

# Going Down The Rabbit Hole IN TO

J A S



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MAD W O N D E R L A N D

## Chapter 1 Relational Ontology

I chose to represent myself as a Vinyl Record, I broke it apart with a hammer and mended it with gold paint. A Japanese art technique known as Kintsugi.



The mirror represents how I'm continually reflecting upon myself, asking myself: "is the reflection I see on the mirror really me?"

Surrounding the mirror there are white rabbit candy wrappers, which I hold near and dear to me as they are a childhood favourite and my Chinese zodiac.

Lastly Pearls, I've been fond of them ever since early childhood when I received a pearl necklace as a gift from a family member.

My fondness for pearls strengthened when I learnt that mollusks create pearls as a means for protection when irritants/intruders slip into their soft tissue.

They layer the irritant over and over. All these combined, encapsulates both joyous and painful memories and perceptions of

self as beauty that can be appreciated and honoured.

### Self

Throughout the course of my life thus far, I have been guilty of boxing myself up with a skewed sense of self. However, who is to say those times weren't my lived truth? As I become more exposed to the realm of philosophical concepts, I'm slowly decoding what each concept symbolizes for myself as I continuously engage in introspection.

My perception of the concept of self is constantly ever-changing. The world around me has always been in motion. In whole-hearted honesty, there are times I feel as if I'm not at all in correlation to Earth's plane of time and space. I sink into my headspace, frequently acting as though I'm watching a movie on myself.



“If I had a world of my own, **everything would be nonsense.**

Nothing would be what it is  
because everything would be what it isn't.  
And contrariwise, what it is, is wouldn't be,  
and what it wouldn't be, it would. You see?” -



“Everyone keeps telling me  
how MY story is supposed  
to go.

**Nah,** Imma do my own  
thing.” -



Like bubble-gum, we're all  
interconnected in one way or another.



There's a connection with all things in life:  
nature, humans, animals, spirituality, and  
whatever else one could think of. Some residue  
(connection) will always be left from our  
experiences as we continue our journey.

Throughout our lives, things known as experiences are collected. Over time, some parts of our experiences stay for a while, some fade away, and some come and go. Either way, all these experiences we take in as we go about our lives become something more significant. They become a part of our relational bubble-gum. Relations with others through sports, languages, music, plants, nature, travel, art, and many more vary from person to person. But all these things are interwoven as they create and continue the creation of how we see the world, connect and interact with those around us.

## Chapter 2 Paradigms and Life Positioning

From the start of the semester up until now, I have repeatedly pondered the very question of “what is *even inclusive* of my paradigms and life positionings?”

Even now, at this very moment, I have no clear sense of direction in life. I wander aimlessly and yet with purpose at the same time. You see, I grew up perplexed, unable to feel grounded in the present moment, often dissociative. I thought of how vastly different my understanding and sense of love had developed from an early age. Did those differences harm me? Yes, immensely. I felt like an outcast in many contexts: at school, in my community, and with my family. But by taking what had already happened and viewing them through a different light helps me practice holding space for myself, making room for healing, love and kindness for myself.

At the age of 6, I wanted to grow strawberries, all because of a show that made them look delicious. I asked my **gung gung** (maternal grandpa) and **po po** (maternal grandma) if we could grow some strawberries. Without any hesitation, they started a small strawberry patch to simply grant my request out of unspoken love.

One of the ways my family displayed love was by providing food. Sharing and making food for loved ones has been a means to express a profound sense of love, with no words and no questions asked. As a kid,

I barely considered the nuances food could bear when expressing love. In many instances, food acts as a form of normalcy, as it is also an essential need for survival and growth.



The same idea of normalcy and show of love goes for growing things like plants, flowers, vegetables and fruits. My gung gung loved growing flowers and would grow me any flower I'd ask for. My po po would grow vegetables and fruit, often incorporating them into her dishes. Although I didn't hear the words “I love you” from them much, the affection from my grandparents' was shown through being able to provide for me. The love I received from my grandparents looked like cooking up my favourite meals, taking me on car rides, walks,

grocery shopping, and even stocking up on my favourite frozen foods, snacks, and drinks. Love also looked like helping me with homework and praising me for my creativity.

I now know that, at the time, there was simply too much going on at home. It made several of my early experiences appear and feel like a blur. Now, I can take some of those experiences, appreciate what they have done, and know it was a form of love. I'm now reminded that even in some of the darkest times of life, it can sometimes involve and create some of the brightest moments, too. It's all just a matter of perspective-taking.

A Japanese concept I've been drawn to:

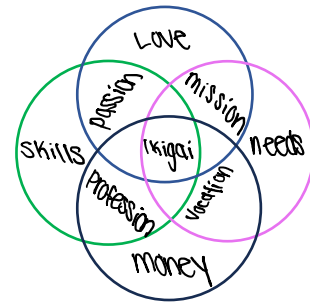
**Ikigai**, meaning “*a reason for being.*”

**Iki** → Life

**gai** → Value or worth

**Ikigai** alludes to 4 primary interconnected elements:

- Passion → (what we love)
- Mission → (what the world needs)
- Vocation → (what we are good at)
- Profession → (what we can be paid for.)



Since my early childhood, I have been self-narrating my thoughts, emotions and observations of the happenings around me, for instance, how a narrator would tell a main character's story in a book or a film. In my life, I am both the narrator and the main character in a book or movie.

At some point, I succumbed to recognizing my out-of-body experience of self-narration as dissociation of self. Although I've been gradually shifting my views, I appreciate what self-narration has done for me rather than feeling ashamed of it. Thus, when I think of the concept of self, I realize that the self is not definitive. There's permanence in facts from the events throughout my life, but my perception of self is constantly in motion. Everchanging. I knew I could use this skill to support others on their path to discovering and understanding themselves.

