

Relationship to Relationships

Stacking Karma
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Revision	Notes
0.1	Initial draft
0.2	Concept flow ironed out
0.3	Fleshing out the concept flow. Finished relationship section
0.4	Start on anger section and finished it.
0.5	Deleted anger bullet flow. Removed Psychology Today disagreement to another doc. Started and finished “on weakness”. Started and finished “what is a teacher?”
0.6	Finished rough draft
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Roughly 8 years ago I came across an article that had a profound effect on my life. I forget how I came across it, but its impact was huge. The article can be found here: <https://qz.com/778767/to-tell-someone-theyre-wrong-first-tell-them-how-theyre-right> and I recommend you read it. It is a tool that facilitates human interaction to an incredible degree, and I use it anytime I have a mismatch of agreement with others.

In the spirit of paying it forward, in this paper I will be sharing an understanding that has been a big benefit in my life. The understanding that I will be sharing here is a functional relationship to relationships. Said another way, it is an attitude towards all other people, events, and things that is surprisingly beneficial.

Hold onto Your Socks, Here we go!

One way to look at the world is through the lens of relationships. Relationships in the sense of a connection between ourselves and everything else. Relationships exist between each individual and pets, cars, furniture, other people, our jobs, hobbies, and on and on. It is possible to say that there is an unfathomable amount of relationships on earth. Many relationships are dormant from the perspective of an unpleasant outcome. However, since there are such an incredible number of relationships, inevitably, we are guaranteed some amount of unpleasant outcomes. Our pet can rip the garbage, our car can have engine failure, our furniture can rip, other people can fail to deliver their responsibility to us, and on and on. One observation that is important to make, is that these frustrating & angering situations cannot be prevented. The vast majority of people will experience these unpleasant and inevitable outcomes, and will experience anger. Anger is an important emotion. Its job is to prepare the body for intense action when we are in danger or our possessions which are of extreme strategic importance (ex: food or shelter) are under threat. Anger increases blood flow, dulls pain and has your muscles firing quickly, but the downside is that it dulls intellect, wit, manners, and creativity. In civil society, where there is no physical danger to ourselves or to our possessions, anger is a weakness. It prepares us for a fight that will not happen, while deactivating the very skills that are needed in civil society. It is very important to note that anger emanates from within, and has very little to do with the other people who facilitate its emergence. When it comes to any human weakness, the best possible outcome is to eliminate the weakness by overcoming it and converting it to a strength. To overcome a weakness, it needs to first be identified as a weakness. Another piece of the puzzle is the definition of a teacher. A teacher is someone (or anything) that is showing you something new that requires your work in this new direction to generate improved outcomes; I mean improved outcomes relative to ignorance. When all these are taken in aggregate, anyone or anything (a relationship or a pattern of behavior) that brings out anger in you in a civil setting is creating an environment in which your weakness steps into the limelight. The next step is to voluntarily acknowledge the patterns of behavior that anger you are a gift from others. This is the most critical pivot as this requires your voluntary acceptance that you have a weakness that requires your attention. Should you accept that you have a weakness that requires your attention, then the entity that has brought out the anger in civil society has shown you something about you. You have encountered a teacher. Looking at people who bring anger from you as your teacher is the journey towards a new level of human growth and strength. If some of this makes sense, but not all of it, that's great. The rest of this paper is going to unpack each important concept and flesh it out. Let's dive into relationships, anger, weakness, teachers, and the importance of voluntary undertakings.

