

MISCELLANEOUS

- 156.** We do not need to radically change our external behaviour, because as Patrul Rinpoche points out, what needs to shift is not the manner in which phenomena arise, but the manner in which they dissolve. That is to say, with our practice, life continues as usual, getting up, washing, going to the shops, cooking food, yet the particular space from which we engage in these activities is different. Whatever is arising, including our sense of self and other, is arising as the manifestation of the openness of our mind itself. The practice is called *dzogpa chenpo*, 'great perfection': by seeing the intrinsic purity or perfection of all phenomena we are released from our habitual impulse to control and improve events.
- 157.** Relax, we are here, simply in the moment of shared revelation or co-emergence with others. Within this infinite non-duality we are spontaneous responsiveness as part of the precise moment.
- 158.** When relating to others, if we can use their confusion and their limitations as fuel for our wisdom, then we'll be able to recognise their contribution and feel gratitude. This then allows us to be more generous towards them. With this they might experience the space in which they can relax from their identification with limited forms of identity. That's the theory. In practice, of course, it's slightly more difficult!
- 159.** The start of the meditation, our sense of the clear blue sky, offers a new beginning for everything. The middle part offers a further dispersal of the old, the solid, the enduring. The end of the meditation is rebirth in the unborn flow of becoming. This practice never ends.
- 160.** Openness reveals the unfixed moment, the space just before we speak, or move or think or act. Are we going to arise and fill that moment on the basis of what we want to be there so that we close over the openness by knowing what the moment will be in advance? Or are we going to relax and open and be here with whatever occurs? When we open rather than control we see that the ground space and what arises from it are not two different 'things'. Their non-duality reveals the pervasive indestructibility of space. Space is filled but not displaced for it is filled with its own radiance. Space and its radiance are neither the same nor different—they are non-dual. Being surprised by the world and by ourselves keeps life fresh and connected.
- 161.** Tantric practice helps to soften our sense of the world. This little wooden table in front of me is made of solid wood and it appears to be a hard entity, separate and existing in and of itself. The table and myself clearly appear to be two separate entities. The reality of the table is given by itself and similarly it appears that the separate reality of myself is intrinsic to me, yet both the table and myself are known to me through and

as my experience of them. They are experiences for and in my mind. Their status is not self-existing but depends on my interpretation of my experience, and both interpretation and interpreted experience are mere transient reflections in the mirror of awareness. The describer and the interpreter and the judge all are ego functions and feel like me – but they are not the experiencer itself, pure, open, naked awareness. Rather than focussing always on the description of ‘things’ and their ‘qualities’, meditation points us towards finding out who is the actual experiencer of the experience. This is the one question that frees everything.

- 162.** In the view of Buddhism the heart of wisdom is openness or emptiness. Through attending to our own mental processes while being with others, we come to recognise the ways in which we construct our sense of other people and of ourself out of our own past experience, our own knowledge and our own fantasy projections. All of this illusory magical construction, which seems so real, occurs in fact within the space of the open empty mind.
- 163.** In meditation we can start to be present at the moment when a thought arises. We see how we are instantly caught up in the thought as it arises, generating a feeling or a knowledge that ‘I am angry’ or ‘I am tired’ or ‘I need to phone my mother.’ I am sitting in the meditation and the thought arises, “*Blast! I haven’t phoned my mother.*” Now if my meditation is not very powerful, and since my mother *is* very powerful, I jump up for the telephone! If my meditation were a bit stronger I could put that thought on hold and just have a trace attention to the content of it but let the form of the thought pass through, knowing that, of course, I will obsessively think of my mother soon after! So what is the relationship between me, the thought and my mother? The thought is the vehicle for attachment, it is the glue that seems to bind these two separate entities, me and my mother together. Yet the thought vanishes. It vanishes without a trace, and the sense of my mother and of me in this moment also vanishes. This vanishing is effortless. When the impermanence and emptiness of the ‘subject’ is clear then our sky-like mind reveals itself.
- 164.** In meditation we develop an attitude of openness and tenderness to our thoughts, and a similar capacity to receive the tenderness of the world. It is the tenderness of the world that supports us. If we have to do it all by ourselves, as if we were acting against the world, we will get exhausted. But our true strength arises from being able to work with the world as it moves around us and in us. We are enworlded, we are part of the world and that is our strength. Our thoughts come, not as our privately produced thoughts, but as the thoughts of the world passing through us. Being present in non-duality, all the strength and all the richness that we need is freely available for us.
- 165.** With our usual ordinary sense of duality, everything that we do in the world and everything that happens to us is an affirmation of the substantial reality of phenomena. This, fortunately or unfortunately, is a fantasy arising from ignorance. When we are successful, when we are unsuccessful, when we are happy, when we are sad, every experience, every action that we do, is taken as proof that subject and object are real and separate. This is why the texts say that samsara is endless. We ourselves are maintaining the flow of misinformation, misinterpretation and confusion. If we do not

see what we are up to this non-sense will go on and on. But if we look carefully and see how we take our assumptions to be facts we can start to question the seeming truth of our beliefs. Seeing that they are constructs, we can see that all that appears for is essence-less illusion. This is most helpful.

Deep and vast awakening occurs, however, when we see that we ourselves, the subject, the thinker, the knower, the doer, are in fact also just patterns of experience in our own mind. My 'self', my 'identity' is a sequence of patterning of evanescent energy which is the play of my mind. So what is my mind? Where is it? How is it? This is the big door, the ever-open door, the door to freedom that has always been with us. Finding it directly and going through it with no hesitancy or caveat and not turning back or looking for something else—this is the origin of dzogchen in our world. This is the gift of Garab Dorje's three statements.

- 166.** When an existential fear arises, rather than turning away we should turn towards it, open to it and let it reveal what it actually is. When fear and anxiety arise they are so quickly wrapped in ideas, interpretations and assumptions that it is difficult to see the naked simplicity of what is occurring. If we encounter the wrapped up experience it can seem daunting and if we are to face it we often slip into hero mode. Then we face our foe and engage with it as our ego-self. Through this we can painfully gain qualities like patience and courage. This is useful. Yet from a dharma perspective our aim is not to be heroic but to be open like the sky. The sky lets everything pass through it – planes, storms, rainbows – they are there and then they are gone and the sky itself is untouched. The indestructible vajra mind is like the empty spacious sky – it accepts all without struggle, reservation or bias.
- 167.** When we practise shine or shamatha, we focus exclusively on our breath. We yoke the horse of our intention to the plough of our attention and align it with the little double furrow at our nostrils. Then we just keep the plough steady and unwavering. So how many people here were able to plough in a straight line for fifteen minutes?
- 168.** Prayer is a method which uses the structure of dualistic separation to intensify the energy of longing so that our ordinary self and the divine form can start to vibrate and come together revealing our own emptiness. After praying with great faith and receiving the light of the four initiations, Padmasambhava comes to the top of your head evoking warm feelings in your heart. Then he folds into a ball of light and descends into your heart. You are aware of this radiant presence coming into you, very deep inside you. All that you have ever wanted, all that you have ever longed for in another person, in another object, is now present as this radiant presence inside your heart. You open fully to it and dissolve in it. Then the non-dual single ball of light shrinks to a point and dissolves. There is only openness, emptiness. Resting in this spaciousness, appearances gradually manifest. Appearance manifests from space, as the display of space, and is not essentially different from space. In this way all that occurs is Padmasambhava.
- 169.** True healing is to wake up to the integrated three aspects of the mind, openness, clarity and responsivity. This heals by cutting through basic ignorance which is the root of the five poisons, of attachment, and of all the sufferings that arise.

