body which is alive and equal to the tasks in front of it. I'm talking about being able to stay up for two, three days in a row when there's something worth staying up for. So there's no real health in this vicious circle, nor is there any real self-expression.

And everybody in the room knows they've got something inside themselves that they want to share, that they want to express. And everybody knows that they ain't expressing it, sharing it. You know that feeling, when they don't get me, they don't understand me. It's real. They don't get you. And they don't understand you. I wish it weren't true. I wish it was just that you were fooling yourself. But they don't. Because what you've got to share of yourself isn't possible in this limited reality. And you can't have the other reality without creating it.

And most of you haven't got enough courage to create.

I'm going to say one thing off the board for people in management. Maybe I'll say two things. I can't tell yet. At least one. I think there may be another idea that's tied to this.

Essentially, people in management get paid for what isn't.

I'll say it again. People in management get paid for what isn't. What is not.

You know, you don't get paid if you're a manager or an executive for making what did happen. They pay you for what they want to happen or what will happen. So managers or executives get paid for what is not. And most managers and most executives don't know that.

So, first off, it's a very good idea if you're an executive to know that what you're getting paid for is what isn't. So that you can start looking around at what isn't.

Sounds stupid, doesn't it?

Let me use a football analogy. In football, you've got the quarterback. And the quarterback makes things happen. He gets paid for what isn't. He gets paid for putting the ball where it isn't. He doesn't get paid for moving the ball around or running the ball or calling the plays. Nobody gives a damn about that stuff. He might do that, but he gets paid for putting the ball where it isn't. And a good quarterback knows how to get the ball where it isn't.

Then, on Monday, you pick up the newspaper and you read about the game that happened over the weekend. And that's called reporting or journalism. And it's very exciting for us and we know all about what happened in the game. That's terrific, right? You read about the game and you get the color and some of the inside story and it explains why they did it. It's really beautiful. But if you haven't noticed, it doesn't make quarterbacks any better. It has no impact on the quarterback.

That whole language, that whole domain of conversation and communication has no impact on the quarterback. It might make him feel badly or make him feel good, well, but it has no impact on his ability to put the ball where it isn't.

So the talk communicates. If the coach is any good, it makes a big difference to the quarterback. So I make the distinction between coach communication and journalist communication.

What I'm talking to you about with regard to management is called coaching management. Managers, executives, get paid for what is not. You want to be an outstanding executive. Pay very close attention to what is not. You're paying attention to it whether you like it or not. If you're an executive, if you know that that's what you're getting paid for, you can start doing it intentionally.

Now, with respect to what is not, and I want you to, those of you who are in management, I'll do this quickly for those people who don't care about all this stuff. It's useful almost any place, actually, if you're going to make the translation. But I'll do it quickly anyhow because I don't care much about it either.

So most people in the realm of what is not, what do you do when you have something that isn't? And somebody says, listen, we don't have any X, Y, Z, and your job is to get us some X, Y, Z. What do you say? You say, well, let me do a study. Let me check it out. I don't know anything about X, Y, Z. Let me check it out. I'll check it out. I'll see what it's all about, and I'll let you know.

See, you think as a manager, as an executive, that what you get paid for is predictions. A prediction is a statement about the future which you can explain. Yeah, we will get X, Y, Z for you, and the way we'll do it is we'll do this, and then we'll do this, and we'll do this, and that'll result in that, and we'll take that, move it over here, and after that, that'll be there. You got it. I'm your man. I'll do it for you.

Now, a good manager knows how to predict. A good manager knows how to gather the facts, analyze the facts, take a look at what the elements are, has enough experience to see the way it comes out, has enough education and training to know how things work, but that'll never make a great executive because the other domain in which to deal with what is not besides prediction is the domain called creation or declaration as a speech act.

Declaration.

Want to be a really great executive?

Start paying some attention not to what you can predict but to what you can declare.

Now, watch. Don't be an idiot about it because remember, communication requires a listener. If I'm going to make a declaration to the people with whom I work, I want it to be heard as something so. I don't mind if there's a little controversy around it. As a matter of fact, people who know me well know I like a little controversy around it.

But I don't mean making fantastic declarations. I don't mean, don't worry about it, I'll take care of it no matter what it is. I don't mean that nonsense. I mean being able to take a stand, being able to make a declaration, being able to take responsibility can be either a predictive act or it can be a creative act and really top flight executives get paid for creation, not prediction.