Relationships Abound

There is a relationship between all things on earth. This seems counter intuitive, but if the state of some thing, or an action of another person can affect you, then a relationship exists. This is an indisputable fact. Think of any two things. They are both on planet earth, they are both made of atoms, they are both bathed in matter (solid, liquid, gas or some combination of those), They both exist in your mind right now, and so on. This concept is not an intellectual game. This is firm reality. Imagine you are driving a car. Do you have a relationship to the car in front of you? If you say “no”, I say:

- you are both on the same road
- you are both traveling in the same direction

But beyond that, what if the driver in front grabs the brakes in an unexpected moment? Your options are you can swerve, you can brake on time and stop safely, or you can brake late and collide with that car. Since the driver in front of you has an incredible ability to affect you, it indicates the presence of a relationship. This is just one example of a relationship that if you are a driver you experience on a regular bases, but are likely not aware of. Either way, anything that can affect you, and especially your actions, means that you are in a relationship with that something. You are in a relationship with a police officer who is arguing with his wife right now. You just don't know it yet because he didn't pull over your boss yet. LOL. Just kidding, but you get my point. When we had fires in Alberta, kids in Ontario were kept indoors. Who know the Greater Toronto Area kids had a relationship with Alberta forests which are 3750km away? The point is that all physical things on this planet have a surprising connection to each other. The amount of relationships on this earth is immeasurable.

From the perspective of the individual, many relationships are cultivated by you and are not an accident. Pets, cars, employment, living arrangements, living locale, various services you enjoy, and much much more are all choices you make. Also there are relationships that you have no control over, for example the military of the most powerful nation on the planet. It is hard to imagine relationships that at some point do not provide a strong negative experience. Pets die, cars break, employment ends, living arrangements require tweaks, locales can change, services may have a drop in performance when most needed, and so on. So if we consider that we have an incredibly large number of relationships, and that each relationship at some point is likely going to have a low point, it is inevitable that you are going to experience a ton of strong unpleasant moments.

Well, if strong unpleasant moments are inevitable, perhaps they can be mitigated using externalities (anything external to ourselves). Is this possible? Given that the most capable externality is money (to hire people, and procure products) let's explore life with a billion bucks. Pick any problem in your life. PAUSE... pick one, then keep reading. Ready? Now imagine a person who can resolve this matter, or an item that solves the matter. Is your problem solved by a specialist or product? If so, then imagine that the product will fail at some point, and the person will become ill at the worst possible time. What the externality of money is doing for you is creating a novel relationship to overcome a problem in another relationship. You are simply proliferating relationships, and ultimately you are proliferating more low points at some future time. Overcoming relation challenges using externalities is not possible, as it simply increases relations and eventual unpleasant moments.

The reality that we are going to experience many unpleasant moments is a given. I don't even know that correlating the near infinite relationships in a human life to the reality of low moments is necessary, but, just in case, I laid it out for someone who might have needed it. The next reality is that some of these unpleasant moments are going to bring out anger out of you. You may know this,

but, after crashing into the car in front of you it is very common to yell the following in anger: “Why the hell did you press the brakes?! What’s wrong with you?!”



Many people will experience the unpleasant outcomes of their relationships as anger.

On Anger

Before I get into anger, I think that it’s best that I make my understanding about the existence of anything inside a human explicitly clear. Anything fundamental that exists within us is a tool that is best suited for a unique task. Of course it’s possible to take some tool and use it in an impractical manner; the ability to use all of our tools is up to each person. However, the existence of the tool is an indication that the tool is valuable.

With this in mind, let’s consider anger. From personal experience in my own body, and having a wide range of experiences, I conclude that anger is a great tool in a high stakes physical situation, where the skills to deal with the threat are missing; and there is a need to have maximal physicality to deal with the threat. What are some examples where anger is ideal? It is ideal if some animal is attacking me, my family, or is destroying supplies required for life, some animal I know nothing about. Another example is if I am in a prison fight, and have no fight training or experience. In these types of cases, pain is subdued, my muscles are maximally utilized in both speed and overall strength, and there is practically no reliance on my capacity for intelligent thinking AKA creativity. Anger is a great tool when the challenge is intensely physical, short lived, and high stakes.

