



THE
WAY

—
Pillar Outline and Sample Openings

*A working table of contents for the culminating book
of the Divine Karma Institute*

David Ramirez · May 2026

On the Reason for This Book

This is the book that has been writing itself for nine years.

Between March 3, 2017 and April 21, 2026, I posted one thousand eight hundred and forty-six reflections, one at a time, day after day. I did not know I was writing a book. I was working a discipline. Each line was a small offering to a question I could not yet name.

Now I can name it. The Way is the question of how a human being becomes free from the burdens it did not choose and the masks it learned to wear before it could speak.

This is a thesis-driven work, but the thesis is not a theory. It is the shape of my life as I have lived it, and, I suspect, the shape of every life that allows itself to be looked at honestly. The nine pillars that follow are the bones of the book. They are not invented. They are excavated.

This document is the scaffolding. The book itself will be written in the register of Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching, short, paired, distilled. Each pillar will become a chapter. Each chapter will be brief. Brevity here is not minimalism. Brevity is respect for the reader who is doing the real work, which is not reading.

| *So we let go.*

— D.R.

The Thesis

The book rests on a single thesis, articulated below in full. The nine pillars are an unfolding of this statement.

We are born without an ego. We learn to adopt this mask to navigate through life and interact with our experiences. As we adapt, emotions and feelings become accentuated when we create attachments to our experiences. Those attachments become the mechanism that keeps us from growing and in stagnation, because we are unable and unwilling to let the emotions go.

We learn that we are products of a creator and believe that we are slaves to genetics, upbringing, experiences, etc., and believe that we are all separate from each other, blind to the fact that we are all forms of energy vibrating at a certain frequency and being interpreted by those who are observing us.

We live our separate lives oblivious of these burdens we carry, until we reach this point where we can no longer carry them, and we have to let them go. Unfortunately, we fear letting them go as they bring purpose and meaning to our lives. So we hold on, thinking we can one day confront those attachments to let them go, but we don't.

There are major transitional periods in our lives in which we are able to lift and let go of these burdens, during traumatic events, emotional distress, midlife crisis, and during the death process. Each of these moments is a time that the ego gives the opportunity for the true self, in its natural state, to let go of its burdens and to enlighten itself to its true nature.

This transformation is the Awakening, and it can happen suddenly or in a slow process to ensure that we can find ambivalence to trying to control experiences and learn to just let them go. When we wake up, we see that reality is just a game or a play, in which everyone plays their part by engrossing themselves into the character and digging the hole into the character they have chosen to play. There is no reality and there is no character playing its part. It is all a grand illusion, and there is nothing to hold onto. So we let go.

The Structure

The book unfolds in three movements. Each movement carries three pillars. Each pillar becomes one chapter.

MOVEMENT I
The Construction

*How the ego is built, necessarily, then permanently.
The mask, the charge, the stagnation.*

Pillars 1 · 2 · 3

MOVEMENT II
The Imprisonment

*The inherited self defends its walls. The story of
separation hardens. Beneath it, the truth waits.*

Pillars 4 · 5 · 6

MOVEMENT III
The Release

*The four apertures. The awakening. The letting go.
Reality revealed as play, the grip released.*

Pillars 7 · 8 · 9



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MOVEMENT I

The Construction



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PILLAR 1

The Mask

OPENING

Before the mask, there was the face.

The face is what was given.

The mask is what we learned.

The child does not lie about being a child.

The child arrives.

Later, the child learns to arrive correctly.

The mask is not the enemy.

The mask is the first tool.

It becomes the cage

only when we forget it can be set down.

WHAT THIS PILLAR TEACHES

We are born without ego. The mask is not original to us; it is acquired, gradually, in response to the demand that experience be met with a face. The first pillar establishes that the work ahead is not to destroy the ego but to remember that it was put on, and therefore can be taken off.

DRAWN FROM THE THESIS

| *We are born without an ego. We learn to adopt this mask to navigate through life.*

ECHO FROM THE CORPUS

To be genuine requires no effort, but to be a fake requires wearing a mask.

— Posted 2019

CHAPTER SCOPE

Open with the child arriving without armor. Trace the first moments when correction teaches the mask to form. Close on the recognition: the mask was

once a kindness from us to the world, and from the world to us. It need not be hated. It needs to be seen.



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PILLAR 2

The Charge

OPENING

The same rain falls on a hundred roofs.

Each roof holds the rain differently.

The rain is not the difference.

The roof is.

Emotion is the body speaking.

Attachment is when the speech will not stop.

What we call our pain

is what we have built around the pain.

WHAT THIS PILLAR TEACHES

Emotion is innate. Attachment is what accentuates emotion until it adheres to a memory and refuses to leave. The charge is the residue. The second pillar distinguishes feeling, which is healthy, from charge, which is the load we choose, often without knowing it, to keep carrying.