You can get any technician to produce a prediction. It takes a human being to produce a declaration and specifically to coach people in it, you need to know the distinction between the domain of creation and the domain of prediction.

If you're a little skeptical, you should be saying, yes, Werner, that's a whole bunch more concepts. I get to go out and ride the bicycle on Monday. What is today? No, I have to go out and ride the bicycle Thursday. Well, I don't want to read a book when riding a bicycle. Get me a bicycle. I got to balance on a bicycle tomorrow at work. So now, it's time to learn something about this domain.

I want you to know, remember I told you I wanted to talk in that little place in the whole realm of communication where the talking actually made a difference.

When I say talking, I mean communicating, talking and listening, where it makes a difference. That little place where talking and listening makes a difference is called, I call coaching. To distinguish it from the stories about it and the explanations about it and all the rules about it and all the beliefs about it and all that stuff.

So whether you can make the distinction or not, you and I have been communicating at a coaching level, not at an explanatory level. I'm not interested in explanation here tonight. It's not my field. My field is not explanation. It's generation. My field is coaching, not journalizing.

Now, we should be very clear before anybody is stupid enough to dismiss this domain that it's a very important domain. This domain of representation, of content, of explanation, the domain of circumstances. Let me tell you just how important it is.

You can't get out of this room without it. See, because outside this room is only a concept for you and me, isn't it? Nobody is experiencing outside now. Outside is something represented in our mind, not actually being experienced by us.

So we couldn't even get out of the room without the world of explanation, conceptualization, until somebody by accident fell against one of the doors. Then we could say, oh hey, outside, I see it now. See, some nitwits, when they discovered that there was a realm of experience, say, we've got to throw all that mind stuff and all that intellect away. Real stupid.

Being half-assed is as bad whichever cheek you've got left. All I'm saying is that you and I are very confident in this whole realm of conceptualization.

We live in a culture and in a society which forces us to be confident in it in order to survive.

So we know a lot about the realm of explanation, about the realm of content, about the realm of conceptualization.

We know enough about the experiential realm, the process realm, to at least be aware of it. We heard tell that there's this thing called love and satisfaction and wholeness and being complete and alive and there's this thing called happiness and there are people whose lives are turned on and we've heard tell. We've read the menu. But we have no capacity to communicate in the contextual domain.

So this is all about that tonight.

See, a lot of people are worried about following what I'm saying. If you follow what I'm saying, you haven't gotten anything. It's okay to follow what I'm saying, but don't worry about following it. That isn't where the communication occurs. What you ate, what I said. And if you don't, you didn't get whatever value there was here tonight. So you've got to create. You've got to generate.

You've got to call forth that there is a domain of communication and knowledge which is generative and that it's possible for you as a human being to call forth, to create.

From where? From your experience? No. From your concepts? Absolutely not. Then from where? The answer is two answers. One answer is nowhere. Three answers. One answer is nowhere. The second answer is nowhere and everywhere. And the third answer is from yourself.

I'm just going to make an assertion. I'm going to make a statement. I'm not going to prove this. I'm not going to communicate it. I'm just going to state it. It takes me 60 hours to communicate this. So I'm not going to communicate it tonight. But I am going to assert it.

Until you know that who you are is empty and meaningless, you don't know anything. So I assert that until you know who you are is empty and meaningless, you don't know anything. Without knowing that, all things known are not known but are only known to some end. Like everybody knows everything they know for a reason. They don't just know anything. And you can't know anything until you know that who you are is empty and meaningless.

Now, look, that's a very stupid thing for me to say and leave like that. It's only going to bother people. So I'm stupid and you're bothered. But you see, until you get yourself as a space without meaning and without content, until you get yourself as a space without meaning, without content, there's no self from which to come. There's an identity from which to come who you think you are, what you believe in, what you stand for, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, all that, your position. But until you know yourself as that without meaning and that without content, you have, literally, you are without nothing from which to come. You've lost the nothingness which you must have in order to create your own life.

So, like I said, that's a 60-hour discussion. We're going to leave that one aside.

I should tell you the other half of it. You know, like a hand has a front and a back. It's still a hand. But if you keep slicing off the front, the instant you get the last slice of the front, the back disappears at the same time. So you're inseparable. So when I say no one knows who they are until they know that who they are is empty and meaningless, that's the front of the hand. The back of the hand is who you are is the stand you take on yourself. Literally, who you are is the context you've created for your own life. And a context is always and only created. It's never inherited. It's never a matter of learning. It's never a matter of something you picked up. It's never a matter of accident. It's never a matter of habit. Always and only something created. The stand you take in yourself, the context for your life, is always and only created.

