

# Pathways

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*"The highest reward for a person's toil, is not what he gets for it, but what he becomes by it"*

John Ruskin

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## Scanners and Lasers

So here's an interesting thought...there are some people who move through the world as scanners, some as lasers and some who can work in either modality. Yeah...so what makes that so interesting?

Scanners are those wonderful people who see everything. Nothing is missed in their gaze, they watch the world and are great detectives because nothing counts too much. Scanners can turn their hand to pretty much anything that piques their interest and acquire competence fairly quickly in that field. Scanners have diverse interests but can also seem to flit from one thing to another and never settle. You might even be excused for saying that some scanners have ADD, but that would be to miss the great gift of their talent. Scanners are always looking for something new to learn and build a wealth of experience across several disciplines.

Lasers are, as the name suggests, those amazing people who see to the heart of an issue, who penetrate to the very core of a subject and who absolutely own one single subject. Lasers are masters of their trade. Lasers expend their energy in one passionate pursuit and devote their lives to a single cause. Lasers are highly focused, dedicated, and not easily deflected from their chosen path. Lasers may appear as though they have blinders on and can appear oblivious to any-

thing but their own subject. You could be excused for saying that some Lasers have OCD tendencies, but again, that would be to miss the point of the great gift of their talent.

So let's take an example...a gifted musician might be a Laser who spends eight hours a day playing the piano. Conversely, they might be a Scanner who can play almost any instrument you give them, and can even make something you wouldn't think of as a musical instrument into one.

O.K., so what if you have a bit of both? What if you can scan some things, and lase to the target on others? What does that mean?

Well, the first thing that means to me, is that you can communicate in both worlds, which in itself is a talent not to be underestimated. Something else it means to me is that the world is not entirely Yin nor entirely Yang...it is neither black nor white, it is massively grey. You will run into end-member Scanners and end-member Lasers, but many of us are somewhere along the line between the two extremes.

So, confession time...I'm a Scanner, I admit it. I have a lot of interests, and it gives me the ability to coach people from diverse backgrounds. At the same time, I can use my laser-like tendencies to penetrate to the core of a coaching issue, so over time I have learned to use both sets of traits to advantage.

## Scanners and Lasers

So what's my message?

It's probably not a bad idea to have an idea of your tendencies in this matter because it can help steer you away from frustration and confusion. Scanners do not do thrive in a Laser world and vice versa.

As a Scanner, I can be really good at a bunch of things, but I'm never going to excel at just one thing and be happy...that's just not how I am wired. It's not that I'm going to get bored with a subject, it's that there is so much to learn.

Now let's look at the world of the Laser...we can say the same thing...we're not going to get bored with a specific subject precisely because there is so much to learn...about that subject.

If you take an end-member Laser and try to force them into Scanner-suit you are asking them to pay equal attention to all the distractions that are preventing them from focusing on their passion.

If you take an end-member Scanner and try to force them into a Laser-suit, you are asking them to ignore all those things that might attract their attention.

In either case you are creating a recipe for disharmony.

Lasers excel at what they do best, and Scanners excel at what they do best. It is not that one is preferable to

the other, it is simply a matter of propensity.

I have no intention of getting into genetics or brain chemistry and nature versus nurture here...I'm not really interested in the why's and wherefore's of this matter (right now), I'm interested in how this can play out in your schooling, career, relationships, and family.

Can you imagine, for instance, the potential disharmonies that could ensue from having a child who is a Scanner being raised by parents who are both Lasers? Or having a corporate manager who is assigned the role of troubleshooting problems across a corporate landscape precisely because she excels in one aspect of the corporate mission?

So yes, it's important for us to know our own traits, but it is equally important to understand the tendencies of those around us. Specifically, knowing the tendencies of those around us helps us to offer them opportunities that enable Scanners to shine at what they do best and Lasers to shine at what they do best.

The trick is learning to play to your strong suit, reach your potential with the talents and skills that you have, and to help others play to their strong suits.

This isn't about being right or wrong, better or worse, it is simply a matter of knowing where your strengths lie,

and playing to them, because it is only when you play life with the congruence of internal integrity that you can bring your best to the world.

As a coach, and before that as an academic advisor for thirty-plus years, I have listened to literally hundreds of people coming to terms with their correct path, and sometimes feeling trapped by the expectation (or label) of being either a Scanner or a Laser. Some were the opposite of their current path, some were looking for internal permission to go with their heart and gut, some were completely aligned with their purpose.

