Tatsujin Programs Narrative
A Sample of Discussions in Session One

"Life is a journey of decisions and the person who can't make them has a hard trip ahead. All along the pathway of life are stalled persons stuck between 'yes' and 'no'." [i] We can make decisions for, and by ourselves, or we can let others make them for us. We can actively BE in our lives, or we can wait and see what life gives us.

The word "decision" comes from a series of words meaning "to cut off from" [ii]. Like a warrior who burned the bridges of escape behind him so he could only go forward, a decision is a statement of purpose and power. The two essential choices for each of us are whether we are in this life to live it fully, or whether we choose to sleepwalk through it and live it as passive players.

Tatsujin is a Japanese word that refers to a *fully actualized person*, a person who is achieving excellence, who embraces excellence in all aspects of their life – physical, mental, social, economic, spiritual, etc.

Fate and Destiny

No matter what the ultimate spiritual view, any reasonable person realizes that each of us is uniquely suited for something – should we not be all we can be for that? Should we not believe and know that we are here for some good purpose?

The Greeks spoke of *Fate* and *Destiny*. Fate is what we are born with. We are tall, short, born in the USA, etc. We cannot change the circumstances we are born with. That is our Fate. We can, however, choose our Destiny and where we can go with what we have.

Excellence

Aretê [iii] is a Greek word meaning "excellence" that shows up in Aristotle's *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics*. Aretê is the method to reach *eudaimonia*, or to make a success of life. It means that in order to succeed in life, a person must exercise their best, both in character and intellect. According to Aristotle, character excellences include moral virtues, such as courage and generosity, and dispositions such as self-respect. The intellect excellences include knowledge, good judgment, and "practical wisdom." Aristotle maintained that men are separated from the animals by the power of thought, that they "contain something divine – what we call the intellect is divine," and therefore the most human excellences were intellectual. His main thesis in *Ethics* is that "excellent intellectual activity constitutes success or flourishing for men." [iv]

Being the best doesn't mean being better than someone else. Being the best means being the best we *can* be. For example, a person may want to be a champion sprinter, but the best time he can achieve in the 100 meters may be 10.5 seconds. That time in the year

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2005 will not beat any champions who can run that time "into the wind"!   BUT, it is the best he can be and should take pride in the achievement with what he has.

We should consider that there may be other paths that will place us among the top of the "class". This is the function of our Destiny, our ultimate purpose. In every way, in every day, we should strive to clarify our Destiny and know *it* by *its* success, or how and when *it* produces results.

Results

Results are quantifiable. Even the apparent intangible is measurable. Love is not measurable one may say. But if we have it, and then we don't, can we not describe what it feels like? Are our bodies not different, are our minds not different, and are our attitudes not different? Is not all of that measurable?

Results are measured over time. Having a good day is great, but not very useful. Aretê can be achieved only by making good "habits of choice."[v] Having a series of good days means a trend – that is excellent. If we repeat something, it must be working. Life is a series of days – we now are on a path toward a Destiny.

Honesty

Another aspect of Aretê is honesty. We must accurately reflect reality with our thoughts and actions. If we are outwardly directed, our standards are defined by people's opinions and comments. If we are inwardly directed, our standards are defined by our own opinions and comments. But reality is in *both*, not either one separately. Anyone can be wise and happy in a cave. Anyone can be wise and happy as a hermit or a solitary monk. But life is lived with others and that is the test of wisdom and happiness. As Aristotle said, "Men are not isolated individuals, and the human excellences cannot be practiced by hermits."[vi] Likewise WE must make our choices and not let others make them for us, so WE must be comfortable in our skin with OUR decisions. According to Aristotle, only the choices and decisions that do not cause regret contribute to our quest for happiness.[vii] This paradox of inner and outer is very much like a war at times. As Teddy Roosevelt said, "We have duties to ourselves and to others. We can neglect neither."

So honesty is critical. We cannot seal off the private from the public. We must act as if we are in Yankee stadium and we are standing on the pitcher's mound. It is night and all the lights are on and the stadium is full of people. The announcer is asking us to respond. The entire private is revealed to the public. If the world knew, could we live with that?

In Plato's work *Critias*, he warns against the possibility of willful self-deception, of "choosing a self who is blind to itself, of self-ignorance, self-shaped blindness to one's true beliefs, values, and abilities."[viii] While Plato believed that there are good and bad

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lies, Aristotle argues that no lie is allowed, because it will only open a person up to self-delusion.[ix] Aretê declares that all must be revealed eventually.

Models

Lucretius and others in the ancient world wrote about the importance of models. They conceived the idea of atoms as the basic building block of all things. They noted that models give us patterns for understanding.