- 170.** Our sense of self often carries the sense that we are a fixed ‘thing’, a substantial essence. However, if we look at how we actually are, we see that we are not fixed or definable. Our ‘self’ is an ongoing ‘selfing’, a dynamic interactive disclosure of the potential of our being which is open, empty, and always available. Self-referential selfing is like editing a narrative, a way of organising the moments of experience into a seemingly coherent narrative which confirms the continuity and integrity of our ‘self’. However, our ‘self’ is not self-existing but is formed moment by moment with the thoughts we have which self-reflexively confirm our ‘self’ as something already existing. We are all caught up in this activity of self-construction and its allied practice of ignoring the fact of construction and pretending that we endure as something as such. The huge amount of editing involved in this keeps our attention well away from the open ground of being. Social politeness means that we tolerate slippages in other peoples’ narratives—*“I won’t tell you you’re incoherent if you don’t tell me I’m incoherent!”* This keeps the drama of the individual centre-stage in a non-stop production.
- 171.** By looking carefully we can see how, when we identify with and merge into the thoughts and feelings which then feel like ‘me’, we engage in a process of constituting or creating our sense of self. These thoughts are not mirrors or x-rays that show me who I am. They are the building blocks of who I actually am, as I take myself to be. It is through merging with the thoughts that of ‘I’ and ‘me’ that I, my open potential, become ‘me’. With this clarity we can turn towards seeing who is this ‘I’ when I don’t think about it.
- 172.** If we have sufficient factors around us which prop us up we seem to be okay. Yet it’s like a magician’s sleight of hand. We easily and effortlessly delude ourselves into thinking that we’re grounded when actually we’re impulsive and reactive and truly unstable. We are not unstable because we are bad but because all phenomena are impermanent.
- 173.** Buddhism indicates something very disturbing and very radical. The texts point out that we are asleep within a dream, within a part which of our potential we take to be the whole. This dream is constructed out of a particular set of causes and events. Due to having created causes in the past, we have come to be born in this human dimension, sharing a particular kind of karma with other humans. This seemingly shared vision supports our belief that the delusion is real and so distracts us from enquiry. After a while, the causal forces which generate our access to this domain will be exhausted and then we will find ourselves in another domain, another hologram, another arena of experience – and it probably won’t be as nice. So we need awaken from the dream world of samsara.
- 174.** There is no one true rulebook that can tell you how to live. We are all flying by the seat of our pants. In this situation it’s best to keep your eyes open, your ears open, your heart open and stay in the dance. Of course there are many rulebooks that can tell us what to do in general but our lives are not lived ‘in general’. We are exquisitely located in time and space with the unique specificity of each moment of our lives. Only we see through our eye – to accept this reveals the ego’s world to be a lonely one. We can try to avoid this fact by utilising shared generalities yet our specificity is unique. Maps and rulebooks can give us the sense of knowing about something prior to experiencing it. Yet

our lived experience is of being here in this fresh situation and having to respond within the dynamic unfolding. So, will we trust the maps we have been given or shall we attend to the fresh actuality and participate as embodied non-duality? If we chose the latter way we come to trust that we find our way by walking in the world as it shows itself.

- 175.** The Buddhist view describes how we lose the open spaciousness of being, our original nature, when we collapse into false identification with momentary arisings as if these appearances were truly ourselves.
- 176.** In order to develop we need to find a way to inhabit the tension which always exists between our desire for excitement, creativity, expansion and new possibilities on the one hand, and our need for comfort, reassurance, and security on the other. The key is not to invest any situation or possibility with a sense of ultimate value. Everything matters and does not matter simultaneously.
- 177.** The flow of my experience ceaselessly occurs. I can be open to the flow as something apart from awareness or as the participative field of awareness. Thoughts, feelings and sensations arise from emptiness, in emptiness, as emptiness. Tasting without grasping reveals that every moment is rich and fresh. When there is nothing to be done we rest in awareness, unruffled by any of the forms which occur. This is the primordial purity of the mind, *kadag*. When there is a need, in the manner of a dream we emerge as energy patterns in the field of clarity. This is non-dual co-emergence, compassion free of reification, the instant presence of the potential of awareness, *lhundrup*. Unchanging purity and instant presence are inseparable.
- 178.** The dzogchen view points out that attachment arises from a dualistic orientation, from setting up oppositional categories, the poles of which appear to be both truly existing and fundamentally different. The most basic of these polarities is that of self and other, belief in which generates the sense that I exist apart from others and apart from the environment around me. Once this is established hope for gain and fear of loss become the organising principles for engagement with all that is deemed other.
- 179.** Rather than the mind being a possession of the self, the self is a construct of the mind. When we don't realise this, the openness or potentiality of the mind is ignored through a decontextualising reification of appearance and grasping at the manifestations of the creativity of the mind including our 'self'.
- 180.** The heart of the meditation practice is the subtle work of re-balancing our habitual bias towards our ego sense of self. This bias gives our feelings of individuality a sense of importance and centrality which it does not actually have. Paradoxically our true centre cannot be found for it is our unborn spacious awareness, present everywhere yet forever eluding capture.

- 181.** Clothes show themselves when you put them on. If a dress is hanging in a wardrobe, you don't truly know what it's like. You have to take it out and hold it up, and even then you don't know if it is right for you at this moment. To find that out you have to put it on. It is only when you wear it that the garment can reveal itself along with your current mood in relation to it. In the same way the nature and status of subject and object are not revealed by abstract thought. When we open to our experience in the here and now, moment by moment, then 'self' and 'other' are draped over what is occurring. Then you can see if they fit, if they are needed. We tend to wear too many clothes, we are all covered up in habits, memories, old stuff that has been in the wardrobe of our mind for too long. Being present in the freshness of our mind as it shows itself, we gain the confidence to be naked and unadorned. This is Kuntuzangpo, our naked being, the bodying forth of the dharmadhatu. This dharmakaya only wears clothes for the benefit of others – new outfits arise without effort as required. Self and other, good and bad – these styles are way out of fashion in Buddhaland!
- 182.** When we meditate by opening to whatever occurs, it is at first a bit like speed dating. In speed dating, many strangers come together in their search for love. They have five minutes sitting in pairs to meet and introduce themselves. Then they move on to the next person. Will I find my one true love? In meditation we want to find our one true nature. So we interview all the candidates who present themselves. Thought after thoughts comes in front of us, intriguing, enticing, fascinating and beguiling. *'Love me!'* they say, *'Merge with me! I am all you have been looking for.'* And then they are gone and the next one appears and says the same old line. All talk and no trousers! Sweet words and then goodbye. Well, if we want enduring love we need to settle for the mind itself and not go chasing after these charming but oh so deceitful temptations.
- 183.** The tumbling experience of being ourselves arises in relation to the environment. The more we open in a fresh way with the environment as it shows itself the less stable we will become. This is the heart of the dzogchen teaching: we cannot control our self-identity. Our self is part of the world and it will change as the world changes. So let it change, and instead find stillness where stillness always already is.
- 184.** Rather than changing the object which arises, whether it seems good or bad, we are simply loosening the bond of identification and attachment. This bond is made by us, not by the qualities of the object. The sweet taste of freedom is already ours, if we wish it.
- 185.** On this essential point of recognising our true nature, there is nothing to recognise. It is not an object and it is not a cognition. We don't get anything, we don't find anything and neither do we recognise anything. Our nature is not something which we can lose or get. It is not an object to be found nor is it a quality of the subject to be developed. Relaxing the anxious fixation driving dualistic perception, we find ourselves in unborn awareness. We don't dissolve into nothing at all, we don't vanish completely! Rather we, the reflection, in giving up the delusion that we are a substance, find ourselves in and as the mirror. The falsity of self-construction fades like morning mist and the clarity of non-duality allows us to see ourselves when there is nothing to see and no one to see it.