Most people don't have a context. They only have a condition.

The condition is this vicious circle. That's the condition in which most of us live our lives. We live our lives from conceptually derived... Our experiences are conceptually derived. And our concepts are reinforced by those conceptually derived experiences. And we change over time and we think that that's life. We keep changing. We get older and smarter. We think that that's life. That isn't life. That isn't life. That is not life. That's not being alive. Change is not life. Rocks change. Life, being truly alive, is creative and generative. One creates one's own life.

How? Very simple. By making a distinction called the domain of creation.

You see, because generation, context, communication at this level is nothing more complex than drawing a distinction. A realm is brought into being by drawing a distinction. And by knowing that the realm you're brought into being is neither experience nor content.

So, you go home to your wife, walk in the door and say, how do I feel? Do I love her? God, I hope I do. Because I've got to live with her. And I've got to act like I love her. I hope the feeling's there. I hope the experience is there.

See, then people get to the point where they can't keep living with the circumstances when the experience isn't there. They don't know how to get out of it. They don't know what to do about it. They don't know how to fix it. There's no fixing it in the vicious circle.

So, it's possible, it takes an enormous amount of courage, but it is possible to create the context of love for your relationships. When? Now? Where? Here? How do you do it? You don't do it by looking into the circumstances. You don't do it by looking into your feelings. You do it as an existential, self expressive act.

You call into existence a context of love in which you hold both your experience and your circumstances. And in that context, the experience, the process of your relationship, begins to reflect the context which you've created for it, and that process, that action, begins to move the circumstances around until finally you've got an experience and circumstances that match the context you've created.

I know you can't follow that. I know it doesn't make any sense.

You want to make a difference in life? You want to stop just being concerned with what's important, like what people think of you, and what your position is, and how much money you've got, and your posture in the community, and what you believe in, and all that other stuff that ultimately doesn't make a difference, but is important?

You want to play in the realm of difference-making? That'll vary. Actually, I could have my fingers closed. You want to play in that realm of difference-making? Then you need to be willing to take a stand. That's something you can prove. And you're not going to get any applause for it either.

I'm going to read you three more quotes quickly, just so you're not looking for applause. If you want monuments, if you want agreement, if you want titles, if you want recognition, this is the wrong domain to function in. Stay down here in the vicious circle and get a good game going. But if you want the monument of having made a contribution to the quality of life, then this is the domain.

Albert Einstein said, "Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds."

He knew that from experience.

This is a quote from a tomb of a man who had a great impact on our civilization. It says, Finally, this is a piece of literature. This is a poet talking.

"The great things of life are what they seem to be. And for that reason, strange as it may sound to you, are often very difficult to interpret."

I say explain.

"Great passions are for the great of soul, and great events can only be seen by those who are on a level with them."

“We think we can have our visions for nothing. We cannot. Even the finest and most self-sacrificing visions have to be paid for. Strangely enough, that is what makes them fine.”

So, what did all this mean tonight? Nothing. It wasn't meant to mean something. It wasn't meant for you to go out with a rule. It wasn't meant for you to go out with something to remember. It wasn't meant that tomorrow, when you get into a certain situation, you say, Oh, I remember, he said do this. It wasn't meant that when you have a discussion tomorrow with your friends, it means that you have some smart, new, slick things to say. Try talking about this stuff and see how smart and slick you come out.

Now, let me tell you where I measure the validity of our being together. I measure the validity of our being together and the quality of your life over the next few weeks. I don't measure it in whether you like what got said or not. I don't measure it in whether you remember what got said or not. I don't measure it in whether you understood what got said or not. I measure it in the quality of your life over the next couple of weeks.

So, I have a few things to say in leaving.

One of the things is a real, honest-to-God thank you.

I mean, I really mean thank you.

First off, thank you for your time and your attention. That's always a gift.

Nobody owes their time or attention. But something much more fundamental, something much more powerful than that.

You know, I really want to thank you for being here. I have to say here because that's English. I actually mean I want to thank you for being.

This has been very real for me tonight, being with you. The opportunity to be together, to have a relationship, to communicate, to share ourselves.

See, I did all the talking. That's unfortunate. I hope that the real action was not going on in what you were looking at up here, but was going on in what you were creating for yourself, what you were generating for yourself. I wish I were better able to communicate the depth of my gratitude for the opportunity that you've created for us.

This has been a privilege for me and a great gift.

Thank you very much and good night.