Lucretius

Titus Lucretius Carus was a Roman poet and author of the essay "De Rerum Natura" or "On the Nature of Things." He lived from 99BC to 55BC and based his work off of the teachings of Epicurus and Democritus, Greek philosophers who believed in atomic materialism or that "the hidden substance in all physical objects consists of different arrangements of atoms and void."[x] "De Rerum Natura" was created as a scientific explanation of the universe and how man relates to it while still being a part of it.[xi] Ideas from Lucretius' writing would become crucial in the foundation of western science.[xii]

Lucretius built off the natural observations of some of the first physicists such as Thales, Anaximander, Heracleitus, and Empedocles who proposed nature as single power that they then tried to break down and analyze in its simplest forms, ranging in combinations of the elements of earth, air, water, and fire.[xiii] Lucretius argues that the major flaw in these physicists' theories is that they ignore the element of void.[xiv] He insists that the universe and the matter that it is formed from can be broken down into two things, void and atoms because if there was no void, or empty space, then there would be no motion because everything would be a solid mass.[xv]

"The air bounds of the hills, the hills the air;

Earth bounds the ocean, ocean bounds the lands;

But the unbounded All is everywhere."

-Lucretius

De Rerum Natura

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Stories

Interestingly most of us love stories. We remember stories but we have trouble remembering disconnected facts. The ancient world communicated with stories through grand oral traditions, which were their model for communication and teaching. *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* were stories in the form of epic poems and ballads. Even Aesop taught with stories. Within each story there were messages, symbols, and lessons. Some were recognized, some were not. The models were passed on, through repetition and through ways that the mind worked.   Have we ever considered how *The Iliad* survived? It was not written down until far later. How about the Bible? How about the deeds of Alexander the Great?

The forms of these histories were not realized until far after the events – yet they survived. Through storytelling.

"A need to tell and hear stories is essential to the species Homo sapiens--second in necessity apparently after nourishment and before love and shelter. Millions survive without love or home, almost none in silence; the opposite of silence leads quickly to narrative, and the sound of story is the dominant sound of our lives, from the small accounts of our day's events to the vast incommunicable constructs of psychopaths."
– Reynolds Price[xvi]

Energy

Another model from the ancient world relates to energy. Things with no energy were called "not alive" or "inanimate", while things with energy were "animate", or "alive".[xvii] A human is alive while a rock is not alive. Therefore, if we put energy into something, that something comes alive. A rock simply sits there until I pick it up and throw it or turn it to a purpose. If I take a certain rock (iron ore) and add heat, it melts. If I pour the melted rock into a mold and let it cool, the rock will change form and become the shape of the mold. If I take another certain rock (flint), and strike it against this new molded form, I can create a spark. If I put this spark over dry leaves I can get a fire. Two inanimate objects, made alive by my energy, created something that would not have existed without me, but the potential was there before my actions. My energy gave this scenario life. According to Aristotle, materials, such as those rocks, have a capacity or a "potentiality" that was reached or "actualized" when it achieved its purpose.[xviii]

Work is another form of energy. In physics we define work as the force required to move something a distance. Work has a destination, it has a purpose, and there is an activity that requires energy to move some objective a given distance. In other words, work is measurable.

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Reality

Our perception of our lives, how we focus on its different aspects to a negative or positive degree, affects our situations and all of their outcomes. In other words, when we choose to focus negatively, it is the negative aspects in life which will begin to come alive. If we choose to focus positively, the positive aspects will start to reveal themselves in our lives. The positive builds, while the negative tears down. Belief is an *expectation* that something will happen, while trust is *consistent belief* that it will happen. Doubt is the expectation that something *may not* happen; and distrust is the consistent belief that it *will not* happen.

For example, if we focus on distrust, then everything which occurs in our lives is a revealing of distrust. Nothing being perfect is a revealing of lies – more distrust. This negative energy breeds its own truth, which is not really truth. Sharing the negativity (e.g., nothing ever goes right) with others only compounds it, and the probability of someone coming out of negative situations with everyone around them just as negative, is not possible.

However, if the purpose behind the search for truth is love, for example, then one part of the solution is in building evidence of trust, or looking for the positive. Trust *will be* if trust *can be*. Trust (a positive) cannot live in negativity.