You can see that my view of anger is that of an emotion that is destructive. It is a tool for destroying, or, surviving a dangerous situation by physically challenging the threat directly (by engaging in a fight). To maximize avoidance of a direct confrontation the tool would be fear, but, that’s for another time. When it comes to anger, which is used to directly face a threat, there is nothing other than destruction. You either damage the other entity or it damages you. At no point is anger creative. I only mention this because www.PsychologyToday.com and me don’t agree on this one matter when it comes to anger. I’ll write an essay on that when I have time, but for now, let’s agree that I am right, and that anger, as a fundamental tool when used in it’s optimal setting, is destructive. Anger cannot be creative because it’s mere existence eliminates the pillars of creativity. Anger subdues intellect, wit, and cleverness. Also, anger is very short lived, and it doesn’t persist long enough to achieve anything creative that is worth while. And, let’s not play intellectual games where it “creates a safe environment from a bear attack”. Anger is not creative and is destructive. Why else are you never able to do anything clever when you are angry? While I am disagreeing with some experts (Psychology Today), let me put on my tinfoil hat and say that I believe that anger is not exclusive to humans. I have seen anger in dogs, and I have a feeling that this feeling is found in more than two species.

Another observation I have about anger is that it has a strong relationship to exercise. I have noticed that after exercise I am less likely to misuse the tool of anger. If I have exercised, the odds increase that the tool (anger) doesn’t come out in circumstances that do not warrant it (ex: someone in traffic is misbehaving, but is not causing a dangerous situation). When I do not exercise, there is a greater likelihood for anger to emerge in an inappropriate moment, as it’s not the optimal tool. I believe that this phenomenon is tied to my belief that any relationship has a two way relationship. For example, if you are happy you smile; but if you force yourself to smile, you will improve your mood after a few minutes. In the same way, when anger is used correctly, we get a physical response in the form of intense motion; but if we induce intense motion, we are less likely to leak out anger when it is not called for.

Coming back to my belief of the optimal utility of anger, you will notice I wrote “where the skills to deal with the threat are missing”. This ties to my belief that anger is not creative. Let’s come back to a prison fight situation. In the domain of skills let’s consider two extremes: one person is totally new to fighting (newbie), and the other is a highly trained Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) fighter. The newbie is well served by anger as that would allow for maximal muscle performance on all fronts, and a subduing of pain. However, the MMA fighter would be best served to not become angry. They do not need to have their muscles perform marginally better at the cost of their athletic creativity. The MMA fighter would be much better served if they were cool, calm and collected; such a state is more conducive to creativity, which would be needed to choose the best combination of moves to optimally address the incoming physical challenge. This is why fighters try to “get inside each other’s head”. By getting the opponent to get emotional (specifically angry) they are becoming a weaker opponent. The point here is that anger gives you a bit more on the muscle side at the cost of your cognitive capacity; which is great for activities that you are new to, but is a massive hindrance in activities where you have significant knowledge and capacity for creativity.

Anyway, having laid out anger as I see it, I am now going to get to the point. Anger has no place in civil society. Notice I didn’t say in modern society. Modern society is rife with dangerous places such as maximum security penitentiaries, streets with gangsters, war, terrorism, and much more. In those instances anger serves its original role of preparing the body for rigorous short duration action. However, in civil society, anger has zero benefit. In civil society angry people are seen as weak, lacking self control, unintelligent, and so on. Every time I have seen people get angry in civil society, the level of conversation, wit, and grace falls to a very low level, which never serves them well.

The final thing I’ll point out on the topic of anger is that anger comes from inside you. Anger is not something that is pushed onto you by others. It is something that comes from within you. I won’t get into why, and when, in who, and under what conditions. The point is simple, anger is something that is emanating from you, only you, and nothing but you. Full stop.

Putting all this together, unfortunately, when we are angry in civil society, we are in a state of weakness as we are getting ready for an intense physical confrontation; which is never needed in civil society. At the expense of your cognitive ability, which is indeed something that is needed in civil society.

Anger in civil society is an inappropriate use of a fundamental tool, which is (sorry to say) a weakness.

