

THE BLUEPRINT OF INSIGHT



A Close Reading of Idries Shah

DECONSTRUCTING TALES OF THE DERVISHES THROUGH THE PSYCHOLOGICAL LENS OF LEARNING HOW TO LEARN.

The teaching-story is a development-exercise, not a fable.

The Problem of the Container



THE CONTAINER (Form)



THE CONTENT (Function)

“If you think that a book is a sandwich, you may try to eat it, and will not be able to learn what a book can teach.”

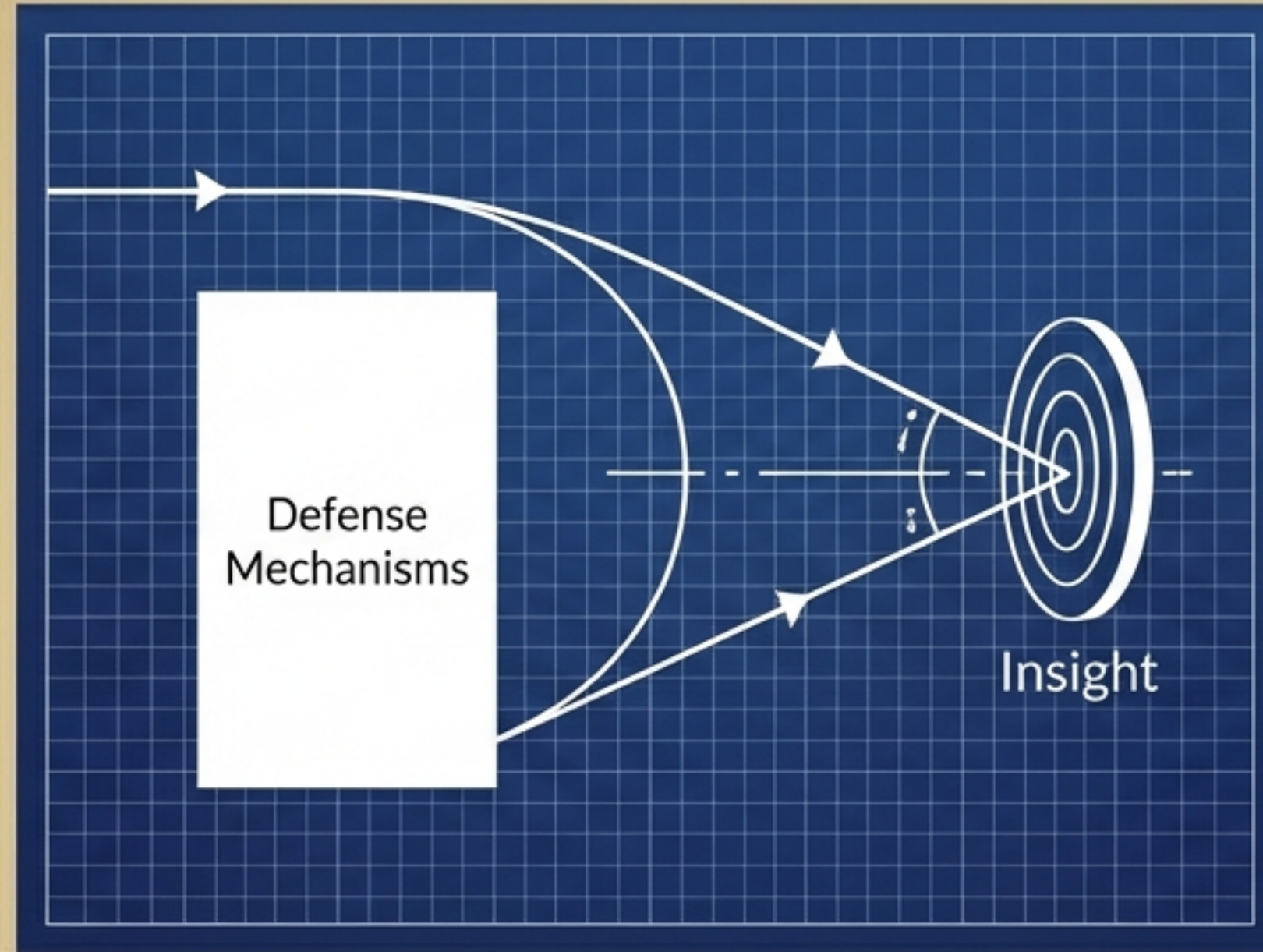
— Learning How to Learn

- ✦ Obsession with appearance over function.
- ✦ Confusing the ritual with the insight.
- ✦ The Trap: Wanting to learn what we *imagine* is to be learned.