- 186.** The problem of the subject cannot be solved by the object. Our confusion, the difficulties we feel, our uncertainties about who we are, and about the meaning of our life will not be resolved by finding the perfect object and falling in love. The lovely other may enable you to have a holiday from the difficulty of being yourself but after a while you will find that the difficulty is still here. That's why we have to learn to be with ourselves, with our thoughts and feelings and find the way to let them lead us to our own true nature.
- 187.** Meditation practice can gradually change the content of our mind but, much more importantly, it will change the relationship we have with the content of our mind. Meditation can be very boring and this can assist us to be less and less fascinated by and dependent upon the content of experience. As our thoughts and feelings are seen for what they are, our lessening interest lets us start to taste awareness free of content. This does not mean that there is no content. The content is still there, just as before, but our simple awareness is untouched by it.
- 188.** The clarity which is produced by thoughts is developed by linking one thought to another thought. But the clarity which arises from relaxation, openness and emptiness, is present prior to thought. Thoughts arise as the shiny edge of this awareness, as if you are looking at the sea in the moonlight and edge of the breaking waves shimmer with a silvery sheen. Our thoughts are like little drops of spray, of beautiful energy arising from the open dharmakaya ocean. They are the ceaseless display of our mind's own luminous potential.
- 189.** Our buddha nature is something that we can trust. The problem is that we are out of touch with it. Something has to shift so that we can connect with our true nature. To change gear from samsara to nirvana we need to use the clutch of emptiness. At the moment we are locked in the gear of our karmic identity, driving along at this particular speed, perceiving what we perceive at this speed. Then, making use of emptiness, we change gear and now we are travelling in mandala mode and everything that appears is Padmasambhava!
- 190.** The essential point is very simple. Don't take life too seriously! If you look back, you will see that you have already had many troubles in the past, and now they have gone. Now you are struggling with the problems of this moment, and if you are lucky enough to stay alive, they will be replaced by new problems in the future. So don't take your current problems too seriously; they are not the end of the line!
- 191.** We exist in the world, as part of the world, and the world reveals itself to us through our participation. We are revealed to ourselves and to others, through our participation. There are two paths open to us, participation as a separate individual or participation as a non-dual part of the unfolding field.

- 192.** The real nature of the mind of the deity is emptiness, the open, unlimited, pure awareness which is the ground of everything. Everything arises within this mind. This mind is not something moving towards objects as if they were external to it, but is the very cornucopia, the very womb of existence, within which subject and object carry on their eternal play.
- 193.** Here we are in this flow of experience, so what is the source of the flow? It is the wellspring of the dharmadhatu, emptiness itself. Emptiness is flowing out of emptiness, through emptiness, into emptiness.
- 194.** Learn to relax the body, releasing muscular tension and the formality of self-presentation. Learn to allow speech to flow freely, releasing editing and blocking, staying present in interpersonal responsiveness. Learn to trust the unborn openness of your mind, releasing identification with thoughts, feelings, memory and all that may arise.
- 195.** Practise letting go of your attachments, opening to your connection with others and settling into the natural spaciousness of your being.
- 196.** When we relate directly to our own experience we start to see the infinity of the revelation of the integrated movement of subject and object. That is to say, the root quality of our alive intelligence, our awareness, is something ungraspable. It has no personal or private content of its own which is always there, but is rather a potential within which infinite forms can be revealed.
- 197.** Repeated negative thoughts become like a huge old sofa – very heavy to move, and very tempting to sit in! We can collapse into our neurotic beliefs and feel quite at home. Then you see the world from that point of view. Of course a lot of other things are going on simultaneously but you are now seated comfortably facing in your chosen direction. Doing something new doesn't feel quite as interesting as the repetition of the delicious limitation of this neurosis. Oh, Oh!
- 198.** Rather than seeing our ordinary lives as something stable, secure and reliable, through the practice of meditation we come to experience our mind as the flow of ungraspable experience within open, empty, mirror-like spaciousness. This shift may well feel alarming! What about the reassurance we derive from object constancy and repetition compulsion? If I give up the seeming reliability of the forms and patterns I cling to, my assumptions will fade, my automatic responses will slow down and I will not know how to act or be myself! How can this be an improvement? Well, the complacency we have been operating with is only effective when the environment supports it. All patterns are vulnerable to change. Our ego, our personality, our sense of self – these are all essence-less patterns vulnerable to shifts in circumstances. Seeing that this is the case we might seek for what is truly reliable. The surprising and strange fact is that the most reliable aspect of existence is its emptiness. The absence of self-substance in

appearances is the basis for liberation from the deluding fantasy of stable reliable entities

199. Within and through our own basic openness free of intrinsic content, all movement, all gesture, all experience reveals itself moment by moment, as the specificity of transient this or transient that. In this way our participation in the world is part of the flow of emergent energy. This is our aliveness for we are no longer operating on automatic pilot. We are not taking things for granted. We are touched and moved by the freshness of our contact with the living world. Subject and object ceaselessly dance, creating infinite patterns while our mind itself, our true awareness is calm, clear and unruffled.

200. Having no fixed shape itself, when our awareness reveals particular patterned moments, it is as if our awareness (mistaken as an enduring personal identity) is in fact the current content of our mind. In that moment it is as if we, our unborn awareness, are our jealousy, our pride, our laziness, our diligence. There is no substantial basis for this seeming merging, identification, attachment. A reflection appears to be in the mirror, and in a way it is although it was not put into the mirror nor can it be taken out of the mirror. Similarly, thoughts are in our mind and can appear to be our mind, yet they are neither the same as the mind nor different. Therefore it is vital not to react to a transient content of the mind as if it were self or not-self. Involvement is the work of dualistic consciousness. It brings no true benefit and confuses us as to the nature of the mind. So, rest in the intrinsic integration of awareness and its self-display since forgetfulness of the open ground allows mind's energy to appear substantial, and this creates all aspects of samsara.

201. It is the quality of awareness to reveal what is here and what is here is its own energy. If we are not present as awareness itself, our awareness will simply reveal the manifesting qualities of the transient formations of dualised subject (which we identify with) and object (which we like or don't like). The aspect of energy which is our involving ego consciousness will grasp onto whatever it is in contact with without seeing that these 'objects' are also aspects of our mind's energy. For example, if in meditation we think, *"Oh no, I am too tired, I can't do this!"* this is because tiredness is experientially all that there is. Illuminating awareness, the source, is not attended to and so clarity displays itself as us being lost in fusion with whatever is arising.

202. Is nothing better than something? That is the key question. We have to be clear for ourselves. Is the yogi who spends her life in a cave wasting her life? In the midst of 'nothing' is everything; in the midst of 'something' is disappointment.

203. When we feel overwhelmed the object or situation feels big, and we, the subject, feel small. We, the subject, feel vulnerable and unstable and the object-situation we encounter seems to be powerful and inevitable. We are sure that we are going to be crushed, we are sure that we can't survive. The only true exit from this delusion lies in meditation. We need to trust the truth of emptiness and release our reification and our

fear. Keep relaxing in the face of whatever arises and it will dissolve in front of us. The power of the object is the power of our mind – so why are we giving it to the object?

204. When you listen to the dharma try to experience the words as droplets of rain gently falling on you and washing away all your doubts and confusions. In particular, as you listen to sentences being formed, you can see the various grammatical particles in operation together. This co-dependency, interdependency or dependent co-origination is very obvious in language; each part of the sentence plays its role in bringing something into being. Attending to this we can start to feel directly the energetic quality of words as they impact the various centres in our body. The fact that language itself—something so fleeting and so interdependent—seems to support the notion of real entities, is really quite amazing.

205. If dzogchen is saying *“All things from the very beginning are pure,”* and we are saying, *“No, I have some really bad thoughts, I’m really horrible. I don’t want anybody to know this about me,”* this would indicate that we are excluding ourselves from our own natural purity. The fact that other people might agree with us that indeed our qualities are terrible, would then offer us a chance to make use of their limits to reaffirm our limits. Worldly opinion confirms limits as real while meditation reveals the illusory nature of limits.

206. In our practice we are open to the fact that everything is pure yet when we are in the world with others we also need to be careful. Dzogchen doesn’t mean that you should be naive. Although all the patterns of experience are truly empty illusions, patterns can and do bump into each other with painful results. So until you can see that pain is also an illusion it is best to take care.

