



## Huna Article

### Subtle Criticism

by Graeme Kaponi Ulrich

Every day on social media we see a flood of memes and posts that are “anti” something — anti-person, anti-policy, anti-group, or anti-idea. They are often shared without much thought about whether they are true or not. Sometimes they are jokes, sometimes angry attacks, and sometimes just fashionable slogans that get passed around.

The problem is not only the misinformation or lack of context. The deeper problem is the effect such messages have on ourselves. In the Huna tradition, **Ku** — the subconscious self or body mind — does not distinguish between what is true or false. It simply takes in impressions. True or false is a **Lono** interpretation. A meme that creates tension, even if meant as a joke, imprints that tension on Ku. The result is a subtle accumulation of stress, irritation, or conflict that affects us long after the laugh or moment of outrage has passed.

This is why people often react so strongly to opinions that have no basis in fact. The reaction is less about the content itself and more about the way the subconscious has absorbed a negative impression. Over time, repeating and reinforcing this habit undermines our peace of mind and distorts how we see the world.

Part of the challenge is in interpretation. A meme or comment may be intended as a harmless joke, and if we see it that way it can simply bring a smile and pass through without harm. Yet the very same words may be received by someone else as criticism or even hostility. The skill lies in being able to tell the difference — to discern when something is genuinely playful and when our own subconscious is interpreting it as a personal attack. That kind of discernment is increasingly rare, but it can protect us from carrying unnecessary tension.

Here it helps to ask the same question I have often had to ask myself in shamanic work: *What am I really looking at?* Am I observing the facts of a situation, or am I reacting based on old assumptions, cultural labels, or personal biases? Am I seeing clearly, or only what I expect to see?

The Seven Principles of Huna provide a useful framework here. **Ike** reminds us that “*the world is what we think it is.*” If we habitually think in terms of criticism and opposition, we will experience more of that world. **Makia** teaches that “*energy flows where attention goes.*” When we focus on negativity, even in subtle forms, we feed it with our own energy. **Manawa** — *now is the moment of power* — reminds us that we can shift our focus right now. We do not have to keep repeating the same patterns of reaction.

This principle comes alive in Serge Kahili King's book *Dangerous Journeys* (Chapter 3), where **Keoki** at first found the urban environment uncomfortable and alien. That discomfort was not inherent in the city itself but came from subconscious rules and habits shaping how he saw it. When he shifted his perception, applying the principle that *the world is what you think it is*, the very same surroundings revealed order, beauty, and opportunity. Nothing outside changed — only the way he looked at it — and with that shift, the discomfort dissolved into curiosity and appreciation.

Criticism may feel satisfying in the moment, but it is not the same as observation. Observation looks at the facts. Criticism adds judgment, often based on who is speaking rather than what is true. Subtle criticism — in memes, in passing comments, even in our inner dialogue — carries hidden costs, because it keeps Ku tense and conflicted.

The alternative is to cultivate **Aloha** — “*to love is to be happy with*”: to appreciate, to bless, to look for what is good in a situation, to take a positive attitude to how to improve it. This does not mean ignoring problems or refusing to take a stand. It means choosing to respond from clarity rather than automatic tension. It means remembering **Pono** — that effectiveness is the measure of truth. What is effective in creating healing, connection, and peace will serve us far better than repeating criticism that keeps us trapped in conflict.

Two more principles of Huna can help with this shift. **Kala** reminds us that “*there are no limits*” — we are free to release old habits of criticism and reinterpret what we see in more helpful ways. **Mana** reminds us that “*all power comes from within*” — the authority to change our focus and free Ku from tension lies in us, not in the posts or opinions of others. Remembering these truths opens the door to greater calm and choice, and prepares the ground for **Aloha** and **Pono** to guide our responses.

In the end, the real challenge is not what others are posting or saying. The challenge is how we choose to see, interpret, and respond. When we learn to look beyond subtle criticism, we free ourselves — and our Ku — to live with greater calm, clarity, and effectiveness. With that freedom comes the possibility of a more creative, compassionate, and connected way of being.

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[Aloha New Zealand School of Hawaiian Shamanism](#)

[The Seven Principles of Huna Philosophy](#) (video)

[The Three Aspects of Self](#) (video)