



The World Gym Theory

By JOHN BICKART, Ph.D. | **Science Education and Spiritual Transformation** / The Psychological Handling of Spacetime

Separation versus Connection



Recently the *Texas Education Review* published Damon Almond's call for **genuinely meaningful work** in higher education to answer "a prevailing sense of emptiness—or meaninglessness—as the most pressing problem facing these students" (2022). He describes a *purpose gap* that is due, in part, from a lack of authentic connections to broader transcendent life purposes that extend beyond the self. Following is a whimsical, yet intentional look into at least one aspect of a possible purpose of life on earth.

The Theory that the World is One Big Gym

The whole physical world seems to be saying from every corner, "Everything down here is separate!" Physicality

itself demonstrates that we live in these objects called bodies. And these bodies are physically separate from the tree objects and the rock objects and the star objects and the other human objects. Yet, just about every spiritual tradition speaks about *oneness* and *connection*. They seem to praise the act of caring about the other. Then, there's the golden rule - doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. So, as I thought and taught about this for the last 50+ years, it hit me that perhaps some higher being than me designed life that way. Perhaps at least one aspect of physical life is to be separate on purpose, so that we have to work to reach the well-being sensation of feeling connected.

What if the Physical World is One Big Gym!? Suppose some aliens came to visit and you took them to a gym. You would explain that, "We humans love to work out. We work out at home, outside, and regularly at the gym." You take them into the gym and show them around. "Here is a machine that makes your legs burn. This one hurts your neck and this one over here causes pains in your biceps and triceps. You see, the resistance of each machine makes you work to break down your body, so that it builds up better than before." You hear yourself sounding pretty funny and you think that your alien friends might be wondering, "Why?" You answer in anticipation, "No pain, no gain."

After much explanation to the aliens, it becomes clear that to them that we earthlings want to keep in shape. Therefore, we to build up our bodies. You explain that we keep going back to the gym because we want to develop ourselves and maintain ourselves. You tell them that to maintain health, we can't just hang around - we must be moving forward.

Finally, the aliens get it. They say, “We see. This is how you develop - you build your body. We have seen similar behavior throughout the galaxies we have visited. It appears that everywhere we go, beings want to develop.”

What is the difference between Physical and Spiritual?

Let's play a guessing game. Let's pretend that we could understand some little things like ... *the meaning of life!*

Ready? Ok, first, picture a spiritual place with no physical bodies to maintain. How might life in that spiritual place work?

- for one thing, maybe you would be in a place outside of space and time
- when you wanted to get anywhere, it would take no time
- you would need no food
- you would need no money
- if a group of your friends wanted to get together, the entire group could be in the same place, the exact same space
- also, any one of you or your friends could be in several places at once, at the same time
- and somehow, you would be one with everyone and everything else, whatever that means

Now, ask yourself this. *Why in the world would you come into this physical world?*

If, in fact, you started in a spiritual world, what would be the purpose of coming to a place that seems to be non-spiritual - a place where things appear to be separate, and it seems to take time to accomplish every task?

Think about it.

If you knew you were at one with everything in a spiritual world, why would you go to a place where it appears you are separate from everything and everybody? What would be the purpose of going down to that strange, physical existence to have a life?

As long as we are playing our guessing game, how about trying to answer this huge question with at least one modest, simple, possibility. Could it be that one purpose of having a life on earth is not unlike the purpose of going to a gym? You leave your comfortable couch, feeling no pain, and torture yourself in a gym with physical pain in order to develop your physical body. What if you leave your wonderful spiritual world of oneness and torture yourself with an earthly existence full of separate objects in order to develop your spiritual body. In the gym you work out on contraptions that offer the physical resistance of not moving until you work at it. In the earthly life you work out trying to be connected to other people and nature, while the world is constantly offering ***the resistance of apparent separation.***

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#19 The 5 Rules of Living



A traveling rooster claimed he could teach the most important life lessons a new-hatched chick should know. He declared that he could tell them how to make the adjustment from heaven to earth! And he brazenly boasted that he was the owner of THE 5 RULES OF LIVING! "It's quite simple," he would say, "I'll just explain how in heaven everything was together; but here on earth everything appears separate." Here are his rules. See what you think ...

- 1. Do not touch other chicks' stuff or person. It's not yours. You are separate. (Yet, somehow ... try to act as if you are not separate.)*
- 2. If stuff is not yet claimed, grab it before someone else does. For example, if there's some food on the ground and someone else grabs it, your body will go hungry. You see, the food will go in their body. You are not one with their body. You're separate. So quickly grab it for yourself. (Yet, somehow ... try to learn to leave some for someone else.)*
- 3. Watch out for mine-not-yours-certificates. They come in round, metal coins and rectangular paper. Grab them, too. If you do not, your body won't be allowed to buy stuff; but the other bodies will. (Yet, somehow ... try to leave some of these, too.)*
- 4. You will be told repeatedly to share. This means willingly not keeping stuff for your body so that it goes to*

some other body. This mostly works while adults are watching. This usually does not work out in the yard, in private, or pretty much anywhere else. (Yet, somehow...try to learn this, anyway.)

5. Try to find how to undo physical separateness. It is called oneness. Your chances are slim because most chickens do not even believe it is possible. It happens to approximately 1 in a million chickens, 1 in a million times. Good luck. (Yet, somehow ... if you can achieve oneness against all of these odds and against all of the above difficulties down here on earth, it may be the most important thing you do in your life!)”

SEPARATENESS IS A SUBTLE DECEPTION OF LIFE ON EARTH

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About the Author



John Bickart

John Bickart, Ph.D., likes to work in the background and let good ideas speak for themselves. He believes that children, and sometimes adults, know what they want and that they empower themselves when they listen to their hearts.

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References

- Almond, D. (2022). Pedagogical Ecologies to Facilitate Higher Education for Genuinely Meaningful Work. *Texas Education Review*.
- Bickart, J. (2020). *Bickart's Just-in-Time Fables* (Vol. 1). Asheville, NC: Red Shirt Interactive Group.