At Halloween children dress up as ghosts and demons and go out knocking on people’s doors. They put on masks or paint their faces and go ‘Wooh!’ They want to be very terrifying but really they are just sweet little children. It is the same with these thoughts which look so terrible and seem so unbearable. Actually, they are just the sweet children of emptiness; they are the children of the dharmakaya. When you observe thoughts from this point of view, they are a shining radiance even though they may appear to be dull or disturbing. The ‘shining radiance’ quality is not the semantic or overt content, it is the clarity intrinsic to the energy of display as it moves within the field of awareness. Clarity is the relationship of manifestation with its own ground of emptiness. So however experience is, whatever is occurring, remain relaxed, open and uninvolved. Don’t despair if your mind seems very dull. This dullness doesn’t mean that you are far away from your unborn awareness. The fact that you experience being alive and cognisant of this dullness is itself the natural radiance of the unborn mind.

One day when I was doing *chod* practice in Ladakh, I was sitting outside my little tent writing something down on the wrapping paper of a packet of incense sticks—because I always write a lot and I had run out of paper. My tent was pitched in a little cemetery quite far from the nearest village but a lama came striding across the stones to the cemetery and looked at me sitting there writing. He picked up two stones and he banged them together saying strongly, *“Stones are better than words, they won’t cause you so much trouble.”* Then he shot off again. He was a very helpful lama. This was Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche and he was very interested in anyone who was doing practice. Our habitual fascination with particular ideas, our efforts to freeze the moment or

capture our own thoughts which seem to be so very important—these are dangerous blind-spots for meditators.

- 207.** The Buddha said that suffering arises from attachment. Attachment is our effort to hang on to our idea of something so that we believe we can move it from the past into the present and on into the future. Of course it is not the object itself we are moving, only our ideas about it – but due to attachment the object as it is and our idea about it have been conflated. In the moment of our attachment we forget that there is no truth to any object, no inherent reality to any object. The seasons change, languages change, national boundaries change, the body changes, thoughts and feelings change. Suffering arises because we resist being with how things actually are.
- 208.** The energy of the mind is ceaseless and we can't grasp even one moment of our experience. What we get when we grasp is an idea or a concept which seems to stand for the experience itself. Confusing these aspects is delusion. We are like a little mouse in a cage, on one of those wheels going round and round and round. The more the mouse tries to get somewhere, the more it stays in the same place. There is nowhere to get to. *"But if I am not making something of my life what will happen to me? It will all fall apart and then where will I be? It is all up to me. If I don't take care of me who is going to do it?"* These anxious thoughts keep us running on the wheel.
- 209.** The function of meditation is to enter into the ceaseless flow of live experience. It is not about controlling or improving or getting rid of things but of finding one's balance like a surfer, staying with the waves of experience as they roll on and on.
- 210.** In all situations just stay present in the centre of what is occurring without losing your balance. Allow whatever arises to arise, confident that it will pass. In this way, one is working with the teachings of the Buddha.
- 211.** What is asleep is not the nature of the mind but the content of the mind. When a thought arises in the mind and we believe the thought, who is the one who believes the thought? If you observe yourself, you start to see how a thought believes a thought – a thought follows a thought, followed by another thought. That is what samsara is. You are caught up in thoughts and thoughts catch you—on and on and on.
- 212.** The whole art of life is to release and relax, letting go into the timeless present.
- 213.** Compassion is awakening to the actuality of our connection with others. This is always already here, present even before we're aware of it. Compassion's quality is connectivity.

- 214.** We stand at the crossroads directing good things towards us and bad things away from us. There is a lot of traffic, a lot of fumes and the pay of a traffic policemen is not so good.
- 215.** The only place you can get lost is in your own energy. What hides us from ourselves is ourselves. The energy of the mind in the richness of its display is so dazzling that we forget that we are also the ground of that display.
- 216.** There is continuity in our lives, but it is a continuity of change. Since we were children everything has changed in our lives. Our thoughts and feelings have changed so often, the shapes of our bodies have changed, the kinds of activities we do have changed. So what is the continuity of our identity? It is some sort of felt sense of 'here-I-am', but here I am as what? As 'this' in the morning, and as 'that' in the afternoon! The content of 'what I am' and 'how I am' is changing, changing, and changing. Recognising the empty nature of everything including ourselves is wisdom, for it frees us from false attribution and allows us to experience what is occurring without avoidance, merging, attachment or bias. Experiencing form as inseparable from emptiness is compassion since we see how sentient beings wrongly take illusory forms to be substantial entities and in doing so generate great suffering for themselves and others.
- 217.** We don't look at the world the way a camera takes an impression. We look at the world through our values, our beliefs and assumptions, our likes and dislikes. Something may be very attractive to some people and not very attractive to others. We don't simply say, "*I like this cheese*" which would indicate our relationship to it, but we say, "*This is a really good cheese.*" In this way the 'goodness' seems to be inherent in the object. However for someone else it might be a very 'bad' cheese. Our 'truth' is only an opinion, only the view from here.
- 218.** The root of who we are is awareness inseparable from emptiness, and this emptiness is the basis of the ceaseless flow of our experience. If we settle into this awareness, we will find that it is more reliable than any friend. Whenever we look for our mind it will be there, yet we will never find it as a substantial entity. Friendships form and change. If your friends didn't change, their lives would be very limited – but these very changes alter their availability. As the Buddha said, "*Friends become enemies, and enemies become friends.*" We can go through life telling ourselves stories about how the world is in order to make our world feel safe, but this is merely to fall asleep in illusion. The only unchanging refuge is our own true buddha nature.
- 219.** Relax into your own ground, the natural perfection of your own presence. Experience its limitless infinity and see directly that it is the ground, source and field of all experience. This is your home territory. This is where you belong. So why not relax and enjoy it?

- 220.** One of the functions of buddhist understanding and practice is to start to see the cocoon of assumptions within which we live. The more we understand the nature of the cocoon, and that we ourselves have spun it, the more we free ourselves from it. In that way we go from being a little grub to being a lovely butterfly. Beautiful!
- 221.** Looking in front of me I can see another person yet I can't see my own shape very clearly. I can bend and see under the other person's chin, but even if I did yoga for fifty years I would never be able to see under my own chin! This indicates that other people are more visible to us than we are to ourselves. Similarly they see us more clearly than we do. In fact we need other people to see ourselves, to see how we are and what we are up to. The sangha is the field of collaboration in which we all engage in learning.
- 222.** We are not a fixed thing. We are not a coherent self. What we take to be ourself is an aspect of the flow of experience we encounter. Tendencies, traits, and memories move together creating different patterns, like dancers on a stage. The various aspects of ourselves are energies moving in the background like a corps de ballet, and then suddenly one of these aspects decides to be the prima ballerina and goes out to take centre stage. This is great when the moment is ripe but the 'star' needs to be able to rejoin the corps de ballet. When an aspect of our potential becomes a permanent star we will be off balance.
- 223.** If we use the simile that our world is like a piece of sculpture, then each of the nine yantras or vehicles functions as a different angle of illumination of the sculpture. When you look from each viewpoint the sculpture shows a particular aspect which, in this moment of looking, appears to be the truth of the sculpture. You can walk around the sculpture looking from each of these nine different viewpoints, and each view is just what you get from that specific position. One view is not better or worse than any other view. In meditation practice we are the sculpture, simultaneously simple and complex. It helps not to get stuck in just one way of viewing. Yet we should avoid comparing and contrasting and be fully committed to whatever view we are currently entertaining.
- 224.** Thoughts are like politicians. Politicians always say, *"Trust me. I speak the truth. I will work for your benefit."* Watch out for these inner politicians! Simply observe how thoughts arise and pass. Just as politicians say so many sweet things before an election and then afterwards don't do very much, these thoughts seem very attractive when they are arising, but then they are gone.
- 225.** Buddhism offers ways of awakening from our dream of solidity. This doesn't mean that we leave the sense of things being strongly real and enter a mere nothingness. Rather we stop over-investing the fleeting moment and remain open and present. Then moment-by-moment we can experience the world directly as the play of our mind.
- 226.** If you think, *"I have understood"*, you put the Buddha in your pocket to keep him safe, but later when you look in your pocket you only find a rotting apple. Whatever is

turned into a 'thing' will change and rot. The way to use dharma is not to take it so seriously but to actively use it to soften your rigid beliefs.