The Teaching Story as Technology

★ **The Instrumental Function:**
A story is a tool, not a description. It is designed to provoke a specific psychological effect.

★ **Bypassing Conditioning:**
Direct facts trigger emotional defenses. Stories slip past these defenses.



★ **The Blueprint:**
Narratives that contain powers of increasing perception unknown to the ordinary man.

★ *True function as Sufi teaching-stories...
no technical or popular term exists to describe them.*

Case Study I: The Three Dervishes

Source: *Tales of the Dervishes* (Murad Shami, d. 1719)



The Intellectual
(Sore Head)



The Ascetic
(Inversion)



The Academic
(Nosebleed)

They sought “Deep Truth” through obsessive effort,
but produced only the appearance of progress.

Analysis: The Trap of Imitation

**“Imitators...
generally prefer
to emphasize
‘system’ and
‘programme’,
rather than the
totality of
experience.”**

— Tales of the Dervishes

Close Reading

- **The Error:** Believing that suffering equals progress.
- **The Confusion:** Mistaking the “Vehicle” (exercises) for the “Objective” (Truth).
- **The Insight:** Obsessive effort without knowledge is merely automatism.
- **The Rule:** A man standing on his head is just a man standing on his head, unless the Time, Place, and People are correct.

Case Study II: The Tale of the Sands



The Narrative: A Stream is stopped by a Desert. To cross, it must allow the Wind to carry it as vapor.

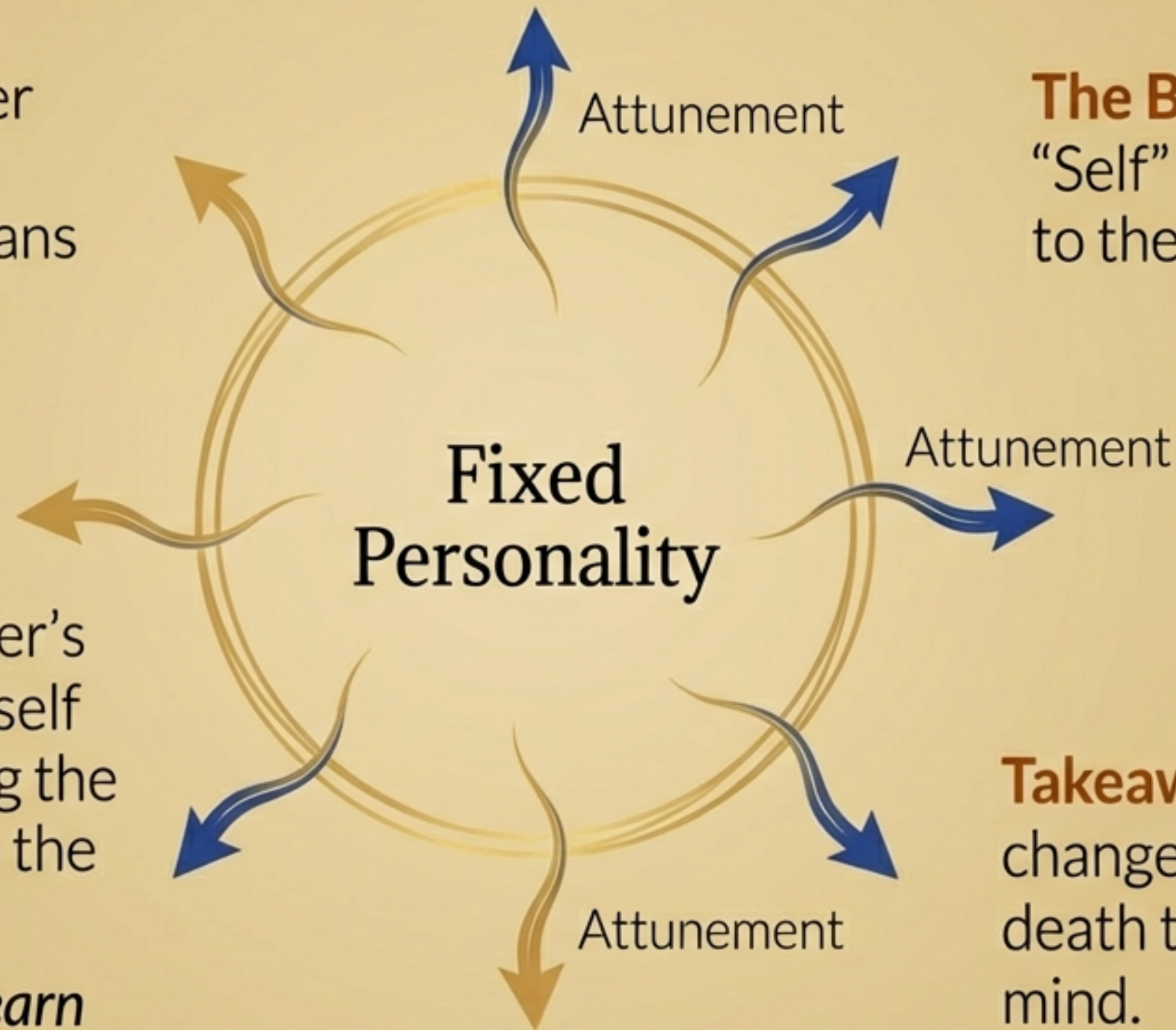
The Conflict: The Stream objects: "But if I do that, I will lose my individuality."