DRAWN FROM THE THESIS

Emotions and feelings become accentuated when we create attachments to our experiences.

ECHO FROM THE CORPUS

Your experiences are not happening to you, they're happening because of you. This allows you to become the witness to your creation.

— Posted 2021

CHAPTER SCOPE

Use the rain-and-roof image to separate event from interpretation. Walk through a single concrete event held by two people, charged differently. End

on the witness, the part of us that can see the charge as something the self has added.



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PILLAR 3

The Stagnation

OPENING

The burden is heavy.

We mistake the weight for the bones.

To set the burden down feels like dying.

A man defends his cage

with the strength he could have used to leave.

A life lived in defense of the cage

is itself the cage.

WHAT THIS PILLAR TEACHES

Attachment becomes the mechanism that prevents growth. We do not let the charge go because we have come to identify with it. To release it would feel like ceasing to exist. So we defend the prison. The third pillar names this, and shows it.

DRAWN FROM THE THESIS

Those attachments become the mechanism that keeps us from growing and in stagnation, because we are unable and unwilling to let the emotions go.

ECHO FROM THE CORPUS

You have become the product of your limited and conventional thinking and have created an environment which can support those limitations.

— Posted 2023

CHAPTER SCOPE

Open with the man defending the cage. Build a slow image of the cage being mistaken for the skeleton. Close on the reader's own life, the small daily defenses, the rehearsed grievances, the things we will not put down because we no longer know who we are without them.



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MOVEMENT II

The Imprisonment



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PILLAR 4

The Inherited Self

OPENING

*They told us who we were
before we could ask.*

*We believed them,
because we had no other story.*

*Now we have a story.
The story is not us.*

We are not our genes.

We are not our wounds.

We are not the country we were born in.

*We are what looks out
from behind all of them.*

WHAT THIS PILLAR TEACHES

We are taught that we are products of a creator, of genetics, of upbringing, of circumstance. We come to believe ourselves slaves to a story we did not write. The fourth pillar argues that the inherited self is the most carefully constructed prison of all, and that the act of recognizing inheritance as inheritance is itself the beginning of release.

DRAWN FROM THE THESIS

We learn that we are all products of a creator and believe that we are slaves to genetics, upbringing, experiences, etc.

ECHO FROM THE CORPUS

Fear builds the prison, belief blinds us to its fragility, and debt chains us to servitude. The keys to your liberation have always been in your hands.

— Posted 2025

CHAPTER SCOPE

Open with what was told before the child could speak. Trace each of the inheritances, biological, familial, cultural, religious. Establish that to question inheritance is not to reject the people who passed it down; it is to take responsibility for what is carried forward.



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PILLAR 5

The Illusion of Separation

OPENING

*Two waves of the same ocean
argue about which is wetter.*

*Two flames of the same fire
argue about which is hotter.*

*Two voices of the same silence
argue about which is louder.*

*Separateness is a concept
which lives in our mind.*

Nowhere else.



WHAT THIS PILLAR TEACHES

The deepest lie of the imprisonment is that we are not the same. We learn it before we can speak. We rehearse it in every difference we draw. The fifth pillar undoes the lie, not by argument, but by showing it clearly enough that the eye can no longer unsee it.

DRAWN FROM THE THESIS

| *We believe that we are all separate from each other.*

ECHO FROM THE CORPUS

Separateness is a concept which lives in your mind.

— Posted April 5, 2026

CHAPTER SCOPE

Use the three image-couplets, waves, flames, voices, to expose the absurdity of arguing about difference within sameness. Close on the gentle

observation that compassion is not a moral instruction; it is what naturally follows the seeing through of separation.



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PILLAR 6

The Vibration

OPENING

We are not what we appear to be.

We are what is appearing.

Beneath the body, frequency.

Beneath the frequency, intention.

*Beneath the intention,
the one who is listening.*

We close our eyes.

The sun still shines.

WHAT THIS PILLAR TEACHES

Beneath the inherited self runs the energetic truth: we are not solid; we are pattern, frequency, vibration, interpreted by those who are observing us. What we call "self" is an interpretation, not a substance. The sixth pillar makes the metaphysics felt rather than argued.

DRAWN FROM THE THESIS

Blind to the fact that we are all forms of energy vibrating at a certain frequency and being interpreted by those who are observing us.

ECHO FROM THE CORPUS

Close your eyes and the sun still shines. Nothing exists until you open your eyes.

— Posted 2017

CHAPTER SCOPE

Build from physics outward, atoms mostly empty, bodies mostly water, water mostly memory of pattern. End on the observer: that what is called a

person is also a frequency, listened to by others who are listening, and that the listening is itself part of the song.



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MOVEMENT III
The Release



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PILLAR 7

The Apertures

OPENING

Calm guards the ego well.

Crisis does not.

Trauma cracks it.

Distress cracks it.

The middle of life,

when the borrowed story runs thin, cracks it.

The death process,

when the borrowed face is returned, cracks it.