- 227.** Each of us has to decide whether to continue to build our identity from limited concepts, or to open to the teachings and explore directly who we are. Limiting concepts can be comforting in their familiarity yet they diminish our availability to the ceaseless hospitality of our own unborn nature. Observe how many small worlds you have already invested your time and energy in. Recollect how they have all vanished. Your true friend and ally is not far away. In fact, if you stop being so busy, and stop looking so hard you will find that what you need is already here.
- 228.** Practice is a means to an end. It is not an end in itself since whatever is established with effort will succumb to the fact of change.
- 229.** Not tilting away from occurrences, not tilting towards them, simply staying present with everything as it occurs – this is the heart of meditation.
- 230.** In meditation, the more we can let go the better it is, whereas in the world the more we can accumulate the better it is. This does not mean that you have to practise renunciation of external phenomena. Rather, by relaxing into openness again and again, you come to see the dynamic, impermanent nature of illusory forms, both subject and object. With this we can freely participate in the unfolding matrix of the world without too many hopes and fears.
- 231.** On an ordinary level our lives are constructed on the arrow of time and on the basis of cause and effect. Whereas the paths of direct experience take us into the heart of time, an infinite moment that has no beginning and end.
- 232.** We are asleep in the dream of duality. The actuality of non-duality continues to be the case even while we are asleep and dreaming of many different things. The sense of being a separate self is a dream formation that vanishes upon awakening. Our buddha nature is outside of time. It is not conditioned by any of the events that occur in time, for linear time is always dream time.
- 233.** Space is open and unmoving even while winds move through space. In the same way in the open mirror, reflections come and go, yet the mirror itself doesn't move. Our buddha nature is like space. It is not something hidden inside us. It is not something to discover in the future when we are ready. It is not something we had in the past and then lost. It is simply the basis of experience moment by moment, experience as the non-dual arising of self and field.
- 234.** In dzogchen, nothing can spoil meditation except being somewhere else.

- 235.** This is the work: to allow whatever arises to come and go, and, simultaneously, to stay relaxed and open as spacious awareness free of essence and definition.
- 236.** The deeper the meditation goes, the more unformed and infinite we experience ourselves to be. This liberates our playful energy. With increased clarity, we see situations more easily. It then is important to be precise and careful in everything we do, harmonious, attuned, soft and with a lightness of touch.
- 237.** Recognise that from the very beginning our nature is pure. I am not a thing. I am not an entity. My nature is ungraspable, like the sky. This infinite openness gives rise to all phenomena. Resting in a state that allows phenomena to come and go, the distorted ego-winds gradually dissolve and there is clarity and spaciousness. From clarity and spaciousness a deep satisfaction arises, a contentment which means you have no need to go and do things. You can just sit quietly and not be so hungry for experience.
- 238.** Dzogchen is not much concerned with getting your life sorted. Whether you're serious or you're foolish, whether you have a settled life or a crazy life, whether you are rich or whether you are poor—none of these things impact the relationship with the ground. Everything arises from the ground. Everything has the same nature or, in the language of mahamudra, everything has one taste. This is the taste of emptiness. When you taste that one taste, the forms of life do not matter so much. You can relax and let your life arise according to circumstances.
- 239.** To be alive is a very individual thing. We're not homogenised, we're not clones of each other. Respecting the unique specificity of others is very important in dzogchen. We're not trying to control other people and make them the way we want them to be. Rather, we experience their vibrant ever-changing patterning as an encouragement to relax into the flow as part of the flow.
- 240.** In Buddhism, as in all religions, dreams of power have led many people astray. Power can be dangerous. Since the ground of power is emptiness, if we have an authentic compassionate intention, power may be useful. But it's very easy to fall in love with power and to let its impetus carry us along. So, again and again, we should question: 'What is our motivation in doing practice?' 'What is our motivation when we interact with other people?'
- 241.** Our existence is structured in two modes: the host and the guest. The guests come and go; the host is always there. The host can neither be grasped nor defined. The guests can be briefly encountered yet not grasped. We all know what it's like to feel sad or lonely, we know what it's like to feel happy, we know what it's like to feel full of energy and eager to work. Each of these fleeting mental states can be known—they have a particular shape—but the one who receives and illuminates these passing guests has no form or shape that can be grasped. The indefinable unlimited host has nothing to gain or lose from any guest and so is even and hospitable to all.

- 242.** Movement is the energy of stillness. Stillness and movement are non-dual. They are not oppositional, and they are not enemies. Neither is trying to block or inhibit or destroy the other. That which is still, spacious and open, is in fact inseparable from all the movement that arises from it and in it.
- 243.** We are not the owners of our nature, but rather we are the children of our own nature. The domain of I, me, myself is an energetic arising. It's not a problem to be solved nor is it something to be removed. However, the energy patterns of myself need to settle back and be held safely in the arms of their mother. The mother is space. The nature of our awareness, the ground of our existence, is open spaciousness without corners or edges. Without beginning or end our mother is always here, open and available. Lost and lonely as we can often feel, we have actually never left her hospitable womb.
- 244.** You can renounce external phenomena. You can give up your house, you can give up your money. You can become a monk or a nun. However, for meditators the central point of renunciation is to renounce the belief that the meaning of existence is to be found in thought.
- 245.** What we have is a path of inquiry, which means being willing to not know in advance of events. It's not about changing one belief system for another. It's not about becoming a buddhist. But it is about learning how to look clearly and simply at what is actually happening here and now.
- 246.** Many of the difficulties that come in dharma practice arise because we ask the ego to do things it cannot do. The mind and the content of the mind are not the same. The ego is a content of the mind. The content can't do what the mind can do. The content of the mind is always smaller than the mind itself. To ask twenty people to sit on one chair would be silly. To ask the ego to be free of grasping is silly. Rather than spending time trying to transcend your ego-limits, enter into the state free of limits.
- 247.** The basis of dzogchen practice is to find oneself in the relaxed, natural state of awareness. This state is not something far away. It is not a state of something, the way water can be in a hot state or a cold state. It is not a condition. It is vital that we remember that the non-dual actuality is beyond language. Linguistics signs are at best evocative – they cannot truly indicate how it is. Awareness is not something mystical or esoteric. It is always here but it is hidden by its own brilliance. The radiance of your own mind—which arises as the continuous stream of thoughts, feelings and expressions—is such a dazzling display that you are blinded to your own invisible nature.
- 248.** Thoughts come and go in the spaciousness of the mind. Speech arises and passes in the spaciousness of silence. Movement occurs and vanishes in the spaciousness of stillness. In this way, whatever we are doing or experiencing is precisely as it is, never cut off or separated from the integrated field of arising.

- 249.** It is very important to precisely understand what is meant in buddhism by the term 'illusion'. Perhaps a better way of translating it would be 'ungraspability'. As our life moves moment-by-moment we can either be attentive and participate in it or we can go off into a daydream. However, whether we are in a daydream or attentive, nobody can stop time. The seeming solidity and reliability of phenomena is an illusion since they have no enduring self-substance. Both the grasper and the grasped are illusion.
- 250.** Problems exist in two domains, as event and as narrative. As an event problems have a beginning, a middle, and an end. As part of a narrative they can appear to be endless. The less we enter into absorption in the ego's narratives the more we are fresh with phenomena as they manifest momentarily. Clarity free of reification, illuminates our activity and all phenomena are self-liberating effulgence.
- 251.** The function of the practice has nothing to do with becoming a buddhist. It doesn't matter if you call yourself a buddhist or not. 'Buddhist' is a name and we already have a lot of names. The main point is to enquire, 'Who is the one who is here?', 'What is this arising?' This is the path to enduring value.
- 252.** Prince Siddhartha was shocked by encountering the sick, the old, the dead and the holy. Subsequently observing life in the palace where he lived, he started to see that things were not quite what they appeared to be. He was looking with fresh eyes and was troubled by what he saw. So he left the palace and spent many years practising different kinds of meditation, many kinds of self-restraint, diminishing the amount of food he ate, holding postures for a very long time and so on. But after six years he found that these practices were not bringing fundamental change. He decided that he needed just to sit and be with himself. He wouldn't move until he had awakened to the truth of existence. By doing nothing, everything was achieved. Up until that point he had been pushing himself. But now he was just sitting still and breathing in and out. Thoughts and feelings were arising and passing, yet he was not involved in them. With equanimity to whatever occurred he was able to see how it actually is. The straight forward fact of the matter made him invulnerable to desire and aversion and all the other distracting forces which had previously blocked his path. Being with what is, rather than fusing with arisings or striving for something else is the middle way he found and taught.
- 253.** Nowadays many people seem to have an inner desolation, and lack a sense of meaning. That is clearly not a healthy place to be. Now, because we tend to believe that the best places are far away and that deep down we are unworthy, it may make sense to engage in a practice that will take us somewhere else. This will give us a sense of purpose. Yet by acting in that way we can avoid attending to our actual situation. Attention to what is brings calm clarity while judgement about what is here will mobilise us to restlessly seek something better elsewhere.
- 254.** The ego-self is very fragile. Happiness is easily lost. We built our house on sand. The various factors which continue to give us the sense of who we are don't fit together all that easily. Just saying, '*I exist, I exist*' doesn't really give us a certainty. Chasing

