

# The Substance of Understanding

**Larry Krantz:** Like most of us, I do things to exercise my brain and body: crosswords and puzzles, as well as cycling and swimming. Also, I play golf with a group of men, which is socially useful. I've been instructed how to hold my hands on the golf club and shift my weight and a dozen checkpoints on a swing that takes less than two seconds. With so many conflicting thoughts it is not surprising I often don't know where the golf ball will go!

Golf is a deceptively difficult game. The ball just sits there, so it should be easy, but as my friend, John Gray, found when I took him to the driving range, even when he managed to hit the ball, it went anywhere but straight. It was so absurdly funny we both laughed ourselves silly.

Humor is part of divine expression. I see so-called spiritual types, mostly Christian or Muslim, on TV, exhorting their followers to hold certain beliefs or pray in a particular way. Their faces are often wrought with anger, fingers wagging, expressions dour or smug or just plain scary—not evidence of the tone of life, which is easy, full of light and humor. If we are at center, we may find amusement and enjoyment in all things, even when we are personally uncomfortable.

Recently, I went to the golf practice range and picked a slot next to a young man who is a very accomplished golfer. In high school, he won the Colorado state championship, then played for a high-power college team in Oklahoma. He's a fine young man, bright and warm, with a quality of character I appreciate. He told me he had just turned pro and was going through qualifying rounds to try to play on the PGA tour. I wished him well and turned my back to him to continue my own practice. Then a strange thing happened. Instead of having a head full of conflicting advice about how to swing a golf club, it was simple and obvious. This caused me to wonder why I had made such heavy weather of it in the past. When I hit balls in this new mindset, using varying clubs, the balls sailed straight and far, to my delighted surprise. After that day, I played a few times before the weather turned cold, and while I was tempted to over-analyze my golf swing, I held onto how it felt that day on the driving range, and played much better than I had before.

I have just told you a story. There is a point to it, which I will get to shortly. Stories are useful ways to expand our understanding, to imagine different lives and situations, different cultures, and so on. Many stories these days involve violence and coarseness and reflect the worst impulses of human nature. People relate to what is familiar to them. I don't have much

interest in these sorts of stories or shows. There is enough depravity and craziness on the news. On the other hand, there are some inspirational stories, often of a person overcoming odds to do something worthwhile, demonstrating determination and character; these are said to be “feel-good” stories. The rest, I suppose, are “feel-bad” stories which display the sordidness of human behavior and make it seem acceptable or even ordinary.

If the divine state were fully present on earth, there would still be stories, although quite different than what we know now—stories with greater participation in an acute awareness of vibratory factors. Art and music and dance and acting have places in sounding the tone even now, although on a limited basis. Humanity, when conscious of our divinity, sings with a unified voice, a voice which has been silent for a long time. The celestial song of creation goes on without our unique contribution.

Back to my little golf story: The significance of it is that this shift in understanding did not come from some new athletic ability that had broken through or a mysterious golf secret I unraveled. It was a gift. I realized, to my astonishment, that I stood in the shared substance of golf understanding that exuded from this elite player next to me. It helped that we had something of a flow going, he and I, and that I was open to learn. I glimpsed the golf swing as he saw it—at least to some degree. Each of us projects radiant substance, usually unnoticed by others, or even ourselves.

This reminds me that our current methods of education are needlessly cumbersome, built on external modes of tedious learning and memorization. It is much simpler to be uplifted into the substance of one who has mastered a certain skill. It is a gift of vision. This could pertain to some craft, or to our very purpose for being on earth at this time. Lengthy dissertations are unnecessary when we see something new for ourselves through the lens of the substance of understanding. Once seen from a loftier vantage—the gift of comprehension—we may apply this vision to our unique situation. It is like having a smudged lens made clear; what had before been murky is now seen.