The Resolution: It accepts the risk, crosses, and falls as rain.

Analysis: The Necessity of Transmutation

The Fear: The learner fears that giving up current opinions means ceasing to exist.

The Lens: The teacher's role is to render himself superfluous... helping the student escape from the toils of lesser ideas."
— *Learning How to Learn*



The Barrier: The "Self" is the obstacle to the "Goal".

Takeaway: Functional change looks like death to the static mind.

Case Study III: The Lamp Shop

A Critique of Premature Seeking



1. A man asks directions to the 'Lamp Shop' to buy a lamp for reading in the dark.
2. The stranger asks: 'Can you actually read?'
3. The seeker admits he hasn't checked that prerequisite yet.

Source: *'The Lamp Shop' dialogue.*

Analysis: Prerequisites and Capacity

The Imagination

- Seeking the Tool (The Lamp).
- Desire for 'Advanced Work'.
- Intellectual Vanity.

The Reality

- Building Capacity (Literacy).
- Basic preparation of the self.
- Recognizing one's own conditioning.

“People... want to learn what they *imagine* is to be learned, not what they have first to learn.” — *Learning How to Learn*

Case Study IV: The Four Magic Treasures



Speed



Disguise



Seeing

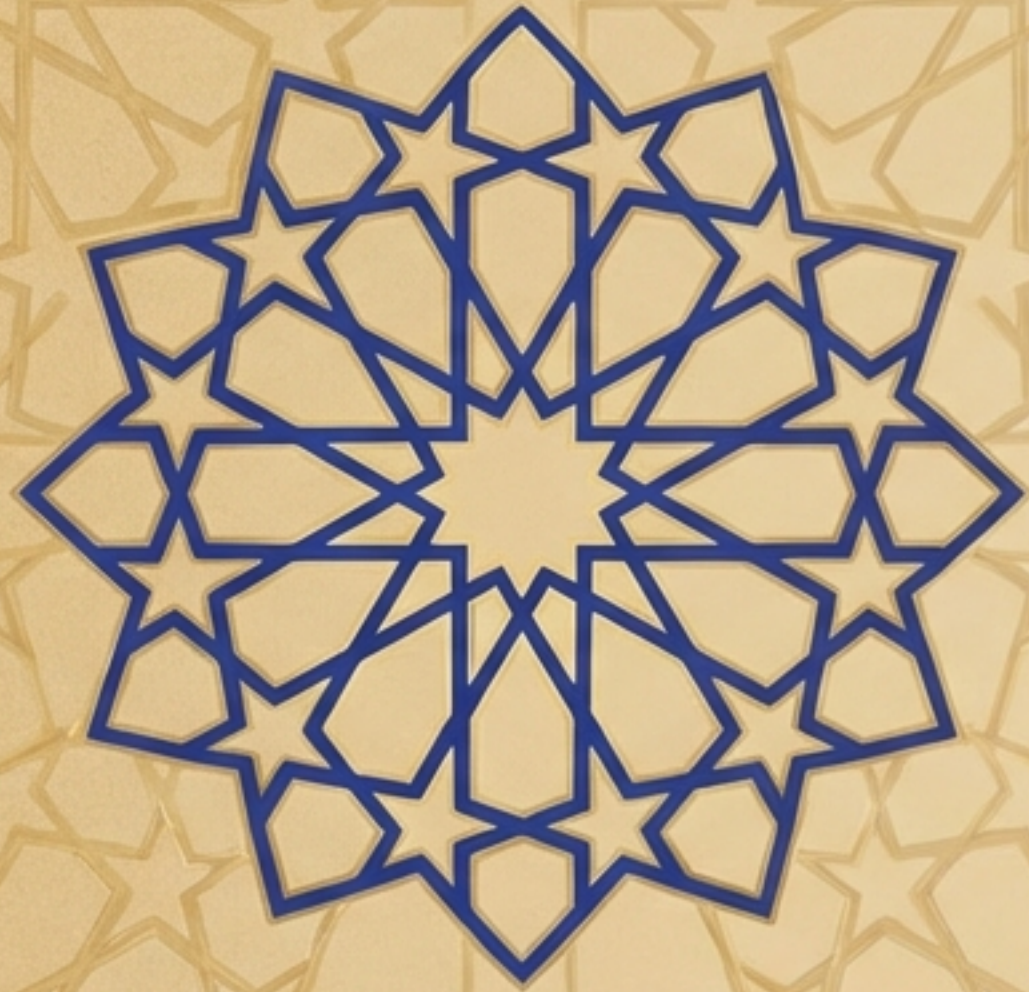


Healing

Four dervishes use magical items to save a princess. They eventually lose the items or find them clumsy. They abandon 'magic' to work in secret, arranging events so they appear to happen naturally.

Source: 'The Four Magic Treasures' narrative.

Analysis: Appearance vs. Function



Magic Phase: Represents the immature desire for miracles and attention.