experience will lead us astray. Who is the one who is aware of the thought, the feeling, the sensation? This enquiry reveals the natural purity, the natural clarity of the mind itself.

- 255.** This world is meaningless. We give meaning to the world. The meanings which seem to exist out there are all projected.
- 256.** Don't ask thoughts to do what they can't do. Thoughts are fragile; they don't live very long and they can't do very much. Although there is no end to thinking, thoughts never establish anything reliable. We, however, use these thoughts to create the whole world. Every day we are busy constructing this great edifice of samsara with our thoughts. Thoughts are very young, they like to play, so let them play. The point is, don't ask your thoughts to give you the meaning of existence. They cannot do that. Don't ask them to do what they can't do.
- 257.** Tantra is a path of activity, and one of its strengths is that it gives us something to do. There are mudras to form with your hands, a dorje and bell to hold, instruments to play, texts to read, and many images to visualise. The beauty and skilful organisation of these patterns of movement allow such a focus of attention that no aspect of our mind is left free to be caught up in distraction. In tantra you are working with energy, with the transformation of your experience of what is occurring. However in dzogchen one is concerned simply to relax into the natural purity of the open state.
- 258.** In the practice of tantra, the orientating view is that from the very beginning nothing has truly existed. Visualised images are arising moment by moment. These images are translucent, playful, and essentially delightful, but if you grasp them in the wrong way they turn into sharp, hot objects that will burn and cut you. It's about how you take the world. It's about having a lightness of touch.
- 259.** The term 'dependent co-arising' points to the co-emergence of all the factors in the field. Every arising is linked to every other arising and they are mutually influencing. Thus 'how I am' is called forth by how you are. Who I am is not defined by something inside me, but is the shimmering surface, the interface between subject and object. We emerge in interaction, and the ground of both subject and object is ungraspable, beyond thought, word and expression. Our practice is to attend to the immediacy of how we and our world appear in this moment rather than going in search of an imagined essence.
- 260.** When we truly see that everything is passing, we awaken to the fact that the evanescent moment can only be enjoyed, it cannot be grasped. There is no doggy bag for experience, we don't take anything away. Our karma might go with us, being the patterning which constitutes us, yet if we release the site of identification and appropriation, everything goes free. The main function of meditation in dzogchen is simply to release, release, and release. The central point is relaxation, not striving.

- 261.** Dzogchen is primordial. It has no history. Yet there are histories of how these teachings came into the world. Dzogchen is intrinsic to all beings – but transmission is required to awaken to it. It is not an invented system, but is the presence that was, and is, and always will be here. All beings, in all places, in all times, can have access to it since dzogchen is their own true nature.
- 262.** Our body is not a thing, it's a great river of change. The same is true for sensations and feelings and thoughts. Once we start to experience the ceaseless movement of experience we realise that within this movement there is nothing to hold on to. Yet we don't get lost, for the ground of this movement is completely still and always precisely here and now.
- 263.** Movement is never still. You cannot make it still. The only thing that is still is the presence of awareness, our unchanging true nature.
- 264.** When life is hard it is difficult to trust that awakening is easy.
- 265.** We can tell closed stories or open stories. We can have the story of the expert person or the story of the pathetic person. Best of all, however, is the story that we tell with other people, a story which is allowed to emerge as a conversation allowing us to find out that we are always fresh.
- 266.** I find myself by being with you. I don't find myself inside myself but I am revealed through being with you. I am revealed now as this one who is being with you. I am not revealed as 'the real me' because there is no real me. The more aspects of you that you show me the more aspects of me will be shown to you and to me.
- 267.** The more relaxed and open I am the easier it is to have a sense of all of you who are here with me today. By having a sense of you all, I can speak with you. The ground of our coming into being with the other is not a fixed recipe from a book. It is not a thing inside us but is the relaxing of our defences and the lessening of the intensity of our self-definition. In this way we become at ease with not knowing. This profound not knowing is itself the door to 'wisdom'. Not knowing gives us access to the knowing which is present prior to thinking. It is not dependent on thinking nor is it based on expelling or rejecting thoughts. Rather, every thought, feeling and expression is allowed to arise and pass without the reification and judgement inherent in dualistic positioning.
- 268.** When we are sitting in meditation and a thought presents itself, we don't have a front door with a bell on it; the thought is already in our mind. We don't have a choice, it's here. Similarly, we do not pause in front of a thought and consider, "*Oh, is this an interesting thought to enter?*" We have already entered the thought and merged in it as if we were the thinker that created it. Seemingly, without any effort we are in whatever is arising, and then we are not. There is no obvious front door or back door. The mind is

open and empty; subject forms and object forms co-emerge and then vanish in endless play.

- 269.** If you have bad times, you may feel bad yet these bad times don't define who you truly are. If you get a bit crazy for a while, if you are treated badly, if you feel collapsed or worthless and life seems to lose its meaning, these are just transient episodes in the flow of your experience. If you can relax and be with what is occurring, you will see that it passes. We are not the content of our mind and yet we are inseparable from the content of our mind. The content of our mind is experience, our experience—yet no experience can give a total or final definition of who we are or what our value is.
- 270.** Our life is revealed through being with others. Our life comes to us, is given to us, when we make the gesture of welcoming the other. Sometimes we are happy and sometimes we are sad, but either way, the mood is a revelation, a transient showing. Experience is not a thing you can hang onto. This is really the heart of the dzogchen teachings. There are no things, there are only moments of ungraspable experience arising within the open field of unborn awareness. The more we see that we are always already integrated in open spaciousness the more each moment is fine just as it is.
- 271.** To open and see what is here is the purest form of phenomenology. It is allowing the world to be as it is and allowing ourselves to be as we are. You could say that this is the basis of a profound non-violence. Although the desire to develop ourselves and increase our good qualities seems to be a beautiful intention, it is actually a limiting obscuration. For every time we have an idea of who we should be and we try to become that idea, what we are actually doing is engaging in violence against how we are now. We are saying, *"I am not good enough. I should be different from this. I would be better off if I were somebody else."* Thus, our hope of betterment starts with an act of self-attack, of trying to transform ourselves without even truly seeing the actuality of the one we want to transform. The hostility of this attitude reinforces our dualistic structure: *"I am taking up a position against myself in order to recreate myself in a way that will get more approval from other people and myself."* for we will always find new ideas about who we should be. Therefore, the key thing is to relax and open and be present with oneself as one is.
- 272.** We are here, alive—so simply attend to the immediate presence of awareness that is our open ground, the ever-present basis of all our experience. Simply be aware, be present in, with and as the flow of experience. Observe how each movement is a gesture in space and time and is simultaneously an expression or revelation of ungraspable presence. Our open potential shows many forms, as self and other, yet no appearance can define this potential or predict how it will unfold.
- 273.** Observing ourselves is always more difficult than we imagine it will be. This is because we cheat ourselves, for we don't really want to know ourselves as we are. We often want ourselves to be nicer than we are; we have an image of ourselves which we try to protect. Learning to observe oneself clearly is not going to be easy if we hate

ourself or idealise ourself. Self-image generated by judgement gives us something to maintain even if it is negative. However our mind has great potential and many different thoughts and feelings arise in it—not just the ones we want or have come to rely on. Let your mind show whatever it will and you may be pleasantly surprised. You are your mind itself, your awareness, and all the thoughts that seem to define you are just passing through.