Sometimes, I consider myself a wanderer or dreamer, a being of sorts who ventures through many experiences, both good and bad. I continually acknowledge that some experiences are transient while others last longer as I fall through an infinite rabbit hole. The rabbit hole appears as chaos, and it seems so because there's more going on within than what's represented up above on the surface level.

## “Plus est En Vous”

*“There is more in you.” - Van Gruuthuse*

A realm of chaos may not make sense to everyone, but it does to me. Each time I fall further and deeper, I'm becoming myself. As I fall through, I get caught up in some experiences. Thus, much of what I see, and feel as I fall has appeared “stagnant.” But is it stagnant? Regardless of how stuck I feel, as though I'm not changing or moving at all. I am still going through the motions. I'm still catching and releasing memories, events, connections, thoughts, emotions, and everything as I pass through. The world, everything in and around it invariably, is in flux.

I may not fully comprehend or feel it 100%, but I believe the world doesn't stop moving. I've punished myself by believing that I am less than, based on a single event, or a series of events. If the world were to cease all movement, perhaps I would be stuck on an event that made me feel less than. But I find comfort in thinking that because the world continuously moves, so do we as humans. Life is circular.

**Wabi-sabi** → A Japanese philosophical view revolved around accepting transience and imperfection, encouraging us to appreciate and recognize the underlying beauty beneath the surface in simplicity, authenticity and imperfection.

**Kintsugi** → is known as the art of joining with gold. Whereby broken objects, commonly ceramics like bowls or tea, are mended together and bonded with a lacquer, typically gold. The idea behind Kintsugi is similar to Wabi-sabi. The technique encourages us to embrace the scars created from what was once broken, healing through acceptance and believing that beauty can transpire from all things in life, the good and the bad.

During these past few months, I've been challenging myself to allow myself to embrace the impact of my scars, flaws and uncertainty that are influenced by my adverse childhood experiences. By doing so, I believe someday, something of beauty, strength and value can arise from even the most broken of places.

## Chapter 3 Theoretical Frameworks

Like a garden, we grow and nurture our vision and ideas (theoretical frameworks) into becoming what we want our garden to encompass. We can always freely add, remodel, and adapt the theories we draw from. There's no universal rule on how one should go about gardening their theoretical garden. Mine is flexible in that there are some theories I continue to grow routinely, some for only a season or some occasionally here and there.



## Chapter 4 Ethical Framework *Everything is Everywhere, All at Once*

My comprehension of the moral principles guiding my ethical decision-making was initially unclear.

My framework is absolute chaos, yet it is somehow in order.

I realized that chronological age has little influence over how I care for others. Because treating one with care based on the bias suggested surrounding one's chronological age is limiting. Based on earlier developed theories, it indicates what skills and knowledge should or shouldn't be present or appropriate at a specific chronological age. For instance, Freud and Piaget propose that specific skills and knowledge met at a particular stage in life. However, those ideas do not accurately reflect each unique human being's development process. It discounts consideration of one's unique capabilities. It dismisses developmental age and what is inclusive of one's microsystem.

*We are constantly in motion, ebbing and flowing.*



2 years ago, When I was working in schools as an educational assistant, I was approached and asked by a small group of students from grades 1 to 3 during recess supervision a question: "Ms. Jasmine? Why are you so nice to us?" I jokingly replied, "Uh, am I not supposed to be nice to you guys?" they giggled and replied, "No, of course you are, but *how* are you so nice?"

It appears my kindness was indeed a mystery. It made me question if how I presented myself and treated others could be considered anything but ordinary. My approach to care through sharing space with others, attending with curiosity over quick judgements and regarding them as human seemed 'normal.'

I recently started to unfold the mystery of what drives me to be kind. Additionally, I am beginning to understand how building and having connections holds such significance in my life.

I understand love and care to be unconditional because I can't justify why one person is more deserving of love and care over another, nor will I ever honestly know what one's story is or why they came to be who they are at this moment. Instead, I believe everyone is doing their best with

what they have and perceive their experiences as truth. Why? Because everyone's belief on what's ethically correct and wrong differs from person to person.

To some degree, shape, way or form, love drives us. Guides our decisions, morals and ethics. Whether that be a passion or an attachment with someone or something seen, unseen, felt, or unfelt, the point is if not for a belief, a fondness, or interconnectedness to some sort of entity or entities we deem as true or real, then what is the *reason for being* if not for something beyond oneself? This thinking connects to two concepts. Firstly, it alludes back to the concept of **Ikigai**, which I first introduced under Chapter 2 paradigms and life positioning. Secondly, it ties in with Carol Gilligan's Theory on Ethics of care.

### **“What gets loud when it gets quiet?”**

→ What comes to mind when we're alone or with others? For instance, when we travel from one destination to another, lie in bed, dream, or eat a snack or a meal. Do we notice any inner-self dialogue, thoughts, emotions, or questions arise? What stands out? What does it mean? Does it mean anything?

When I mindfully pay attention to and consider where these loud things sprout from, I become increasingly in tune with awareness internally and externally by considering where, what, why, and how during those reflecting moments.

To **LIVE** life means **Living In Full Effect**, and to **LOVE** is to **Live On Valued Energy**.

As living relational beings, we are meant to LIVE, LOVE, and laugh, experiencing those things to the fullest potential and beyond.

### **“Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, but today is a gift. That is why it's called the present.” - Master Oogway**

This quote helps me distinguish the differences between the 3 tenses of time: Past, Present, and Future.

When there's a challenge to being present. This quote guides me by looking deeper into curiosity as to why I, myself or a human being I am connecting with is concerned with what was and/or what will be.