Plato wrote in *Thaetetus* about Socrates' and Thaetetus' discussion on perception and knowledge. One aspect that is discussed is a claim by Protagoras, an earlier Greek philosopher, is that "man is the measure of all things, of those that exist that they exist and of those that do not exist that they do not exist." Both Socrates and Thaetetus interpret this to mean that whatever a person perceives at any point in time is real for them at that moment.[xix]

"When I am well the same wine is sweet and wholesome that is bitter to me when I am ill. The different qualities the wine has for me at different times are equally real to me."
– Socrates[xx]

Electromagnetism

In electricity, we say that the electric charge in a battery moves from the side that has a surplus of "energy" towards the deficiency side. Does anyone believe that deficiency is a positive and surplus is a negative? No, it is a fact and this system consistently repeats itself. Nothing changes even if we call surplus or deficiency different names or feel differently about them – this just happens – neutrally. Nature is a neutral force that tends to flow in the direction of negative to positive. Around an electric current, magnetism is generated. This fact is a measurable fact that is no longer debated.[xxi] Therefore, if the deficiency or negativity of something is our focus then there is no way to pull in the

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surplus or positive. We do not want this situation in reality because it will only cause us to magnetize more negativity.

Pygmalion and Galatea

There is a Greek myth of Pygmalion and Galatea that took place on the island of Cyprus, which belonged to the love goddess Aphrodite. Pygmalion was the King of Cyprus who fell in love with Aphrodite and would marry no other woman. Despite his pleas to Aphrodite, she remained distant and Pygmalion became ill with his longing. Eventually the king decided that if he could not have Aphrodite, then he could at least have her image and created a life-sized replica of the goddess from ivory. This image relieved his longing for a time, refusing to be parted from it, even to the point of bringing it to bed. When the statue no longer provided comfort for Pygmalion, he once again pled to Aphrodite to have pity on him and embraced the statue as he wept. Suddenly, a tear fell from the ivory eyes of the statue for Aphrodite had heard his prayers and breathed life into the statue. The statue proceeded to embrace the king, her flesh, once made of cold ivory, now warm and soft and she told Pygmalion that her name was Galatea. The two married and had a son, Paphos, and the king never yearned for the original Aphrodite.[xxii]

Pygmalion wanted the statue of Aphrodite to come alive so much that eventually his wish was granted. We call this in Psychology the self-fulfilling prophecy. A self-fulfilling prophecy is "a prediction that, in being made, actually causes itself to become true."[xxiii] Robert K. Merton is the generally recognized originator of the term in 1949 and used it in the context of sociology.[xxiv]

To avoid our own negative self-fulfilling prophecy we need to work for it. If we desire trust in a relationship, then we must allow it to be – not destroy it by looking for examples of distrust. We also should surround ourselves with those things that create positive choices, not close ourselves off from making choices by shutting those choices out.

Developing Personal Excellence

We have already defined work as the force required to move something a distance; that work has a destination and a purpose; and there is an activity that requires energy to move some objective a given distance. We also know that work is measurable.

This now sets up a framework for us all to begin to identify and examine the items of most importance to us and how we will improve upon them in sessions two through six of our program. We will learn to employ the Tatsujin action tools and models – earth, wind, fire, water, and void in order to create and bring excellence into our lives.

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[iii] "Aretê" < <u>http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/GLOSSARY/ARETE.HTM</u> >

[iv] Barnes, Jonathan. <u>Aristotle: A Very Short Introduction</u>. New York: Oxford, 2000. p125

[v] Adler, Mortimer J. <u>Aristotle for Everybody: Difficult Thought Made Easy</u>. New York: Simon & Schuster Inc. 1978.

[vi] Barnes p126

[vii] Adler p101

[viii] Schmid, Walter T. <u>Plato's Charmides and the Socratic Ideal of Rationality</u>. Albany State University of New York Press, 1998. p101

[ix] "Plato: The Republic." <<u>http://www.uri.edu/personal/szunjic/philos/republ.htm</u>>

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[xi] Mallock, W.H. <u>Lucretius</u>. New York: John B Alden, 1883. p9

[xii] "Lucretius" < <u>http://www.iep.utm.edu/l/lucretiu.htm</u>>

[xiii] Mallock p19-20

[xiv] Mallock p80-81

[xv] Mallock p29

[xvi] Price, Reynolds. <u>A Palpable God</u>**:** thirty stories translated from the Bible : with an essay on the origins and life of narrative. New York: Athenium, 1978.

[xvii] Barnes p105

[xviii] Adler p51-52

[xix] Melling, David J. <u>Understanding Plato</u>. Oxford: New York Oxford University Press (UK), 1987. p128

[xx] Melling p128

[xxi] "Electromagnetism" <u>Wikipedia</u>. <<u>http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electromagnetism</u>>

[xxii] Ferguson, Diana. <u>Greek Myths & Legends</u>. London: Collins & Brown, 2000.

[xxiii] "Self-fulfilling prophecy" <u>Wikipedia</u>. <<u>http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-fulfilling_prophecy</u>>

[xxiv] "Major Works of Robert K. Merton."
<<u>http://www.faculty.rsu.edu/~felwell/Theorists/Merton/MertonBooks.htm#Major</u> >