Human Weakness

The key to everything is development of the self. All other options are dubious & unreliable. I fleshed this out to a small degree here: <https://stackingkarma.com/Essays/#on-weakness-image>

I believe that the frontier of the self is the most important frontier to discover, tame, and make productive. This is critical to grasp as there is nothing else that you have any amount of control over. Perhaps we have some control over the immediate physical world, but even then, not much. Definitely we have no control over others. The point here is that the starting point of a capable human is some sort of critical mass of harnessing the self. We don’t need perfection to be capable, yet the deeper we go into ourselves the more we can offer others.

Ultimately the point on human weakness is that the best possible outcome in relation to human weakness is to eliminate/overcome it. If you cannot achieve a constructive and beneficial result that

you desire due to an internal hindrance, would you not say that you have a weakness? Once you invest effort into gaining the required ability to overcome your internal hindrance, would you not say that you have overcome your weakness? Isn't this what we encourage our children to do? We all have various weaknesses, and if we choose to eliminate our weaknesses one at a time, we can. As we eliminate our weaknesses, through persistent work, the weakness becomes a strength. I presume that this is classic – meaning it is already known.

Since we agree that overcoming our weaknesses through work, and converting weakness to strength is an optimal approach to dealing with weakness; then we can likely agree that identifying some pattern of behavior as a weakness is the first step in the journey to converting the weakness to a strength. We have to clearly identify a weakness as a weakness before we can take any meaningful step towards eliminating the weakness.

What is a Teacher?

Legit question. Is a teacher someone who shows up at a school? Is it someone who makes kids smarter? What is a teacher? In my understanding, a teacher is someone (or anything) that is showing you something new that requires your work in this new direction to generate improved outcomes. The new thing you are shown might be a new totally new domain, or it might be a perspective on something that you already know a lot about that you haven't considered. If a teacher is showing you something new, through simple logic, you can deduce that you were not aware of what the teacher is showing you. Without diving too deep on categories of ignorance, let's keep it light and consider the basics of ignorance:

- You are not aware of the existence of the domain of knowledge (you don't know what you don't know)
- You are aware of the existence of the domain of knowledge but lack technical skills in that domain (you know what you don't know).

A teacher's role is to alert you to the existence of the novel domain; and if that domain is already known, then a teacher's role is to introduce the technical knowledge for that domain. In either case, a teacher is introducing something novel to the recipient of the knowledge.

Once the teacher has shown the recipient something new, it does not mean that the new knowledge is now available to the recipient. That is not how humans work. Once we see something new, we have to leverage our exposure and immersion in that area of new knowledge to experience a benefit. Without our effort, anything we are shown by a teacher is reasonably fruitless. However, if we do put in effort and focus on the knowledge, we discover for ourselves the landscape of the domain. What is reasonably interesting is that all knowledge has to be discovered by the individual through effort. A teacher shows us something new that we can easily connect to, which we then explore to gain knowledge. All knowledge is gained by the individual, and teachers make the process easier.

I am assuming that we can agree that being knowledgeable is much better than being ignorant. I believe that teachers are a step in the direction of knowledge, as they are the entity that bootstraps the process of finding knowledge by ourselves for ourselves. They are the first step that shows us what we do not know; they expose our ignorance to ourselves. We can say that teachers in human form or in some event, or in some contraption, or in some discovery are a very important mechanism in improving ourselves.

Voluntary Submission to Achieve Growth / “You Are My Teacher”

Up to now everything has been a light mental lift. Likely because everything I have laid out at your feet has been reasonably factual and has not been of any cost to you. You are simply reading and likely agreeing. I am not asking anything of you. Well, it’s gonna change now... I am going to ask you to agree with a statement that will cause you to work. Watch this move I pull on you, and observe how you feel about it. Make sure to take note of your feelings. I’ll tell you what they mean after I finish the maneuver.