Secret Phase: Represents the mature Sufi work. 'The Invisible Work.'



"The Lens: The Sufi teacher has the task of communicating his message... He has to reduce, not increase, the effect of his own personality." — *Learning How to Learn*.

Takeaway: True influence often masquerades as coincidence.

The Scatter Method

The Question: Why do the stories seem contradictory?



The Theory: The Time, The Place, and The People.

The Synthesis: Truth is not a monolith; it is a pattern.
A teaching that is medicine for one is poison for another.

The Reader's Responsibility

“The student who will inhibit these results [does so] because of the shallowness of his expectations.”

1.

Do Not ‘Eat the Sandwich’:

Do not worship the book or the container. Look for the nutrition.

2.

Read and Re-read:

Peel back layers of conditioning through repetition.

3.

Allow the Pattern to Emerge:

Do not seek instant illumination. Allow the stories to act as a slow enzyme on the subconscious.

Summary of Principles

Conduct

Teaching is a matter of behavior and action, not just words.

Context

The right Time, Place, and Company are vital prerequisites.

Instrumentality

Stories are technical tools to provoke insight, not entertainment.

Self-Knowledge

You must know your own conditioning before seeking advanced truths.

The Final Distinction



“If you want to learn Sufism, you must follow the **Sufi path**. If you want information... you must apply to someone who is... giving out scholarly opinions.”

— Idries Shah, *Learning How to Learn*

Presentation based on the works of Idries Shah.