In all cases, however, once they knew where they belonged, the landscape of life became a lot less bumpy, and the road of life had far fewer pot-holes.

We all have gifts and talents, but only when we learn to play those talents in the right tune do we create harmony in our inner lives and, by extension, in the lives of those with whom we interact.

So to wrap this one up, I invite you to examine who you are. Are you a Scanner? A Laser? Somewhere in the middle? Somewhere close to one end?

What would best allow you to play the game of life full-out, achieving your potential? What gifts do you have to share? What is the sound of your harmony? ☺

***“A man really knows nothing save what he has learned by his own experience”***

***Christopher Weiland***

## Competence and Confidence

In the last couple of weeks, the universe has seen fit to bring into my world the notion of competence and confidence in several ways.

It began simply enough in a martial arts class last month.

Martial arts students at the beginning of their journey have very few tools with which to play, but they may feel supremely confident in their ability to apply their tools, regardless of the nature of the opportunity. (If the only tool you have is a hammer...). You see, the thing of it is that if you can't see an opportunity, then to all intents and purposes, the opportunity does not exist. Consequently, without the insight of variety in potential opportunities, everything looks like a nail. This is the stage of the Uniformed Incompetent, something about which we have spoken before (vol. 17 #6).

The next opportunity came in talking with some fellow students at school about our depth of knowledge in Traditional Chinese Medicine (or lack thereof). I am somewhere in the middle of the process that will hopefully lead to the granting of a degree, and I currently feel as though I know less than I did when I started...well, that's not exactly true, but it sometimes *feels* true. I know that I have learned a lot here in school, but also that I have so much more to learn. (Like that's ever going to change?) The point here, is that at this stage I am an Informed Incompetent...I now know I know nothing (or next to nothing).

The third opportunity came from one of my coaching clients who complimented me on my skill as a coach, which (in the moment) I internally deflected as over-stating my skill.

The final opportunity came the following day from a friend who was discussing with me how we often over-estimate our skill at the novice level and underestimate our skill at the higher levels of performance.

Enter: The role of humility.

It is a curious thing to me that those who truly excel at something often say little about their skill level, nor rate themselves as highly as others might rate them through observation.

I think that it has something to do with the awareness that as we learn more, we see that the well of knowledge is infinitely deep, and what we know is insignificant by comparison. It is a humbling awareness. It is also an awe-inspiring awareness.

Humility seems to grow in the very fertile soil of wisdom and awareness. To simply awaken to the knowledge that anything that I have learned is just a miniscule fraction of what there is to learn (in any subject), is to invite the seed of humility to grow within.

All of which led me to an interesting question:

Do any of us ever really step beyond the level of Informed Incompetent?

For sure, in limited areas of expertise and in specific areas of performance we may reach that sublime level of the Unconscious Competent, wherein we

no longer think about what we do, it simply manifests through us.

Using my analogy from earlier, there is a huge difference between watching a skilled person play a piece of music and watching a virtuoso play the same piece. When you watch a world-class virtuoso play, they sort of disappear, and there is only the music...it's difficult for me to explain.

I see the same thing in the martial arts. When I watch truly gifted players do Judo, they disappear and I am simply watching Judo.

But step outside of that skill set for a moment, and see what happens: We become Informed Incompetents. Precisely because we have learned at a high level of performance in one area, we can become acutely aware of how little we know in others...and again, humility emerges.

It is at this point, and because humility *has* entered the picture, that competence and confidence begin to change their appearance.

Confidence moves deeper, and gets quieter, because we recognize that there is less to prove.

Competence is recognized as a subset of '*what there is to know*', which means that we don't have to be right all the time, because we know that we don't have all the answers. More than that, we begin to recognize that 'right' is often merely a statement about perspective.

Or so it seems to me. ☺

***“The great law of culture:***

***Let each become all that he was created capable of being”***

***Thomas Carlyle***

As a faculty advisor, martial arts coach and professional life coach, I have been coaching people in a variety of educational, entrepreneurial and professional settings for more than thirty years.

When I coach, I work from the premise that you have the answers within you and work with an eye to mind / body / spirit congruity. Consequently, I look at coaching as a vehicle through which my clients can find out what it means to them to discover their full potential and live life full-out.

In my coaching tool box you will find the life experiences of a martial artist, an entrepreneur and a scholar. If there is one thread that binds these pieces together, however, it is the notion of embracing a journey of life-long learning and discovery.



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