We are radiant beings. An intensity extends beyond us, a nimbus, an envelope of substance, much like the corona around the sun. Radiation goes forth. Close in, there is an intense zone, and then radiation moves outward in a less concentrated manner. In the true state of divine humanity, there would be an abundance of substance in many fields, an extension of right living, which opens the way to understanding—even to let a newbie know how to live in this outer world of space and time. Long litanies are not needed when we see through the richness of spiritual substance. It is a gift greater than rubies or gold. We may receive that gift with a grateful heart, then apply it, and our living expression, now elevated,

adds to the abundance of this substance of understanding. We pay it forward. It was this cloud of substance that enabled me to understand the golf swing in a new way—an admittedly petty thing—but it demonstrates the process of shared vibratory substance.

Many of us had the opportunity to be in the presence of Martin Exeter, a man of great spiritual understanding. We may have thought his eloquent words convinced us to change how we lived—and he was careful and accurate with his words—but, as I see it now, what was being offered was the gift of the substance of understanding, freely offered. The invitation was to rise up, to see the world as he saw it. To the extent we let ourselves be uplifted, we saw. In the substance of understanding we see things anew. With new vision, old behaviors and errant views no longer fit. It is exciting to rise up and expand our understanding. Shared radiance allows us to do this. In fact, it is how change comes to the body of mankind: uplifting those who are responsive, that they see the Truth more clearly. This substance of spiritual understanding is the light that shines in the darkness, the way to remembrance and oneness of function.

Some have basked in the effulgence of a great one, such as Martin Exeter, returning week after week to be lifted up, yet not let changes come in themselves, sort of coasting along. Such ones could not sustain an elevated level of understanding, for they never actualized it personally. Having a gift of vision is not enough; we have to apply it in our living. The ascension into spiritual identity may be thought of as moving up the side of a mountain, of gaining altitude. “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?” (*Psalms 24:3*) Some climb above the fray somewhat but do not go higher; they settle into place of comfort, lead useful lives, but lack total understanding. With only a partial view, some have criticized and re-interpreted their time of spiritual training, not seeing the full picture. Historically speaking, this is the basis of many religions: a mis-interpretation of what someone of clarity had said. Some strong figures may start a cult—telling others what they should believe and how they should act. Those who go along with such a person give up their responsibility to discern what is right; they follow along blindly. It is why otherwise reasonable people do strange things, accept odd belief systems—even drink poisoned Kool-Aid.

True spiritual guidance never asks a person to give up their ability to manage their own lives or relinquish personal responsibility. We alone perceive what is right and true for ourselves. No one can tell someone else what they should do, for only that person focuses the various factors of his or her world. Spiritual maturity is taking responsibility for one’s life and choices.

We can test the spirits, so to speak. For example, in Spiritual 101 we were told to give thanks for all things. A person could, in theory, spend a day complaining about everything in their world, criticizing those around them, and see how it feels; then spend a day being thankful for whatever comes along and encourage those around them. We might consider this a thought experiment, and it can be field tested if one wants. We find that being thankful works. The same test could be applied to living in the present moment. We could spend a day filled with regrets about the past and worry about all the things that could go wrong in the future (which will probably never happen anyway); if we do, we'll likely mess up what we were supposed to be doing and fill our minds and hearts with shame and anxiety. Then, on another day, focus on what is right at hand. We'll see that life is present now, not in some imagined past or future. Now is when we have the power to act creatively. Start simply and move to higher ground.

As we ascend the spiritual mountain, our senses sharpen and our vision and understanding clarify and expand. And, as we move higher, we'll add to the substance generated by those who came before—true pioneers. They have gifted us the substance of understanding and that substance persists, even if the form of those who generated it are gone.

When the Master was on earth, he tried to convey a simple vision of what it is like to know heavenly experience as a human being. His disciples were bathed in his radiant substance; they must have felt something since they followed him for years. Yet most tried to fit what he demonstrated into tangled concepts about religion and the oppression of the Roman occupation. At one point, the disciples asked the Master who is the greatest in heaven. He put a little child in their midst. A child is innocent and teachable, not filled with mental and emotional structures. Do we, as adults, have mature innocence—an admission that the outer person knows practically nothing, so we let go to guidance from within, without trying to fit it into what we think we know? This kind of surrender of the outer human to divine reality is essential for the vanguard of spiritual leaders now. The human part of each of us, separate from being, knows practically nothing; it was not designed to correlate the many unseen vibratory factors that converge in the moment. Complete openness and yielding to what is higher lifts up the human aspect, to share in divine wisdom and oneness of purpose.