- 274.** Our assumptions and our interpretations manifest as if they are the owners of our existence. The servant has become the master and the master has been forgotten. The actual master or the mistress of the house is our buddha nature, our open fresh potential present moment by moment. The servant is thoughts, feelings, sensations. These are sources of information and pathways of manifestation but they shouldn't be sitting on the central throne.
- 275.** The root of our practice is to be kind to ourself, for through this tender intimacy we find our open availability and so are kind to others. Kindness does not mean letting ourselves off the hook, but it does mean not putting ourselves on the hook in the first place. Being hooked is not very helpful. Judging and criticising is not likely to free us or to reveal our loving kindness.
- 276.** Tenderness is very important for practice. Outside in the big world there is plenty of violence and we also are often critical and violent towards ourselves. Mistakes, errors and confusions should be recognised honestly and responded to effectively but should not be taken as definitive.
- 277.** Buddhist teachings say that everything is an illusion. What does this mean? Let's consider this cup I hold in my hand. The experience we have of there being a self-existing cup with all the qualities and possibilities intrinsic to it is an illusion. 'Illusion' means that we forget that subject and object are always born together. The cup-ness of the cup doesn't live in the cup. It exists in our own mind. It is our thoughts that confer individuality and substantial reality to this appearance. Our thoughts make the cup seem real. Our thoughts sustain the delusion that the cup is self-existing. And these thoughts, how strong and reliable are they? Try to catch one and see if it's made of steel.
- 278.** Whatever comes, comes. Here is the crossroads where either I try to improve the object and work hard, or focus on the one who is the one having the experience. The path of dzogchen is not to lose contact with the one who is having the experience.
- 279.** The key point is to be present with whatever is occurring. That's all. Nothing else.
- 280.** Each moment that we are here together vanishes as soon as it arises. We can make a story which points to the continuity of our time together, yet all the moments of the story vanish even as they are spoken or written. This ungraspable impermanence is not

a mistake or a punishment. In fact it is the natural self-liberation of all phenomena. Everything appears yet nothing remains.

- 281.** The time for focussed observation of the mind is during meditation but when we bring our presence into being in the world with others it is time for participation, for being, as we are, a part of the world. We are already in the world. This is our world and if we attend to the world without hesitation or reservation, we will flow as part of its unfolding. We are here, something needs to be done, and we find ourselves doing it. Life is easier when you don't stand outside it and have to rely on concepts to work out what to do.
- 282.** Being a buddhist is just another kind of illusion. You can't really 'be' a buddhist, though you can be a buddha. You can 'do' buddhism. You can do what buddhists do. You can 'do' filling butter lamps, you can 'do' prostrations, you can 'do' wearing robes, you can do many activities done by 'buddhists'. Buddhism is a great factory of activity. However, no matter how good a buddhist you are, that in itself won't make you enlightened. Just as, no matter how wonderful the reflection in the mirror is, the reflection doesn't become the mirror. To enter the state of the mirror, be the mirror. To enter the buddha mind, be buddha—not a 'buddhist'.
- 283.** The less self-referential we are, the more we will find that qualities like generosity and patience are naturally present, and we will want to use these for the benefit of all beings. Cutting the root of ego-fixation allows all good qualities to manifest.
- 284.** Whatever forms we see lack intrinsic definition: the definitions which we give to anything are extrinsic, contingent and contextual. The seeming 'thingness' of things is given to appearances by our own minds' activity of reification. Our own mind puts the thingness in things – and repressing this fact, treats the consequent 'things' as if they were self-existing. These 'things' are defined from the outside by the thoughts we apply to them. All definitions are projections which disguise the empty nature of all phenomena. Lacking inherent self-nature, appearances are actually empty like rainbows in the sky.
- 285.** You cannot awaken to your buddha nature through study. It is not generated by sophisticated philosophical ideas. Nor is it about developing a body of experience that you build upon. Rather it is a matter of allowing what is here to reveal itself, and that happens when we become open and available to receive what has always been given. Our own hungry activity endlessly searching for what is missing is itself the force that blocks the door to awakening. Strangely, letting go offers more than effortful construction.
- 286.** Becoming nothing you gain access to everything. Nothing is not a nihilistic wipe-out. Nothing allows our narrow self-preoccupation to dissolve, letting you wake up to the

fact of your participation in everything. Not being fixed there is spontaneous ease in the flow of becoming.

- 287.** Thoughts go on journeys but the mind never moves. The basic clarity of the mind doesn't move or change or go anywhere. How peaceful, how restful! So much of our effort is unnecessary.
- 288.** As our attachment to habitual concepts loosens we find there is more space in our lives. Being open by nature, awareness stays open to all that occurs, and with this both subject and object are revealed as empty of fixed defining essence.
- 289.** If we chase happiness on the basis of sorting ourselves out, of becoming better people, of removing all the knots and difficulties which make us narrow-minded and selfish, we are then operating inside a paradigm which says, *"I am a construct that can, with effort, be re-constructed to become the right shape."* Yet who is to know and judge what the 'right shape' is? There is no end to self-improvement since our empty self is the great shape-shifter!
- 290.** Presence is about living our own non-dual complexity rather than trying to simplify our energy by making ourselves a reliable fixed phenomenon. We open to the infinity of our own presence, the spaciousness of our ground-being. This is wide enough and deep enough to provide hospitality and space for whatever kind of experience may arise. The space of awareness is the space for each moment to be as it is, whereas the space of the ego, being restricted and restrictive, distorts each moment, bending it to its own purposes.
- 291.** The particular quality of dzogchen practice is that nothing in your life has to change. Dzogchen is not telling you to change your behaviour or your beliefs. Instead we look at our behaviour to see what its purpose is and whether it is actually necessary. We look at our beliefs to see whether they are as reliable as we have taken them to be. Dzogchen is not about believing more, or believing differently. It focuses on moving from 'belief about', into 'direct experience of'.
- 292.** Helping other people doesn't require a particular bridge between ourselves and others since we are always already in the emergent world which includes self and others. However the world according to our thoughts and beliefs may be a self-referential world occupied only by ourselves. When we seem to live inside ourselves, protected or restricted by a high threshold, our sense of being an autonomous entity is increased. Yet this sense of individual identity is in fact an energetic resonance within a field of energy. That is to say, we are communication and we shift with the field we inhabit. We are nothing but energy responding to energy.