The hardest part of this essay is to voluntarily acknowledge that the patterns of behaviors that anger you are a gift from others.

I’ll say it again. The hardest part of this essay is to voluntarily acknowledge that the patterns of behaviors that anger you are a gift from others. How does this make you feel? Take note.

If you submit, and say, “yeah, that’s what it is” you are on the right path to growth. If you got angry that some asshole that pissed you off last week has been framed as a “teacher” that “gave you a gift”, then unfortunately, this essay is not for you. Sorry. Put it down; get angry a thousand more times; reflect on life, and come back when ready. No worries. Do you. I wish you the best. Come back when you are ready.

For those who chose to still be here and keep reading, you have to ask yourself, what just happened? Let’s run through where we are. There are nearly an infinite number of relationships between an individual (you) and everything else. It is inevitable that these relationships will bring some amount of unpleasant experiences that will bring anger out of you. If you reach for anger as a tool while in civil society then that is a weakness. The best way to deal with a weakness is to eliminate it through work. The first step in eliminating a weakness is to identify the weakness as a weakness. This is where teachers play a role. And now we are in contentious territory, because the person who has brought inappropriate anger out in you has exposed a weakness. Now you must decide, do you overcome that weakness OR do you run away from that reality? If you choose to tackle the weakness you have to admit that the circumstance that brought anger out of you is your teacher. This is a humbling ego crusher. If you are not ready to forgive the circumstance (or person) that pulled that anger out of you and view it voluntarily as a teacher, you are not ripe, and will likely get angry at this paper, or deem it to be stupid.

The reality here is that you need to voluntarily, without any external pressure or duress, realize for yourself that whatever pulled the anger out of you is your teacher. This teacher is a blessing for the person who wants to grow, and a punishment for those who are not yet ripe. I cannot over emphasize how important the voluntary aspect is in undertaking this perspective shift. This is not “a trick”. This is a perspective that is fertile soil for new growth. It is an exchange of the ego for something greater. This is the most critical pivot as this requires your voluntary acceptance that you have a weakness that requires your attention, and the scoundrel that wronged you is actually a teacher bearing a gift.

I came to this realization through a person who is very close to me. I have a dislike towards a repeating pattern of behavior by said person. I perceive it as negative; as in, the high cost of time and effort isn’t justified given the low value outcome. With time I became more and more frustrated when I perceived this pattern of behavior at play. It was never a secret I didn’t like that pattern of behavior, and one day as the pattern of behavior was playing out, I boiled over. I got really angry, and when I aired my grievance, what I learned was that the person was engaging in a totally different activity! I misread the cues of what was going on. In quick succession, a bunch of concepts somehow snapped together all at once. I realized that my anger is internal to myself, the

anger is a weakness, and the person who has allowed the anger to come out is actually my teacher! They are showing me a weakness that I have to address. The moment you shift your perspective to something of value, the anger vanishes. It was an incredible epiphany. To make this story a bit more clear, I still dislike the same pattern of behavior, because it has a negative cost with a worthless return. However, I don't get angry at it. I won't get into my specific approach to modifying myself, because it's too specific and won't likely be of help to you. However, what is incredibly beneficial that is likely of very wide utility to many people is the concept of "you are my teacher" with all the back-end concepts on which it is built.

Logical Conclusion

Anything that pulls anger out of you in civil society is essentially a teacher that is showing you a weakness that you have. The teacher you have encountered has showcased a weakness in you for you to address through work.

Ultimately, the most worthwhile entity you can change to generate the best results for yourself and others is yourself. One way to do this is actively work on plugging weaknesses that plague us. A tool for addressing the weakness of anger in civil society is the perspective of "you are my teacher". Not as a gimmick, but as a perspective towards yourself on your human journey. For those who are committed to growth, who happen experience anger in civil society, this is likely an excellent modification to the model of reality that we all carry.

Looking at people who bring anger from you as your teacher is the journey towards a new level of human growth and strength.