With increased vision comes increased responsibility. Some of us might assume that getting to the top of the metaphorical spiritual mountain is enough. But that is not an end point, only a new beginning. It would be like receiving a diploma and never doing anything with the training. Life is expansive. Spiritual maturity, living at the crossover point, is not the end of understanding. There may be continued upward movement along a golden spiral. There

is always more to see and experience. The universe is a big place, with many layers and complexities. There is no limit to what may be known. This is also true of the body of humanity. If the collective “we” were one with spirit, we would comprehend our part in the vast cosmic organism that surrounds our little planetary home. It has been said that form follows function. If we were to function as divine humanity, who is to say what our bodies would look like or if the earth would re-shape to accommodate more intense spiritual substance. Nothing is fixed and immutable. The song celestial awaits the return of spiritual humanity to sing our part.

We’ll never convince anyone to awaken spiritually with arguments, no matter how eloquently written or spoken. Our gift is to provide the clear substance of understanding, based in our living, that others may see for themselves. This is happening in many ways through many people—an awakening. This is how the New World appears. The Old World, filled with dissent and discord about elections and wars and weird weather patterns and strange religious beliefs, exists because people pour their life energy into it. If that life flow is withdrawn because people see that none of that stuff really matters, the Old World will vanish. Crazy things are going on out there, but we do not need to be emotionally involved in them. Our focus is the New World, based in true character. Nothing else matters.

The climb up the mountain of spiritual understanding has many approaches. All upward paths ascend to the summit. A different starting point than most of us knew, was put forth by the one called Buddha, who lived about five centuries before the Master. He saw the need for humanity to awaken to their divine Selves and proposed Four Noble Truths. Here they are, modified slightly for our understanding:

1. **The world, as it now is, is full of suffering.**  
(Few would argue that point. The world is a mess, filled with violence and uncertainty.)
2. **The cause of suffering is having personal cravings separate from inner, divine guidance.**
3. **The end of suffering comes when a person no longer has cravings separate from one’s inner, divine guidance**
4. **There is a path that leads away from this cycle of personal cravings and suffering.**

Yes, we would agree with this. The path that discards personal, selfish wants leads to oneness with divine intent. It is why we are here. No cravings—a good word to describe the lust of personal desires. “I shall not want.” (*Psalm 23*)—no jealousy or resentment, no coveting

what others have. And no personal, selfish designs. When we are empty of human ambition, we hear the word of God—a silence filled with the music of the spheres. We generate the substance of understanding and gift it to the world, that all who seek the Truth may have the means to rise up.

Here's another story. The Biblical Jacob had a dream or vision of angels ascending and descending a ladder between heaven and earth. His outer mind realized that he was a divine being in human form, incarnate. His inner voice said, "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest... For I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." (*Gen 28:15/Amer. Standard Version*). This same voice speaks to each of us now. It has been present since we were in the womb, and is with us now, in this day. Our divine Selves watch over us, guide us, and love us. These are comforting words, words of assurance, true words, for they are the breath of life, always and forever with us.

Let us demonstrate the oneness of heaven and earth in human form. If we do, we help open the way for many who are awakening now. They look upward and are able to connect with the substance of understanding. Let us not fail them. Let the radiation go forth. The Old World is fading away. Let it go. A New World takes shape, and it is real and lasting. It is good to share our common purpose in these precious days.

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**Pre-Service Music**

1. *Up Toward the Sky*

Thomas Preber

2. *Meal For One (from 'We Live in Time' Soundtrack)*

Bryce Dessner

3. give thanks

aJa monet

**Concluding Music**

*I've Got Plenty To Be Thankful For (From "Holiday Inn" Soundtrack)*

Composed by Irving Berlin and performed by Bing Crosby