- 293.** Other beings are our world. They are not an optional add-on. As long as we see other people as separate from ourselves and from each other we will be making effort to join with them or to get further away from them. That effort will condemn us to artificiality. We are all in this together, although what 'this' is cannot be defined and any agreement about it is bound to be misleading. Tasting the fact of co-emergence makes being available for others as normal as breathing.
- 294.** The biggest mistake we can make in meditation is to confuse the content of the mind with the mind itself.
- 295.** We can always cheat ourselves by imagining that we are more sorted than we are, which is why the more we practise and gain confidence the more careful we have to be.
- 296.** When we see paintings of the meditation buddhas, their bodies are depicted as being translucent. You can see right through them. That means 'no secrets'. They're not hiding their mobile phones from their partners, indeed they haven't got any pockets! To be transparent means no hiding place. Life is as it is, naked and unedited. In our lives we get into trouble when we hide things in order to avoid trouble, when we don't want other people to know how it is, as it is.
- 297.** Perhaps we can trust our aesthetic response to the world, the immediacy of the world revealed through the senses, rather than always making our commentary about what's going on. From the point of view of meditation the commentary obscures rather than reveals what is important.
- 298.** Our consciousness, our personal history, our tendencies, our associations, all of these are manifesting moments or points of energy of coming into being. But they don't remain. This is what is meant by the buddhist notion of no self. It doesn't mean that we don't exist at all. It means that we are not 'something'. To know oneself in terms of personality and qualities is misleading because how we manifest in the world with others is situationally evoked.
- 299.** Put yourself, not the method, first. If you think, "*I'm a stupid person and the dharma is very good,*" then how is a stupid person going to do such a holy dharma? Real practice begins with respecting yourself, because whether you like it or not, you are in charge of your life. It's not like driving a car, where the police can stop you and tell you that you are drunk and take away your licence. Until you die you have a licence to mess up your life and there are no dharma police going to arrive and stop you. So if it is up to you, keep your dignity and be present.
- 300.** Natural clarity, the natural light of the mind, is only revealed to us when we stop running around with our torch trying to illuminate what's going on. "*But if I switch off*

the torch, won't it get very dark?" We are afraid of the dark so we feel we had better keep the torch on. But then you only ever see what you are used to seeing, the little circle of light that your own torch provides.

- 301.** A spinning top, a toy played with by children, will keep going around if you keep spinning it. After a while it slows and gets ready to fall over and so you spin it again. If you don't keep spinning it, it will stop spinning. Pulsation between the polarities of duality is the way in which we keep spinning the wheel of samsara. We keep it spinning because we invest energy into phenomena and make them seem real and important. This is what stops the experience of self-liberation. But if you just leave the spinning top of your habit-formation alone, gradually the energy will leave it and it will stop turning. Then, being uninvolved and uncommitted, we have the space to look, listen and experience true connectivity.
- 302.** We can live in bubbles of hope and we can live in bubbles of disappointment. We can be hopeful for many years and then we can be depressed for many years and then we can be indifferent for many years. Each of these states is like a particular room that we inhabit for a while. Sometimes it feels good. Sometimes it doesn't feel so good. Then suddenly we're in another room and all that seemed so real before has vanished like a dream.
- 303.** We need the breath of the world to come into us. We need the sounds of the world to come into our ears. Receiving the world into the space of the heart replenishes us infinitely. Then our movement in the world is the movement of non-dual responsiveness.
- 304.** The openness of awareness is easily closed down by the particularisation of our judgement. That is to say we organise experiences in terms of 'This is good and I want more of it. This is bad, or unpleasant or dangerous, and I want less of it. I don't want it near me.' Judgement arises due to reification, prejudice and bias. You can't get fresh food from a mouldy pot.
- 305.** It is very important to appreciate that the nine yantras, or buddhist vehicles or paradigms, are all just different ways of construing the world, of making sense of what occurs. Each offers an ethos and are described in the tradition as a 'view'. Each view has an associated style of meditation, linked to which is a style of activity. The alignment of these aspects leads to a specific result. These four factors are used to organise the practices of all the different levels or yantras. It is important to understand the view of each so that your practice is integrated and harmonious.
- 306.** When we lose our way, when we are caught in the spiral of attachment with one thing leading to another, it is not that we have gone from clarity to confusion. We don't get lost by going somewhere else. When we are lost we are still within the open spacious dharmadhatu but we are not awake to where we are. We don't need to travel

to find awakening. To awaken to where we are we simply have to stop following the thoughts and feelings that lead us astray.

- 307.** Why do we take refuge? Because we are lost. We are lost yet we still want to be the boss. Most of us have experienced having a boss who is lost. This is difficult because you can't tell the boss that they're lost. Not a wise move in any organisation! So you have to learn to manage the lost-boss. This is the function of meditation. The ego has to be placated, so that it doesn't get in the way of the work. Developing inner conflict by fighting with oneself is unlikely to be helpful. We need to relax and open but our ego is always finding new things to do. Taking refuge, and especially doing long prostrations, gives the ego an important task to focus on and with that there is peace and calm. With the ego occupied there is space for awareness to show itself.
- 308.** What is the mind itself? The mind and the contents of the mind are not things to be put on different shelves. When you have mind, you have the content of the mind. Whatever thoughts and feelings you have are not a problem. They are not something to be got rid of. They are how the mind shows itself.
- 309.** Speaking is a gesture of compassion. Speaking is relational. We speak in order to communicate with others and be available to them. But speaking cannot reveal wisdom. Wisdom is revealed in silence, in profound absorption, in profound attention, in profound opening to natural awareness. This gives rise to certain experiences which we may try to convey to other people, but as we do so we realise it is beyond expression. Sometimes it's better to be in silence. Wittgenstein said, *"Concerning the things about which we can't speak, it's better to be silent."* This is very good advice.
- 310.** Samantabhadra, the founding Buddha or Adibuddha of dzogchen—the first, the primal, the forever-there Buddha—is traditionally dark blue in colour. Dark blue represents the colour of the sky just before dawn, when the darkness is starting to lighten but there is a little differentiation. He is the spacious potential for illumination.
- 311.** We have options. We can relax into our own nature or we can distract ourselves. There is samsaric distraction: running around, making money, causing trouble and so on, and there is dharmic distraction: doing lots of holy practices, accumulating a big altar and so on. If you have a big altar you have a lot of bowls to clean every day. If you don't clean the bowls you feel guilty. However if you have to clean the bowls, then you do have something to do, *"Now I'm cleaning the bowls for the Buddha!" "Hm...?"* Does the Buddha like clean bowls? No, we do these things for us. So what do we get from doing these things? We generate a sense of meaning and value and competency, a sense that we 'know what to do'. We know how to do mudras, we know the right tune for each prayer... You see the danger? You can get lost in dharma just as easily as you can get lost in making money. It is simpler and safer to relax into our own nature.

- 312.** When the texts say we should be 'without thought' this doesn't mean having no thoughts at all. It means that thought is not being used as a basis of identity and so is allowed to pass freely. In our ordinary life we rest on a thought, which is resting on another, resting on another. Were you to see thoughts as a problem, then the goal of your meditation would be to gain a state where you have no thoughts at all. However if you have no thoughts, then you paralyse yourself, because you are cutting off the energy of awareness! So when we sit in meditation, it's not about trying to turn off thoughts and feelings. It's about allowing thoughts and feelings to be what they are, which is the energy of the mind, self-arising and self-liberating.
- 313.** There is a difference between 'as is' and 'as if'. Perhaps as a child your parents made little shadows on the wall using their hands and fingers, and told you a story about a deer walking along. The 'as is' is a shadow, the shadow made by light falling on to the hand. The 'as if' is when we recognise, *"Oh! It's a deer! Look, it's got two little horns..."* In fact it's not a deer at all; it's a shadow. This 'as if' is an interpretation which we put on to the basic ingredient of the shadow. The shadow form arises due to the interplay of hand, light and wall. These three factors collaborate to support the illusion of there being a deer. Our mind itself is 'as is', empty, ungraspable yet present. It shows itself through all of the forms of 'as if': memories, thoughts, associations and so on. 'As is' and 'as if' are inseparable like mirror and reflection. They are not the same and yet they cannot be forced apart. Both 'as is' and 'as if' are hidden when we believe the shadow, the reflection, is substantial and real.
- 314.** We are very, very lucky to have met the practice of self-liberation. It is the sweet gift of the lineage. Observe yourself. When negativity arises and you neither push it away nor indulge it, but simply stay present with it, it will vanish without trace. If you merge into it, that merging creates an excess, which is an energetic charge. If you try to exclude it, this leads to a deficit or lack, which, like a vacuum, sucks in more thought. The practice of self-liberation shows the seamless vanishing of all experience. The more you get used to the self-liberation of negative thoughts in yourself, the more you are likely to be ethical. That is a surprising paradox. The more you accept and tolerate the fact that you are awash with all sorts of complicated and difficult thoughts and feelings, and allow them to be there, the more you find that they go free by themselves. Then your being in the world will be less encumbered, you will be less preoccupied with your own concerns and you will have more space to engage with other people as they are.