These are not punishments.

These are openings.

WHAT THIS PILLAR TEACHES

There are four moments when the ego cannot fully maintain its grip: traumatic events, emotional distress, the midlife crisis, and the death process. The seventh pillar describes each of these as an aperture, not a misfortune to be endured but a doorway to be recognized while it is open.

DRAWN FROM THE THESIS

There are major transitional periods in our lives in which we are able to lift and let go of these burdens, during traumatic events, emotional distress, midlife crisis, and during the death process.

ECHO FROM THE CORPUS

Transformation begins with destruction of the old, to create room for the new.

— Posted 2024

CHAPTER SCOPE

Treat each of the four apertures with respect and specificity. Do not romanticize trauma or death. The pillar's task is to reframe what is already happening to many readers, not to recommend that they seek crisis, but to help them recognize the doorway when life provides it.



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PILLAR 8

The Awakening

OPENING

*Some are struck.
Most are softened.
Either way, what wakes
was never asleep.*

*The awakening is not the arrival
of something new.
It is the noticing
of what was already here.*

*Ambivalence to control
is not indifference.
It is freedom.*

WHAT THIS PILLAR TEACHES

The Awakening is not a moment; it is a relinquishing. Some receive it suddenly. Most receive it slowly, as small daily concessions to ambivalence about controlling experience, until the air itself feels different. The eighth pillar refuses the dramatic enlightenment narrative and replaces it with the quiet, gradual one.

DRAWN FROM THE THESIS

This transformation is the Awakening, and it can happen suddenly or in a slow process to ensure that you can find ambivalence to trying to control experiences and learn to just let them go.

ECHO FROM THE CORPUS

Awaken your mind and you will discover your wings.

— Posted 2020

CHAPTER SCOPE

Distinguish the cinematic version of awakening from the slow daily kind. Argue that ambivalence to control is not apathy but maturity. Close on the insight that awakening reveals nothing new, only what was already, perfectly, present.



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PILLAR 9

The Letting Go

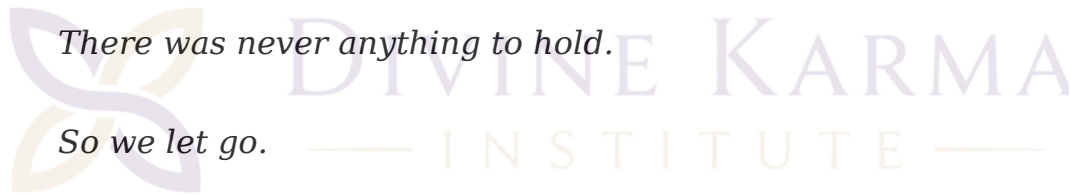
OPENING

*The play continues.
The actors are excellent.
They believe in their characters
more than the audience does.*

*When the eyes open,
the play is still visible.
But the grip releases.*

There was never anything to hold.

So we let go.



WHAT THIS PILLAR TEACHES

Reality, seen through awakened eyes, is a play. Each character is chosen; each chosen character is dug into; each digging deepens the believing. When the seeing is real, the play does not stop, but the grip releases. The final pillar is the destination and the practice: the act of letting go.

DRAWN FROM THE THESIS

When we wake up, we see that reality is just a game or a play, in which everyone plays their part. It is all a grand illusion and there is nothing to hold onto. So we let go.

ECHO FROM THE CORPUS

The mind wants to hold on, but the heart knows to let go.

— Posted 2026

CHAPTER SCOPE

Resist the temptation to teach in this final chapter. The pillar's authority comes from its simplicity. State the play. State the seeing. State the release. End the book with the four words it has been moving toward from the first page: So we let go.



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On the Voice

The book will be written in the register established by these openings. The discipline is brevity. The discipline is paradox where paradox is honest. The discipline is the courage to leave a sentence unfinished when finishing it would betray it.

Lao Tzu wrote eighty-one chapters. The Way will not need that many. Nine pillars, expanded patiently, will be more than enough.

— *"The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao. The name that can be named is not the eternal name."*

The book is not the Way. The book is the finger pointing at the Way. The reader who mistakes the finger for the moon has not been failed by the book, they have been invited deeper.

Next Steps

This outline becomes the working contract for the writing itself. Suggested order of development: — DIVINE KARMA INSTITUTE —

First, expand each pillar's opening into a draft chapter of approximately 1,500 to 2,500 words. Resist the urge to overexplain. Keep the Tao Te Ching cadence at the level of the paragraph, not just the verse.

Second, read the nine chapters together as a sequence and adjust transitions. Movements I, II, and III should feel like one breath taken in three parts.

Third, write a short Foreword (a longer version of the foreword in this outline) and a short Closing. The book should be readable in one evening and reread for a lifetime.

Fourth, hold the manuscript for ninety days before publishing. Reread on day ninety-one. Cut twenty percent. Publish.

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